

Discovering Alabama

Teacher's Guide

Horse Pens 40

Suggested Curriculum Areas

History
Social Studies
Geography

Suggested Grade Levels

4–12

Key Concepts

Natural Heritage
Cultural Heritage
Growth Management

Key Skills

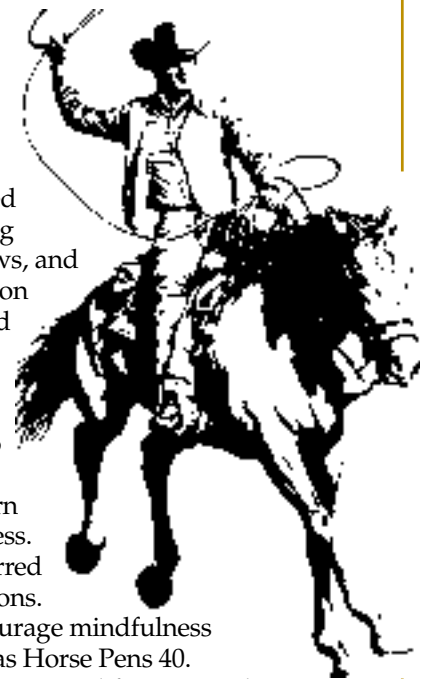
Critical Thinking
Research
Forecasting

Synopsis

Horse Pens 40 is a forty acre area of rock outcropping atop Chandler Mountain near Steele, Alabama. The site contains a unique ring of large rocks forming a natural corral or “pen” reportedly used by Indians and settlers for gathering horses. In recent decades, this privately-owned site has enjoyed popularity as a commercial attraction, offering bluegrass music festivals, arts and crafts shows, and other events. Today, it has gained new attention for promoting tourism, recreation, and related economic development in the state.

The video features the Chandler Mountain region and examines the cultural and natural values of historical Horse Pens 40. The video and this Teacher's Guide invite reflection on whether many of the popular tastes of modern society are perhaps too fast, loud, and mindless. For example, youngsters today are often referred to as the “MTV” generation, for obvious reasons. As we consider the future, it is useful to encourage mindfulness of the full heritage represented by sites such as Horse Pens 40.

Parts of the Teacher Guide may appear to oversimplify in ways that seem judgemental or presumptive. Please realize that these liberties with wording are only for effect, to help evoke comparisons and stimulate student thinking about trends in music, recreation, and other such influences in the lives of youth today.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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BOOKS-A-MILLION



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This program was produced with support from the following organizations:

Before Viewing

1. Have students listen quietly to a selection of soulful bluegrass or gospel music by a group of original, “old-style” performers. Next, play an upbeat selection of modern bluegrass/country music and invite students to clap to the rhythm, dance, shout, etc. After each song, have the students discuss any thoughts or feelings evoked by the music.

2. Explore students’ views about the musical tastes presented by the two selections. What do they think might have been the musical tastes of their grandparents or great grandparents. Do they think the musical tastes of yesteryear might be more representative of the thoughts, ideals, and values of earlier generations. Discuss which of the two musical selections might be more conducive to quiet, thoughtful reflection and which to loud, raucous activity.

3. Have students identify modern-day recreational activities that tend to invoke loud activity (such as outdoor parties with music, game events, recreational vehicle activity, etc.). List outdoor recreation sites in your area where such activities often occur. Then, ask if it might also be important to have opportunities for quiet reflection, and to maintain those aspects of our heritage (historical sites, natural areas, and even original styles of music) that are conducive to such reflection. Have the class list outdoor sites in your area that still provide for quiet recreation.

Introduce the video by explaining that it features an historical place in Alabama, which

is now trying to balance the need for recreation with the need of reverence for our past.

While Viewing

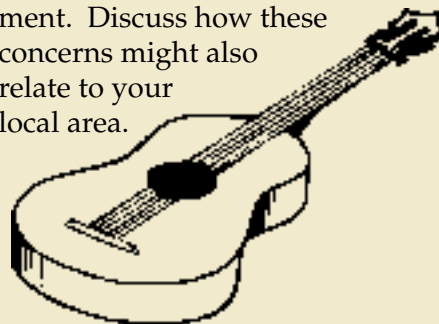
Have students watch for information about how the Chandler Mountain and the Horse Pens 40 area has changed over time, and how it might change in the future.

