SECTION 4: 1796 – 1825
AMERICAN DETROIT

INTRODUCTION:
This unit helps third grade students understand the life and culture in Detroit after the Americans took control of the settlement in 1796, though its involvement in the War of 1812. This unit includes a comprehensive background essay, as well as three lesson plans. The lesson plans include viewing and analyzing primary sources such as photographs and narratives. The unit includes a list of additional resources and copies of worksheets and primary sources needed for the lessons.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:
• Who were key early Detroiter, and how did their actions help the city of Detroit grow and develop?
• What can we learn about the Great Fire of 1805 through a structured study of primary sources?
• Was American General William Hull, who surrendered Detroit to the British during the War of 1812, guilty or innocent of treason and cowardice?

MICHIGAN GLCES – GRADE THREE

Social Studies:
• H3 – History of Michigan Through Statehood
  o 3-H3.0.1 – Identify questions historians ask in examining the past in Michigan.
  o 3-H3.0.2 – Explain how historians use primary and secondary sources to answer questions about the past.
  o 3-H3.0.3 – Describe the causal relationships between three events in Michigan’s past.
  o 3-H3.0.8 – Use case studies or stories to describe how the ideas or actions of individuals affected the history of Michigan.

English Language Arts:
• Reading:
  o R.CM.03.01 – Connect personal knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in text through oral and written responses.
  o R.CM.03.02 – Retell in sequence the story elements of grade-level narrative text and major idea(s) and relevant details of grade-level informational text.
• Writing:
  o W.PR.03.02 – Apply a variety of pre-writing strategies for both narrative and informational writing in order to generate, sequence, and structure ideas.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
Students will:
• Understand the role selected individuals played in the development and growth of Detroit.
• List the characteristics and personal values needed to be an influential leader in the community.
• Understand the historical beginnings of Detroit chronologically and in a specific time frame.
• Learn the definition of a primary source.
BACKGROUND ESSAY:

The Great Fire of 1805

The community of traders, farmers, tradesmen, and families at the edge of the Detroit River grew to almost 500 people during the 1700s. In 1802, Territorial Governor St. Clair incorporated Detroit as a town with five Trustees to make laws, levy taxes, and keep order. John Askin, a successful fur trader who owned a vast shipping fleet, was one of the first trustees. Detroit was scheduled to become the capital city of the newly formed Michigan Territory on July 1, 1805.

Just as Detroit’s future looked promising, a terrible disaster occurred – the Great Fire of 1805. The baker was in his stable and he knocked ashes from his pipe. It was a hot, windy day at the river’s edge, and the wind blew the hot ashes into a pile of hay and fanned the flames until both the barn and the bakery were ablaze. The alarm sounded and Detroit’s only fire engine arrived. Townspeople formed bucket brigades, but they could not stop the brisk wind from spreading the fire.

Many citizens frantically gathered their animals, loaded up their most prized possessions, and fled through the gates of the town. In just six hours, by three o’clock, nothing was left where the houses once stood but a blanket of ashes, with black chimneys rising up through the smoke. Only Fort Lernoult, on the hill above the city, and one warehouse at the river was spared. A century of community growth was destroyed.

Some people moved across the river to Sandwich (Windsor), Ontario or to other nearby towns. But almost two thirds stayed nearby. In just three weeks William Hull, the new Michigan Territorial governor, planned to arrive. Many townspeople decided to wait for his advice and make plans to rebuild the city.

One of the Governor’s officials, Judge Augustus Woodward, argued that the old city was badly planned, and should not be rebuilt again. He had just come from Washington, D.C., a city with a street plan based on Paris, France. He offered to create a new city design based on the hexagon with diagonal roads radiating out from the city’s center. He promised property to the townspeople if they agreed to wait for a survey to design the new plan. They agreed to the plan. Among these citizens were the first African American property owners in the city.

As the new city was constructed, the complete hexagonal design of Woodward’s survey became too complex. The City was still designed around three main diagonal spokes - Gratiot, Michigan and Grand River Avenue - which remain major thoroughfares of Detroit today. Grand Circus Park, in downtown Detroit, is another piece of Woodward’s plan.

