

Nathaniel Russell House

Pre-visit Activity

Grade Level: 3

Content Area: Social Studies/South Carolina Studies, Reading/English, Language Arts, Mathematics/Geometry

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Lesson Description

This lesson will acquaint students with the house they will visit and the people who lived there. Students will also learn about life on an urban plantation, architecture as it relates to mathematics, the reasons for preservation and restoration, and the difference between primary and secondary sources.

South Carolina Curriculum Standards

Social Studies/South Carolina Studies

- 3.1 The learner will demonstrate an understanding of the way individuals, families, and communities live and work together now and in the past.
 - 3.1.1 The student should be able to state how personal changes are affected by the influence of peer groups.
 - 3.1.2 The student should be able to identify historical resources in the local community.
- 3.2.4 Explain reasons for the voluntary and involuntary settling of South Carolina by Europeans and Africans.
- 3.2.8 Discuss the development of slavery in South Carolina and its impact on the state.
- 3.5 The learner will demonstrate an understanding of government, its origins and functions, including civic life and politics.
 - 3.9.1 Make maps, globes, graphs, and photographs to illustrate spatial distribution of physical and cultural features in South Carolina.
 - 3.9.2 Use maps, globes, graphs, and photographs to illustrate spatial distribution of physical and cultural features in South Carolina.

Reading/English, Language Arts

- I.B.2 The student will set a purpose for reading
- I.B.5 The student will reread and self correct when necessary
- IV.A The student will write descriptive paragraphs.
- IV.B The student will write stories, letters, simple explanations, and short reports across all content areas.

Mathematics/Geometry

- I.A Identify, compare, and analyze attributes of two and three-dimensional shapes and develop vocabulary to describe the attributes.
- I.A.1 Using appropriate vocabulary, identify and describe attributes of polygons including triangles, quadrilaterals, pentagons, hexagons, and octagons.

Materials/Resources

Brief history of the Nathaniel Russell House

Transparencies

Procedure

Using the brief history provided discuss the Nathaniel Russell House. Show the transparencies provided in order to orient the students with the location of the house and what they will be seeing there. The transparencies are:

1. Charleston Harbor by Bishop Roberts, 1739

Tell the students that this is the city of Charleston and that it is located on a peninsula (land surrounded on three sides by water). Then place an X on the Nathaniel Russell House.

2. Nathaniel Russell House:

This house was built in 1808 for the Rhode Island born merchant Nathaniel Russell. He lived in this house with his wife and two daughters until his death. His daughter later sold the house to Governor Robert F. W. Allston in 1857. The Allston family occupied the house until 1870 when it was sold to the Sisters of Mercy of Our Lady of Charity. The house then passed to two more owners, the Mullally family and the Pelzer family, before Historic Charleston Foundation purchased the house in 1955. Today Historic Charleston Foundation runs the house as a museum open to the public.

3. Garden view of tower of the Nathaniel Russell House:

Note the different geometric shapes present in the house and tell how each room is used.

4. Dining Room:

Explain that the family would have eaten supper in this room around three o'clock in the afternoon. Tell the students that some of the different foods that the family would have eaten included rice, venison, turkey, and many different vegetables. Fruit was a delicacy and was usually served as a dessert. Also explain that the enslaved Africans who lived on the property did not eat in this fancy room. They ate in their quarters above the kitchen and stables or in the kitchen. The enslaved Africans would serve the meal to the Russell or Allston families.

5 .Oval Drawing Room:

Note the shape of the room. Identify the musical instruments in the room. Explain that ladies were expected to know how to play at least one musical instrument. Music was a very popular form of entertainment. Remember these were the days before television. This room would have been used for evening entertaining. Ladies would also have tea or coffee in this room after a dinner party while they waited for the men to join them. An African American butler or one of the footmen would have served the coffee or tea.

6. Withdrawing Room:

This room was slightly less formal than the drawing room and was also used for entertaining. During large parties both the drawing room and the withdrawing room would have been used.

Introduce the students to a few members of the Russell Family.

7. Nathaniel Russell:

The Nathaniel Russell House was built for this man and his family. He was a merchant from Rhode Island who moved to Charleston in 1765 and began amassing a huge fortune. Nathaniel Russell also helped found the New England Society and was active in several other philanthropic organizations.

8. Alicia Russell Middleton:

Eldest daughter of Nathaniel Russell, she married Arthur Middleton of Bolton plantation.

9. Reverend Theodore Dehon:

He married Sarah Russell, Nathaniel Russell's youngest daughter. He was the rector of St Michael's Church and second Episcopal Bishop of South Carolina.

Explain to the students that the Russell Family members were not the only inhabitants of the Russell House. The Russell family owned many enslaved African Americans, including Tom Russell, a talented blacksmith who participated in the Denmark Vesey slave insurrection.

10. Lydia Middleton, a slave with Charlotte Helen Middleton:

Enslaved Africans worked and lived in the Nathaniel Russell House. Their tasks would have included serving as seamstresses, laundresses, cooks, and nannies. This image is of Lydia Middleton who served as a nanny for Charlotte Helen Middleton.