Video Mystery Question: On Chandler Mountain, how is the history of horses and tomatoes linked. (Answer: Horse Pens 40 and Chandler Mountain’s special tomato-growing capabilities are both a consequence of the area’s geology, which resulted in the unique rock corral at one end of the mountain and the tomato-producing region on the mountain’s lengthy plateau.)

After Viewing

1. Arrange students in small groups and allow 10–15 minutes for group discussion about the video, particularly about differing ideas or viewpoints regarding how Horse Pens 40 might be managed for the future.

2. Ask each group to report the major points and concerns about which they are most in agreement and/or in disagreement. Discuss how these concerns might also relate to your local area.



Extensions

1. Have the class contact the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel for a list of special sites and attractions in Alabama. Determine how many of these sites are near your area, and if there are significant sites that are not listed by the Bureau. Divide the class into teams and have each research a nearby site and present their findings to the class.

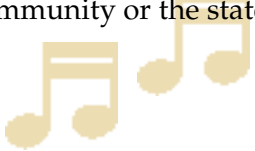
2. Invite a representative from the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel to visit the class and discuss state plans and efforts to protect the historical and natural values of sites being promoted for purposes of tourism and economic development.

Philosophical Reflections

Around the mid-1900s, the famous conservationist Aldo Leopold observed that: “To promote perception is the only truly creative part of recreational engineering.” Leopold felt that, as we develop outdoor recreation, we should be mindful that one of the highest aims of such recreation should be to promote “the perception of the natural processes by which the land and the living things upon it have achieved their characteristic forms and by which they maintain their existence.” Leopold observed instead that popular trends in recreation were increasingly becoming an extension of the same loud machines, faddish music, and other frenzied patterns of modern life from which people needed recreational escape. What do you think?

Nature in Art

Many of the lyrics of early gospel and bluegrass music are tied to themes of the lands and waters of the South. Invite a local musician to perform some of these pieces for the class or have students bring a selection of early music they feel embodies a perspective or sentiment about the natural heritage of their community or the state.



Community Connections

1. Rock outcroppings are usually interesting features to explore. Check with knowledgeable individuals to locate an outcropping near your community that is accessible and safe enough for the class to visit. In parts of central and south Alabama, the scarcity of sizable rock outcroppings may dictate a visit to an alternate feature, such as exposed geological strata in a stream bank or road-way bank. Have the class conduct a study of the selected feature, to include measuring dimensions, photographing terrain, and researching the geological history and possible historical uses of the feature.

2. Invite appropriate local officials to work with the class in developing a summary of your area's significant natural and historical features. Explore concerns and strategies for protecting these features as your area experiences or anticipates change in the future. Develop a list of protection recommendations and present these to your community leaders.

Complementary Aids and Activities

Project Wild, Activity Guide, 2d ed., grades 7–12, “Learning to Look, Looking to See” and “The Power of a Song.” Available through Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 64 N. Union St., Montgomery AL 36130; (334) 242–3623.

Project Learning Tree, Activity Guide, grades K–6, “I’d Like to Visit a Place Where.” Available through Alabama Forestry Association, 555 Alabama St., Montgomery AL 36130.

Additional References and Resources

History of Steele, Alabama, Saint Clair County (rev. ed. with Chandler Mountain supplement) by Vivian Buffington Qualls (1974).

Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold (1949).

Folksongs of Alabama by Byron Arnold (1950).

Foxfire 3: Animal Care, Banjos and Dulcimers, Hide Tanning, Summer and Fall Wild Plant Food, Butter Churns, Ginseng, and Still More Affairs of Plain Living by Elliot Wigginton (1975).

Geological Survey of Alabama, Educational Series. Available through the Geological Survey of Alabama, Publication Sales Office, P.O. Box 869999, Tuscaloosa AL 35486–9999.

Parting Thoughts

The growing popularity of Horse Pens 40, like that of other such special features in the state, leaves Alabamians facing an important question: Are we devoting sufficient effort to protecting the many non-commercial values of our cultural and natural heritage as we work so diligently to market this heritage for economic gain? For decades I’ve wondered why Alabama leaders have often failed to comprehend the attractiveness of the State’s special heritage. Today, with many leaders rushing to promote this heritage as the latest in economic development, I am left wondering whether they will now fail to comprehend the risk of eventually losing this heritage to garish growth and thoughtless change. Fortunately, those associated with Horse Pens 40 are mindful of the special values of this important part of Alabama’s heritage; such values of other important features of the state will require similar mindfulness by all caring Alabamians.

