



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

National Cemetery Administration



This project was funded by a grant from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

Visiting the Santa Fe National Cemetery

Adapted from the UFC-VLP

Grades 6-12 Secondary Lesson Plan

Time: One 50 minute class period prior to the field trip, then Santa Fe National Cemetery field trip

Lesson Overview: Teaching social studies means showing how ordinary people have made a difference throughout history. Through this lesson plan on veterans, the educator will show students that these ordinary men made the ultimate sacrifice to fight and possibly die in the name of the United States of America. This lesson will help students to understand why we must remember, honor, and tell the individual stories of our veterans. Students will be analyzing several primary sources to understand this aspect of history. This lesson will develop students' historical thinking skills.

This can be a stand-alone lesson or could be part of a larger unit on World War I, II, Vietnam, etc. Cemeteries are among the most fascinating, yet often one of the most neglected sources of historical information. Students can learn a lot from studying those interred in a specific cemetery. The symbols and inscriptions found on headstones can reflect religious and cultural beliefs. While the focus is on veterans interred in the Santa Fe National Cemetery in Santa Fe, NM, this lesson plan can be adapted for any national cemetery.

Inquiry Question: Why do ordinary citizens decide to serve in the military to fight for their country and how can we honor their choice?

Relevant New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards:

- 9-12.US.55. Analyze the role of the United States in World War I.
- 9-12.WH.18. Identify significant transformative moments in world history, analyze the reasons behind their transformative nature, and explain how they continue to shape contemporary global interactions.

Required Materials:

- Teacher's choice of biographies of veterans interred in the Santa Fe National Cemetery in Santa Fe, NM. Available [here](#).
- Paper for booklets
- Drawing materials for the day of the cemetery visit

Learning Objectives: During this lesson, the students will analyze biographies of veterans interred at the Santa Fe National Cemetery in Santa Fe, NM. They will examine a veteran's history to understand their experiences. Students will create a small booklet to commemorate a specific veteran's life and contributions to society. Students will then recreate an appropriate epitaph for the veteran based on their study of the veteran. It may be helpful to reintroduce the

concepts of World War I or II. (Note: An additional day may be used for a field trip to the actual cemetery)

Key Vocabulary:

- Veteran
- Conscription
- Propaganda

Procedures:

- Historical Context: Deciding to serve in the military is a sacrifice that many made during World War I and II. It is often difficult for students to understand why a person would voluntarily choose to fight for their country. Some enlist due to a feeling of patriotism or a sense of duty to one's country. Others may join due to social or economic pressures. Some may have wanted an adventure. People were also persuaded by the many propaganda posters depicting service as being a noble cause.
- Activity 1: The teacher will remind the students about the basic events in World War I or II and the fact that we needed people to enlist and fight. Students will be introduced to several biographies of veterans interred at the cemetery and will be given document analysis sheets. Students will work in pairs to analyze the documents.
- Activity 2: Students will continue analyzing the biographies and begin to create their booklets.
- Activity 3: The teacher will explain epitaphs and show examples. Have students answer the following question: How should a person be remembered and memorialized? Discussion will follow about the importance of remembering a person's contributions no matter how big or small. Students will recreate an epitaph for the veterans they had been studying and analyzing.
- Activity 4 - Field Trip extension - Students find the grave markers of their veteran at the cemetery on the day of the field trip. A picture may be included in the booklet, but avoid posing with the headstone or any photo that may not be appropriate.
 - Ask the students to draw the scene in their booklet - the headstone, and markings or items on or around the headstone, and the surrounding environment.
 - Ask the students - Are there any indications about the life of their veteran in the national cemetery that were not included in their biography?
- Closing activity: Students will present their booklets to the class, perhaps the following day if time allows.