

Lonely Island: Hidden Alcatraz Lesson Plans

TITLE: Planning a Field Trip to Alcatraz

GRADE LEVELS: 4 Through 12

SUBJECT AREA(S): Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, Visual Arts

OVERVIEW: Alcatraz is one of the landmarks that identifies San Francisco and is a major contributor to San Francisco's economy, with more visitors a year than any other national park in the United States. Many of these visitors are young people in school groups from as far away as Sacramento. And, as field trips go, Alcatraz is easily the most memorable. The history of the island is rich enough to study for an entire semester and lends itself to fourth, fifth, eighth, eleventh and twelfth-grade curriculum.

This lesson will help teachers prepare a field trip to Alcatraz, including reserving tickets, booking a docent, accessing pre- and post-trip learning activities and materials, and assigning meaningful follow-through projects. Teachers will be able to use the KQED Web site to generate interest in learning more about the history of Alcatraz.

First, the setting is glorious -- cold but glorious. Located in the very middle of San Francisco Bay, it can only be reached by ferry. The ride over to the island, the sheer thrill of being on water, with the wind and spray in your face, and feeling a little bit of FEAR, set the visitor up for something exciting and possibly a little dangerous. Alcatraz has head-spinning views, starting with the Golden Gate, both the inlet and the bridge, and San Francisco, with its countless attractions, including Coit Tower, the Transamerica Pyramid and Fisherman's Wharf. Then, there is the seemingly endless stretch of the bay itself, reaching about 60 miles, all the way south to San Jose. Continuing the circle, we see the San Francisco Bay Bridge towering over Yerba Buena Island and, beyond it, Oakland; Richardson Bay; Sausalito; the Marin Headlands; and, close by, Angel Island.

The first close-up view of Alcatraz is intimidating because it really is a rock topped by the rotting old prison where visitors can walk and sit in cells once occupied by the likes of Al Capone or the Birdman of Alcatraz. The staff of tour guides includes not only naturalists and historians but even ex-prisoners or retired guards, who can give first-person perspectives on their stay in the toughest prison in the U.S. penal system. Walking around the island, the visitor also notices painted slogans and reworked signs, the remnants of an occupation, or sit-in, by American Indian activists that lasted for 19 months and was

**OVERVIEW
(continued):**

responsible for legislation resulting in Indian sovereignty on tribal lands.

Book your seats on the Blue & Gold Ferry early in the year so your visit can coincide with your curriculum schedule. Background information is available on a number of videos and Web sites, but having your students visit the **Lonely Island: Hidden Alcatraz** Web site is a perfect way to generate interest and create an excellent pre-learning activity that can lead to research reports, oral presentations and artwork.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will understand the geological background of Alcatraz.
- Students will gain a deeper understanding of the beauties and dangers of nature.
- Students will understand the historical significance of Alcatraz.
- Students will find information, write, prepare projects and speak on the things they see and hear on the island.

**CALIFORNIA STATE
STANDARDS:**

Grade 4

Language Arts

All language arts entries are from **Representative Content Standards and Instructional Connections for the Language Arts**.

Writing:

2.1 Write narratives that relate ideas, observations, or recollections of an event or experience; provide a context; use sensory details; and provide insight.

Listening and Speaking:

2.1 Make narrative presentations that relate ideas, observations, or recollections about events and provide a context and insight.

Science

Earth Sciences:

5. Waves, wind, water, and ice shape and reshape Earth's land surface. As a basis for understanding this concept:
a. Students know some changes in the earth are due to slow processes, such as erosion, and some changes are due to rapid processes, such as landslides, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes.

**CALIFORNIA STATE
STANDARDS
(continued):**

Grade 4
(continued)

Social Studies/History

4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California.

4.1.5 Use maps, charts, and pictures to describe how communities in California vary in land use, vegetation, wildlife, climate, population density, architecture, services, and transportation.

Visual Arts

5.3 Construct diagrams, maps, graphs, timelines, and illustrations to communicate or tell a story about a historical event.

Grade 5

Science

Earth Sciences:

Shaping Earth's Surface

2. Topography is reshaped by the weathering of rock and soil and by the transportation and deposition of sediment. As a basis for understanding this concept:

a. Students know water running downhill is the dominant process in shaping the landscape, including California's landscape.

Visual Arts

2.1 Use one-point perspective to create the illusion of space.

2.6 Use perspective in an original work of art to create a real or imaginary scene.

Grade 6

Language Arts

Writing:

1.2 Create multiple-paragraph expository compositions. Engage the reader, state a clear purpose, develop the topic, and conclude with a detailed summary.

Visual Arts:

2.1 Use various observational drawing skills to depict a variety of subject matter.

2.2 Apply the rules of two-point perspective in creating a thematic work of art.

2.3 Create a drawing, using varying tones, shades, and intensities.

2.6 Use technology to create original works of art.

Grade 7

Language Arts

Writing:

1.6 Create documents by using word-processing skills and publishing programs. Develop simple databases and spreadsheets to manage information and prepare reports.

**CALIFORNIA STATE
STANDARDS**

(continued):

- Grade 7
(continued) **Visual Arts**
2.5 Create an original work of art, using film, photography,
computer graphics, or video.
- Grade 8 **Social Studies/History**
8.3.6 Describe the basic law-making process and how the
Constitution provides numerous opportunities for citizens to
participate in the political process and to monitor and influence
government (e.g., function of elections, political parties,
interest groups).
- Grades 9-12 **Visual Arts**
5.2 Create a work of art that communicates a cross-cultural
or universal theme taken from literature or history.
- Grades 10-11 **Language Arts**
Reading:
2.3 Generate relevant questions about reading on issues
that can be researched.
- Writing:
1.3 Use clear research questions and suitable research
methods to elicit and present evidence from primary and
secondary sources.
2.3 Write expository compositions, including analytical
essays and research reports.
- Technology**
1.8 Design and publish documents by using advanced
publishing software and graphic programs.
- Grades 11-12 **Language Arts**
Listening and Speaking:
1.6 Use logical, ethical, and emotional appeals that enhance
a specific tone and purpose.