In just 14 years, the population of Detroit doubled and the city was rebuilt, with broader streets and more brink buildings. New industries – fishing, lumber, textiles, gristmills, and breweries begin to do business. Steamboats transported passengers all over the Great Lakes. The new City of Detroit would become very important to the history of Michigan.
The War of 1812

In the midst of Detroit’s rebirth, conflict was brewing between the United States and England. The British were fighting the French in the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, and the tensions effected the new United States of America. There were several reasons why America declared war on England in 1812. A few of the more important reasons included:

- The British had been stopping American ships from trading with their enemy, France, by passing trade restrictions. The Americans said the restrictions were illegal under international law, but the British continued to stop trade.
- The British were boarding American merchant vessels, kidnapping crew members and forcing them to fight for the British in the war. Britain claimed that the crew members they grabbed were not American citizens because they had been born in England. However, several Americans had been pressed into service for Britain.
- The British were helping the Native Americans in the Northwest Territory, who wanted to push the Americans out of the land they considered theirs.

The United States government knew that their forts and settlements in the Northwest Territory, including Detroit, were threatened by the British, who were supporting Native American raids. The governor of Michigan Territory at the time was William Hull, who had few soldiers to defend against a British invasion or attacks by Native American tribes. President James Madison ordered an army to be sent to protect Fort Detroit.

Madison also appointed William Hull to the rank of brigadier general, and set him in charge of moving the new army from Ohio to Detroit. He took command of three regiments of Ohio militia led by Colonels Lewis Cass, Duncan McArthur, and James Findlay. As they moved north to Detroit, they were joined by Lieutenant Colonel James Miller’s 4th US Infantry.

While Hull and the troops were moving north to Detroit, war was officially declared. Unfortunately, Hull did not receive word of the declaration, and he sent a ship ahead of him filled with his dispatches, personal correspondence, medical supplies and sick soldiers. However, the British in Canada knew that war had been declared and they captured the ship off Fort Malden as it attempted to enter the Detroit River.

When he reached Detroit on July 5, 1812, Hull’s troops gained an additional 140 Michigan militia members, which brought his force to around 2,200 men. Though short on food and supplies, Hull was commanded to cross the river and strike against Fort Malden and Amherstburg. However, when they went to move on July 12, several of Hull’s soldiers refused to serve outside of the United States. As a result, he stopped his advance, even though his smaller force would have outnumbered the British, which had only 300 soldiers and 400 Native Americans.

Hull heard that a group of British and Native Americans were attacking forts north of Detroit. He feared that a large number of Native American warriors would attack Detroit from the north. He decided to attack Fort Malden on August 6, but he changed his mind and ordered American soldiers back to Detroit on August 8. He also was concerned about running out of necessary food and supplies, since the supply lines to the south were under attack by British and Native American forces.

Hull spent early August trying to re-open his supply lines, but was not successful. Meanwhile, more British troops were arriving at Fort Malden. Major General Isaac Brock, the commander for Upper Canada, moved troops across Lake Erie from Niagara. He arrived at Amherstburg on August 13 and met with Shawnee leader Tecumseh. They instantly became allies against the Americans. With a combined force of 730 soldiers and 600 warriors, the British army was still smaller than the American troops in Detroit.
Brock read through the documents and dispatches that had been captured from Hull’s ship. He then knew the details about the size and condition of Hull’s army. Brock also learned that Hull was deeply afraid of an attack by Native Americans. Playing on this fear, he wrote a letter to other British commanders that that asked them to stop sending Native Americans to Amherstburg because they already had 5,000. This letter, which was a lie, was allowed to fall into American hands.

Shortly thereafter, Brock sent Hull a letter demanding his surrender. Part of the letter stated: “The force at my disposal authorizes me to require of you the immediate surrender of Fort Detroit. It is far from my intention to join in a war of extermination, but you must be aware, that the numerous body of Indians who have attached themselves to my troops, will be beyond control the moment the contest commences…”

Brock continued to deceive Hull by ordering the militia to put on the extra uniforms that belonged to the British army. In addition, Brock had soldiers light individual campfires and conducted several marches to make British force appear larger. These efforts undermined Hull’s weakening confidence.

