SECTION 5: 1825 – 1865
BOOMTOWN DETROIT

INTRODUCTION:
This unit helps third grade students understand the social, cultural and economic changes that occurred in Detroit in the second quarter of the 19th century. This unit includes a comprehensive background essay on Detroit between 1825 and 1865, as well as three lesson plans. The lesson plans include viewing and analyzing primary sources such as maps, objects and narratives. The unit includes a list of additional resources and copies of worksheets and primary sources needed for the lessons.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:
• What did Detroit look like and how did it change between 1825 and 1865?
• Who were the different ethnic groups that came to Detroit in the 19th century, when did they arrive and where did they live?
• What role did Detroit and Detroiters play in the Underground Railroad?

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 effected the history of Michigan.
• G4 – Human Systems
  o 3-G4.0.2 – Describe diverse groups that have come into a region of Michigan and the reasons why they came.

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.GN.03.01 – Write a cohesive narrative piece such as a fable, folktale, or realistic fiction using personification, setting, actions and thoughts that reveal important information.
  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.
  o W.PR.03.03 – Draft focused ideas in written compositions using multiple sentences and paragraphs to slow down or speed up reading: including varying patterns and/or organizational text structures.
In the mid-1800s, Detroit was on the verge of becoming an industrial city. Copper, iron ore and lumber replaced fur as the key exports. Detroit was the perfect location for raw materials to be brought for manufacturing. Detroiter took
advantage of the dense forests of white pine which covered much of the Lower Peninsula. Lumber was brought as logs to Detroit where it was then sent to sawmills to make boards. The boards were used to make wagons, carriages, ships and furniture. Copper and iron ore from the Upper Peninsula were brought to refineries in Detroit, where they were made into products like wheels, rail tracks, rail cars, stoves, pots, wire, or furnaces.

A variety of other products were made in Detroit. Tobacco was processed into cigars and pipe tobacco. Pharmaceutical drugs were manufactured. Hybrid seeds were produced and packaged. Flour was milled, and beer was brewed.

**The Underground Railroad in Detroit**

A few free African Americans lived in Detroit and owned property in the early 1800s. Detroit and all of Michigan was a free state by the mid-1800s. Many abolitionists (people working against slavery) lived in Michigan. There were free African Americans, Catholics, New England Protestants, Quakers and people of many backgrounds. They provided support to African Americans who decided to leave enslavement and seek their freedom in the north.

In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Laws passed in the nation’s capital. They said that runaway enslaved people could be captured and returned to slavery. Many free African Americans living in the north faced being returned to the south as slaves, and greedy bounty hunters tried to make money by hunting runaways. Detroit was just across the river from Canada, which outlawed slavery in 1819. Many refugees came through Detroit as their last stop on their way to Canada, where they could not be caught and sent back to slavery.

Runaways stayed in several Detroit area locations, including Seymour Finney’s barn at Griswold and State Streets. It was a livery stable, but many fugitives stayed there until dark when they were taken to the river to cross into Canada. Another place to hide was the Second Baptist Church at Monroe and Beaubien Streets, which was built in 1856. This was the first African American church in Detroit. It was founded in the 1830s. Many members were formerly enslaved, and they were eager to help others to freedom. There were also several safe houses in the outskirts of the city.

Many people formed groups which participated in the Underground Railroad and fought to change slavery laws. One group was called the Convention of Colored Citizens of Detroit. The members were free African Americans, white abolitionists, and Quakers.

There were several individuals who were active in the Underground Railroad. William Lambert was manager and treasurer of the Underground Railroad station in Detroit. He was also a member of the Convention of Colored Citizens of Detroit. Lambert was a free African American from New Jersey who came to Detroit at age 18. He was quite wealthy, after opening a successful tailor shop in downtown Detroit. He used his money to fund abolitionist groups. He helped to free thousands of enslaved people by hiding them in his house and arranging for their transport at night. He sometimes created diversions for slave catchers and authorities while freedom seekers escaped across the river to Canada.

One of Lambert’s closest friends, George De Baptiste, was also an important abolitionist. De Baptiste grew up in Virginia. He worked in the White House for a period and was said to have been a close friend of President Harrison. He was in the clothing and catering business in Detroit. He was a leader and active supporter of the Underground Railroad in Detroit. He also helped thousands escape to Canada.