TIME: Two to four class periods

**MATERIALS
AND TEACHER
PREP:**

- Bookmark the following Web sites:
Lonely Island: Hidden Alcatraz:
<http://www.kqed.org/alcatraz/>
The National Park Service Web site:
<http://www.nps.gov/alca/>

**MATERIALS
AND TEACHER
PREP**

(continued):

The Blue & Gold Ferry Web site for ticket and schedule information:

<http://www.blueandgoldfleet.com/abcsc.html>

The official Alcatraz Web site:

<http://www.nps.gov/alcatraz/>

(includes links to the works of anthropologist Troy Johnson and other American-Indian links)

- Video, **Lonely Island: Hidden Alcatraz**
General history of Alcatraz

- Video, **Alcatraz Is Not an Island**
(optional for older grade levels)
90-minute video detailing the American-Indian Movement (AIM) occupation of 1969

- Three or four 35mm, 36-shot disposable cameras

- One large and one small map of the San Francisco Bay. Make one copy of smaller map for each student

- Photographs, posters, drawings and paintings of the San Francisco Bay placed around the classroom

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

- Show a map of the San Francisco Bay Area and, with students, trace the shoreline of the bay, from the northern headland of the Golden Gate south to San Jose and back up the southern headland. Tell students that this is the largest natural bay in the world. Ask what they know about the bay. Write responses on chart paper or chalkboard. (Make sure items such as size, cities on the bay, islands, fog and ocean get on the list.) Students can write the same information on their own maps. Be sure to have students create a color key in a box on the lower right-hand corner of their maps.

- Look at the photographs and posters of the Golden Gate and Alcatraz and ask students to identify their location on the bay. Students can label these sites on their copies of the map.

FOCUS FOR VIEWING:

- Prepare chart paper with three columns labeled "K," "W" and "L." Ask students what they know about Alcatraz and write responses on the chart paper in the "K" column. Next, ask them what they **w**ant to know about Alcatraz and write responses in the "W" column. Divide students into groups based on the number of students and the number of "W" responses.

VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

- While watching the videotapes **Alcatraz Is Not an Island** and **Lonely Island: Hidden Alcatraz**, have students take notes on anything they see that might answer any of their “W” questions. Ask them to be sure to write down anything they don’t understand or that they think needs more clarification or further study.

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

- Have students identify what they learned and write their responses in the “L” column of the KWL chart. Add information to the KWL chart as it comes up. Ask if there are more questions for the “W” column and record them on the chart. Draw a line to separate pre- from post-viewing information.
- With students, identify and make a list of “must sees,” the places and things they really need to see on their field trip.
- If you have time and access to a computer lab or several student computers, print the list of Web sites, distribute to students, and let each select a site to browse for information that might answer his or her question(s).
- Gather as many disposable 35 mm cameras as possible. Costco sells four for \$8. Tell the students they will be sharing a camera with several other students and will have the opportunity to take pictures on the trip. Discuss and demonstrate use of the cameras. For each camera, make a list of the students who will be using it, in an agreed-upon order. Tape the list to the back of the camera. On the day of the trip, students will pass the cameras around and take their prearranged number of pictures. Collect all of the cameras before students disembark and take them immediately to be developed, probably at teacher expense, unless funds can be secured from the PTA, site monies, a student collection or parent donations
- Prepare materials for the actual field trip. If students have the skills, they can help prepare the following:
 - Pocket-size sketch pads
 - Map of Alcatraz for each student
 - Student tour guide booklets, printed from the National Park Service Web site
 - Name tags (maybe in the shape of an island for younger children)
 - A field trip slip with a drawing or a computer-generated trip slip with an image from one of the web sites. If there will be no docent available for your trip, notify students and parents that they will need \$5 to rent a headphone tour guide.
 - List of items needed for the trip, including appropriate clothing and a hearty, healthy lunch
 - Optional: flora and fauna guide and geological information guide from the Alcatraz official Web site.

TAKING THE FIELD TRIP:

If you have a docent, the class will move around the island in a group; if not, parent-led groups may be sent out with the guidebooks or you can lead the tour using headphones for information. Also, make sure that students take their three or four pictures and share the cameras. Collect the cameras as you leave the ferry.

Activities

- When the pictures have been developed, pass them out to the students. Have younger students write captions for the photos. Older students can write poems or essays, using prompts such as What is in the background? Describe the weather. What is happening in the photo? What did you try to capture? What were you thinking about when you took the picture?
- Art activities: Have students create photographs, drawings, paintings and/or posters.
- Writing activities: Have students produce a research paper, first-person narrative, biographical incident, story or poetry. Topics may include the prison, prisoners, escapes, the role of Alcatraz in the Civil War, the Circle of Gold, the lighthouse, the AIM occupation, or any of their "W" questions.

Extensions

- Service learning: Have students create a project to fix up an area of the school the way the families did on Alcatraz.
- Have students make a model of the bay.
- Ask students to find incidences of Alcatraz in the movies.
- Access the Library of Congress Web site, www.loc.gov, and visit the following areas: "For Teachers," "Lesson Plans," "Reservation Controversies" and "Treaties." The last two sites are excellent lessons for a class with Internet access. "Treaties" lists all the major treaties, when they were signed and when they were broken.
- Help students prepare a presentation to be called "Alcatraz: Hidden Island No Longer." Students may create poster boards, charts, graphs and essays based on their research. A topic list should be made with students based on their notes, the KWL, their photographs and sketches.