On August 15, Brock attacked Fort Detroit using canons on the east bank of the river. The next day, Brock and Tecumseh crossed the river with the intention of blocking the American supply lines and laying siege to the fort. Brock was forced to change these plans when he learned that Hull had dispatched Colonels MacArthur and Cass with 400 men to re-open communications to the south.

Rather than be caught between this force and the fort, Brock moved to assault Fort Detroit from the west. As his men moved, Tecumseh repeatedly marched his warriors through a gap in the forest as they emitted loud war cries. This movement led the Americans to believe that the number of warriors present was much larger than there actually was. As the British approached, a ball from one of the canons hit the officer’s mess in Fort Detroit, killing four people. Fearing a massacre, Hull began negotiating a surrender of the fort and town.

During the siege and surrender of Detroit, seven Americans were killed and 2,493 were captured by the British. The local Michigan militia was permitted to return home, but the American army soldiers were taken to Quebec as prisoners.

The loss of Detroit was an embarrassing defeat for the Americans. As a result, the war’s situation in the Northwest deteriorated. Americans could no longer anticipate a triumphant march into Canada. Fort Detroit remained in British hands for over a year until being re-taken by Major General William Henry Harrison in the fall of 1813.

LESSON 1: PROFILES OF INFLUENTIAL DETROITERS

Materials Used:
- Data Element:
  - DE 4.1 – Profiles of Influential Detroiters
- Worksheet:
  - WS 4.1: Profiles of Influential Detroiters

Lesson Sequence:
1. Explain to the students that they will be learning about a few important early Detroiters. People are what make history real and exciting. By learning about these people, they will gain a sense of early life in Detroit and how early Detroiters coped.
2. Hold a brainstorming session. Ask the students what they remember about some of the important events in Detroit’s history (e.g. Great Fire of 1805, founding of the city in 1701, etc.) Write their answers on the board in the appropriate place on a timeline.

3. Then, explain that this study of important Detroiter will include people who made a difference after the Americans took control of the city in 1796 to 1837. Some questions that can help students recall events during that time period are:
   a. When was Detroit involved in wars? And why?
   b. What major disaster destroyed the whole village of Detroit?
   c. Under what circumstances did the British take control of Detroit for the second time?

4. Explain that people were involved in these events who assumed leadership and responsibility. Ask your students to name important Detroiter from this time period and write their names on the board. Examples can include General Anthony Wayne, Lewis Cass, and any of the Detroit mayors.

5. Distribute copies of DE 4.1: Profiles of Influential Detroiter. Divide the class into five or more groups. Assign each group one of the biographies.

6. Ask each group to read their biography and complete the worksheet. The sheet contains the following questions:
   a. What did he contribute to Detroit’s growth?
   b. What important events happened during his lifetime?
   c. What are his major accomplishments?
   d. What characters did he possess that made him a leader?

7. One by one, have each group present their report on their influential Detroiter.

8. Hold a class discussion. Ask the students:
   a. What are the personal characteristics that made these individuals leaders in their community?
   b. Are these characteristics important for leaders today?
   c. What can you learn about being a leader from reading about these Detroiter?

### LESSON 2: The Great Fire of 1805

#### Materials Used:
- Data Elements:
  - DE 4.2: Painting: 1805 Detroit Fire
  - DE 4.3: Newspaper Account of the 1805 Fire
  - DE 4.4: Letter: General William Hull
  - DE 4.5: Detroit Street Plan, 1807
- Pencils and paper

#### Lesson Sequence:
1. Explain to the students that they will be using primary sources to learn about the Great Fire of 1805. A primary source is a document or image that was created during the time that an event occurred. Examples of primary sources include newspapers, photographs, paintings, letters and diaries.

2. Tell the students that today they will be studying primary sources about the Great Fire of 1805. Give an overview of the fire and its consequences. You can read or summarize the background essay on the fire.