Another abolitionist was William Webb, a free black. He was a grocer from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He raised funds for escaped enslaved people to build new lives in Canada. Mr. Webb often held meetings for important leaders in the abolitionist movement at his house on East Congress Street. William Lambert, George De Baptiste, John Brown and Frederick Douglass had a famous meeting at Webb’s house in 1859. At this meeting, they planned to fight for freedom of enslaved people at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia.
Conclusion
By the mid-1800s, the busy docks along the shoreline were bustling with people. Some were busy unloading logs into sawmills or iron ore into refineries. Others were loading finished goods into shops bound for eastern cities. Still others were getting off steamboats with the hopes of finding a better life. From the shore, goods traveled in and out of the city by new railroads or by horse and carriage.

Streets were lined with shops and businesses from millineries to printers to bakers. There were also factories that made shoes, cigars, glassware, packaged seeds, and stoves. Mueller’s Confectioner and Ice Cream Saloon served sweet treats and Conklin’s Watches and Jewelry repaired necklaces and other items.

LESSON 1: DETROIT BECOMES A CITY

Materials Used:
• Data Elements:
  o DE 5.1: Narrative: Silas Beebe
  o DE 5.2: Narrative: Mrs. Stewart
  o DE 5.3: Photos: Detroit Streets, ca. 1860s
  o DE 5.4: Narrative: Mr. Palmer
  o DE 5.5: Graphs: Ethnicity and Population
  o DE 5.6: Photo: Railroad Depot
  o DE 5.7: Map: 1830s Detroit
  o DE 5.8: Painting: A View of Detroit, c. 1853
  o DE 5.9: Advertisement: Michigan Central Railroad
  o DE 5.10: Business Chart of Jefferson and Woodward Avenues, 1868
• Paper and pencils

Lesson Sequence:
1. Review the information students learned in previous lessons by showing various primary sources. Lead students in listing some key words on the chalkboard that characterized Detroit at that time. For example: French, British, fur trading, fort, small town, on a river, rebuilding after fire disaster, ribbon farms. Explain that they are going to learn how Detroit changed. Many of the words on the board are no longer true in the next period. They are going to find out how Detroit became different.
2. Divide students into three groups, and distribute the primary sources as follows:
   a. Group 1
      i. DE 5.1: Narrative: Silas Beebe
      ii. DE 5.6: Photo: Railroad Depot
      iii. DE 5.9: Advertisement: Michigan Central Railroad
   b. Group 2
      i. DE 5.2: Narrative: Mrs. Stewart
      ii. DE 5.3: Photo: Detroit Streets, ca. 1860s
      iii. DE 5.10: Business Chart of Jefferson and Woodward Avenues, 1868
   c. Group 3
      i. DE 5.4: Narrative: Mr. Palmer
      ii. DE 5.5: Graphs: Ethnicity and Population
      iii. DE 5.8: Painting: A View of Detroit
3. Ask the students to study the sources carefully, looking for clues of things that are different about Detroit in the 1830s-1860s compared to the earlier days. Have them look for things that might be the same. When they look at the photos, they should look at every area carefully and methodically. For example, look at the foreground first, then things farther and farther back, or divide it into sections, or read it like a book – top to bottom and left to right. List as many clues and details as they can. The other sources can be studies in a similar way. Some examples of different things include: smoke stacks, railroads, steamships, brick buildings, cigar factories, two and three floor buildings, extended riverfront docks, hundreds of businesses, large population increases, etc. Some details that are the same include: horse and carriage, forest surrounding the city, churches, and some sailboats.

4. While the students are reading, draw a Venn diagram on the board. Label one side 1700s and the other 1800s. When the students are finished reading, lead a discussion where they list the characters of Detroit during both time periods. Place them in the appropriate place in the diagram.

5. Ask students to choose some of the details on the chart and use them in a paragraph. Remind students to include a topic sentence and to write the details in complete sentences. A second paragraph could be written comparing and contrasting their lives today with Detroit in the 1830s to 1860s.