Now explain to the students that the Nathaniel Russell House has been restored to return the building to its 1808 appearance. Discuss with the class the reasons why we would want to preserve and restore buildings and artifacts that existed in the past. Some of these reasons include:

- a. appreciation of the past
- b. understanding how our country was formed and how that affects our world today
- c. it is worthwhile to learn how people lived and thought in the past

Explain to the students that historians do research in order to learn about the past. These historians use two different types of sources, primary and secondary. Primary sources include:

- a. historic documents
- b. letters written by people to one another describing their experiences
- c. newspaper and magazine articles from the time period
- d. archeological discovery and examination of the site

Secondary sources include:

- a. stories that are handed down orally
- b. books and articles written from researched information

Activity

Be an historian! Do research on an historical figure from the time period (Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Henrietta Johnston, Adele Allston, Sojourner Truth, Denmark Vesey etc.) and write an essay about his/her life and tell how his/her contributions might have affected the Russells.

Nathaniel Russell House

On-site Activity

Grade Level: 3

Content Area: Social Studies/South Carolina Studies, Reading/English, Language Arts, Mathematics/Geometry

Time Required: 30 minutes

Lesson Description

At the Nathaniel Russell House students will learn about the daily lives of people of African and European descent during the early 1800s. They will also see mathematics as it applies to architecture.

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Teacher Preparation

The teacher should read over the brief history of the Nathaniel Russell House and implement the pre-visit activity. Contact Valerie Perry with Historic Charleston Foundation at (843) 805-6735 with any questions or concerns.

Procedure

The teacher will be met at the Nathaniel Russell House by a docent and the class will be given a tour of the home.

Nathaniel Russell House

Post-visit Activity

Grade Level: 3

Content Area: Social Studies/South Carolina Studies, Reading/English, Language Arts, Mathematics/Geometry

Time Required: 45 minutes

Lesson Description

This lesson will review the information the students learned while visiting the Nathaniel Russell House by answering questions, writing essays, and performing other suggested activities.

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Materials/Resources

Post-visit worksheet

Post-visit worksheet answer key

Procedure

Ask the students if they have any questions about the Nathaniel Russell House or any other part of their visit. Then hand out the question worksheet and go over the answers with the students.

Activity

Students may choose one activity or the class could be broken into groups with each group completing one activity.

1. Write an essay describing "My Favorite Part of the House"
2. Write an essay describing "What I Think my Life Would be Like as a Child in 1808"
3. Make a travel brochure to encourage other third and/or fourth grade students to visit an historical building. Include pictures, dates, uses of the building, shape, and who owned it. Convince others to want to visit.
4. Draw different figures in the playground and measure them with string, unifix cubes, or other items that can be used.
5. Develop a puppet show using the people who lived at the Nathaniel Russell House.
6. Create a postage stamp with a picture of something important that happened in the early part of the nineteenth century.
7. Trace a map of the United States and color the portions which were settled during this time period, those being explored, and develop a key for it.
8. Draw/ make a trunk and draw/ cut out the children's clothes that would have been kept in it.
9. Consider things you want to know about the Russells and make a time capsule of important things which will be opened in June when the class leaves the school.
10. Listen to some of Mozart's music since it was composed for a pianoforte. If possible obtain a tape of his music played on a pianoforte.
11. In order to demonstrate the principles of the cantilevered system, have the students stand in a circle front to back. Then have everyone sit on the lap of the person standing behind them. If everyone sits down, then the circle will remain. But if one person does not sit, then everyone will fall. The staircase in the Nathaniel Russell House is built in the same way with every stair dependent on the one beneath it.

Nathaniel Russell House

Post-visit Questions

Answer the questions using complete sentences.

1. What is the name of the engineering principle used to build the staircase in the Nathaniel Russell House?
2. What were some of the jobs performed by enslaved Africans living at the Nathaniel Russell House?
3. Where were the enslaved Africans' living quarters?
4. What is the architectural style of the house?
5. For whom was this house built?
6. What is the shape of the dining room?
7. What were some of the different foods that the Russell family would have eaten?
8. What is the shape of Mr. Russell's office?
9. Name two musical instruments that are kept in the drawing room.
10. What was your favorite room and why?

Nathaniel Russell House

Post-visit Questions Answer Key

1. What is the name of the engineering principle used to build the staircase in the Nathaniel Russell House?

The principle is called the cantilevered system.

2. What were some of the jobs performed by enslaved Africans living at the Nathaniel Russell House?

The enslaved Africans were cooks, butlers, gardeners, laundresses, etc.

3. Where were the enslaved Africans' living quarters?

They lived above the kitchen house and the stables.

4. What is the architectural style of the house?

The Nathaniel Russell House is a Federal style house.

5. For whom was this house built?

This house was built for Nathaniel Russell.

6. What is the shape of the dining room?

The dining room is an oval.

7. What were some of the different foods that the Russell family would have eaten?

The family would have eaten vegetables, meats, rice, fish, and fruits for dessert.

8. What is the shape of Mr. Russell's office?

Mr. Russell's office is a rectangle.

9. Name two musical instruments that are kept in the drawing room.

A pianoforte, a lyre, and a harp are kept in the drawing room.

10. What was your favorite room and why?