3. Divide the class into pairs, and give each pair one of the primary source Data Elements (4.2 – 4.5) and a copy of WS 4.2 – Learning from Primary Sources worksheet. (NOTE: Data elements 4.3 and 4.4 include difficult vocabulary words and unconventional sentence structure. Students with these documents may require additional help.)

4. Ask students to closely observe each primary source and write down their observations in the OBSERVE box of the worksheet. Ask them leading questions to help them see key details:
   a. What do you notice first?
   b. Find something small but interesting.
   c. What do you notice that you didn’t expect?
5. Encourage students to think about the source and write down their ideas to the following questions in the REFLECT box of the worksheet:
   a. Where do you think this came from?
   b. Why do you think somebody made this?
   c. What do you think was happening when this was made?
   d. Who do you think was the audience for this item?
   e. What tool was used to create this?
   f. Why do you think this item is important?
   g. If someone made this today, what would be different?
   h. What can you learn from examining this?

6. Have students write down questions that they can’t find answers to by looking at their primary source in the QUESTION box. Encourage them to use the 5 Ws and an H to form their questions. For example:

7. Have the student pairs trade primary sources with other groups to see if they can find answers to their questions in a different document. Explain that historians have to look at many different primary sources to understand an event in the past.

8. If time and resources permit, have the students look for more answers in secondary sources, like textbooks and library books.

**LESSON 3: You Be the Judge: The Surrender of Detroit**

**Materials Used:**

- Data Elements:
  - DE 4.6: Chart: Four Reasons for the War of 1812
  - DE 4.7: Essay: The Surrender of Detroit
  - DE 4.8: Account: General William Hull
  - DE 4.9: Account: Colonel Lewis Cass
  - DE 4.10: Account: Secretary of War William Eustis
  - DE 4.11: Account: Major-General Isaac Brock
  - DE 4.12: Account: Detroit Villager Henri Dubois

- Worksheet:
  - WS 4.3: What's the Big Idea?

- Pencils and paper

**Lesson Sequence:**

1. Explain to the students that America had a second war with the British, not long after the American Revolution. This war is called the War of 1812, but it lasted for about two years - from 1812 to 1814.
2. Use DE 4.6: Chart: Four Reasons for the War of 1812 to help the students understand why the war was fought.
3. Explain that Detroit was an important place during the War of 1812. It was in America’s control, but the British wanted to capture it very badly. Explain that the fort at Detroit was controlled by an American General named William Hull. During the war, General Hull surrendered Detroit to the British. He was later put on trial by the Army for treason (betraying the government) and cowardice. Explain that they will spend time today learning about the surrender of Detroit by reading about the trial. Then, as a class, they will have to decide whether or not they think General Hull was guilty.
4. Break the class into five groups. Give each group DE 4.7: Essay: The Surrender of Detroit. Review together as a class so that each group is familiar with what happened during the surrender.
5. Next, give each group one of the account documents (DE 4.8 to DE 4.12), and WS 4.3: What’s the Big Idea? Explain that each document represents the point of view of an important American during Hull's trial. Some people clearly thought he was guilty. Other people thought he was innocent.
6. Have each group read their document together. Using the worksheet, they should summarize their person's point of view. They will use the worksheet to create a brief presentation that summarizes the main reasons for the person's point of view.

7. Once all the groups have completed their worksheet and prepared their statements, have each group present their person's point of view to the class.

8. Once everyone has presented, lead a class discussion:
   - Who do you think had the strongest point of view?
   - What were some of the key reasons that people felt Hull was guilty?
   - What are some of the key reasons that people felt Hull was innocent?

9. As a class, take a vote: Was Hull guilty or innocent?

10. Explain to the class that the original trial found Hull guilty. He was sentenced to death. Fortunately, President James Monroe pardoned him and he was not killed.

11. Conclude the lesson by explaining that they just participated in an activity similar to a trial in a court. In a trial, the judge and jury listen to several people's points of view, and use that information to make decisions about a defendant's guilt or innocence.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:


LINKS