**LESSON 2: EXPLORING ETHNIC DETROIT**

**Materials Used:**
- Worksheets:
  - WS 5.1: Detroit or Bust Interview
  - WS 5.2: Detroit’s Ethnic Communities
  - WS 5.3: Detroit Neighborhoods, 2011
- Data Elements:
  - DE 5.11: Essay: Exploring Detroit’s Ethnic Heritage
  - DE 5.13: Map: Detroit Neighborhoods, 1904

**Lesson Sequence:**

**Before the Lesson**
1. A day or two before you intend to deliver this lesson, explain that the metropolitan Detroit area is made up of people from many different places and ethnic groups. Some arrived here centuries ago, and others arrived as recently as last week. Ask the students if they know when and from where their family first came to the Detroit area.
2. Distribute the “Detroit or Bust” worksheet, and ask the students to complete it by interviewing their family.

**Day of the Lesson**
1. On the day of the lesson, begin by discussing the students’ results from their “Detroit or Bust” interview.
2. Using information from the discussion, develop a class chart displaying when, where, and why their families came to Detroit.
3. Ask what ethnic groups came to Detroit during its history. Review should include groups such as Native Americans, French, British, African Americans, Eastern Europeans, Arab Americans, Asians, and Latin Americans.
5. Divide the students into small groups and distribute the “Detroit Ethnic Communities“ chart to each group. Have the students work in their groups to study the articles and complete the chart.
6. Have the class discuss the information they compiled on their worksheets.
7. Have the groups create a Detroit Metropolitan area map showing major locations of various ethnic groups.

Extension Activities:
1. Have the students create an artifact box for one of the Detroit ethnic groups. They should collect data, articles, images and objects that reflect the ethnic group. These could include pictures of food, clothing, musical instruments, cultural artifacts, or other appropriate artifacts. Have the students share their projects with the class.
2. Conduct an ethnic festival day for parents by having students select various groups to celebrate through dress, food and music.
3. Invite ethnic dance groups to perform for your students or school.
4. Create a patchwork quilt of Detroit's historic ethnic groups.

LESSON 3: DETROIT AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Materials Used:
- Data Elements
  - DE 5.14: Photo: William Lambert
  - DE 5.15: Photo: Finney’s Barn
  - DE 5.16: Illustration: Underground Railroad Routes in Michigan
  - DE 5.17: Article: The Detroit Tribune: Freedom’s Railway
- Pencils and Paper

Lesson Sequence:
1. Show the picture of William Lambert and Finney’s Barn. Ask the students what the African American tailor and the barn have in common. Students will most likely not know. Explain that one photo is of William Lambert, who was a prominent resident of Detroit from 1840s until the 1890s when he died. The other photo is of Seymour Finney’s barn. Explain that the two images have something very important in common: they were both involved in the Underground Railroad.
2. Explain that Detroit was an important part of the Underground Railroad. Many thousands of enslaved African Americans passed through Detroit. Ask the students why they think Detroit was important to the Underground Railroad. Show the map of the Underground Railroad routes in Michigan. Discuss how many routes led to Detroit and how close Detroit is to Canada, which didn’t allow slavery.
3. Explain that the map and Finney’s barn are well known today as part of the Underground Railroad, but in the 1840s and 50s, only certain people knew this information. Ask them why they think this was. Discuss how the Underground Railroad was a secret operation. Folks who ran the “Railroad“ were in danger of being arrested for helping enslaved people to freedom. They spoke in secret codes and passwords, and used special handshakes to identify themselves to others in the Railroad.
4. Explain that many years after slavery had ended, William Lambert gave an interview about his and Detroit’s part in the Underground Railroad. He told what some of those special handshakes and passwords were. Pass out DE 5.17: Article: The Detroit Tribune: Freedom’s Railway and ask students to practice the secret code and handshake which appear in bold type.
5. Ask students to brainstorm questions (as a class or in groups) they would ask William Lambert if they could interview him about the Underground Railroad in Detroit. Ask students to read the Lambert interview in full and write down any answers they find to their questions and any other interesting information.

6. Discuss the questions and answers as a whole class. Some sample questions could include:
   a. How did the refugees from slavery travel without getting caught?
   b. What were the steps of a journey from Southern slavery through Detroit to freedom in Canada?
   c. What forms of transportation were used to move the slaves?

7. Ask students to write a story of a journey from slavery to freedom through Detroit. It should be in first person and tell the journey from a place of slavery all the way to Canada. It should include some elements they learned from William Lambert, such as secret handshakes, the McKinseyites, stops at stations, forms of transportation used at different parts of the journey, and the feelings and hardships of the refugees along the way. It could be written as a diary, an interview, a letter or a story. These could be shared with the class on another day.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Books:


**Links:**