Oh yeah, I almost forgot. Many tourists find that Alabama’s best attraction is the abundance of uncrowded rural and natural areas and related opportunities for a pleasant style of life that is vanishing in other regions. A few such tourists have confided that their home region used to be similarly appealing until “promotion” of their local features resulted in numerous problems from rapid growth. We in Alabama can help avoid this outcome by encouraging awareness and a thoughtful approach.



Happy outings,

S. Deje



Discovering Alabama

Activity/Information Sheet

Horse Pens 40

Appreciating Our Heritage: A Strategy for the Future

As the video explains, the best hope for maintaining Alabama's wonderful heritage is through planning and preparing for the future. This can be challenging in an age when many kinds of change are occurring at an accelerating rate, amplified by an increasing human population and the fact that new development often brings more than the intended consequences. A new highway, for example, provides not only an additional route of travel, but also frequently invites access to unspoiled rural areas, opening them to growth and change that may diminish rural qualities.

To some people, planning for environmental quality is largely a matter of guarding human safety through the protection of food, air, and water. This perspective of environmental quality has been referred to as the "regulatory perspective," and places a chief emphasis on the technologies of managing wastes, toxins, and the various products and by-products of an expanding society. On the other hand, a "land-ethic perspective" has a more balanced concern for human well-being and for the well-being of the larger community of life, the land. This perspective was developed by Aldo Leopold, who said, "The land ethic enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land...a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow members, and

also respect for the community as such." Leopold spent much of his life teaching that environmental protection goes beyond managing litter and waste, and includes maintaining the land *organism*, as defined by natural areas, rural landscapes, native ecosystems, undeveloped streams and forests, and abundant wildlife habitat. Leopold felt that long-term environmental protection would be impossible without an abiding environmental ethic grounded in an appreciation for the land, for the wonders of our natural heritage.

Today, maintaining important aspects of our heritage, natural and cultural, is contingent upon how well we balance the increasingly complex activities and demands of society, which, at times, are in conflict with one another. For any town, county, or region, such planning begins by assessing the current situation and considering the range of options for the future by asking the general question: Where are we today and where do we want to be in the years ahead? In regard to local heritage, this general question can be pursued by exploring four areas of inquiry, each with a number of subcategories useful to a comprehensive planning effort.

I. What is the local heritage?

A. Natural Heritage

1. Identify local natural diversity
 - a. Geological setting, variations, and resources
 - b. Forest areas/types
 - c. Native plants and animals
 - d. Rivers, streams, and wetlands
2. Determine the natural history of these characteristics
 - a. Development over time
 - b. Environmental/ecological role
 - c. Role/value in supporting human society

B. Cultural Heritage

1. Explore all sources to formulate a complete cultural history of the area
 - a. Local historians, artisans, folklorists, and others with knowledge or skills related to local cultural history
 - b. Archival material, photos, history books, documents, and other historical reference material
 - c. Families established in the area for generations

II. What is the current status of local heritage?

A. Natural Heritage

1. Number and location of special features
2. List of landowners
3. Condition of each feature
4. Owner's intentions/plans for the property
5. Availability of natural history reference/educational materials
6. Public awareness of natural history

B. Cultural Heritage

1. Number and location of cultural heritage sites
2. List of owners
3. Condition of each site
4. Owner's intentions/plans for the property
5. Availability of cultural history reference/educational materials
6. Public awareness of cultural history

III. What is a desirable vision for the future of local heritage?

A. Natural Heritage

1. List of features to be preserved/maintained
2. Preferred future status/condition for each feature
3. Preferred use for each feature
4. Level of desired public awareness/appreciation for feature

B. Cultural Heritage

1. List of features to be preserved/maintained
2. Preferred future status/condition for each feature
3. Preferred use for each feature
4. Level of desired public awareness/appreciation for feature

IV. What aims/strategies/actions are needed to achieve a desirable future for local heritage?

1. A process for input and participation of diverse interest groups
2. A baseline information map (for example, a county map noting locations of all special heritage features)
3. A heritage status database to include present and changing status/condition of each feature
4. Formal vision/plan for future heritage status/management, to include specific goals and strategies
5. Coordination of heritage vision/plan with an overall plan for local area (town, county, region, etc.)
6. A program of public education about local heritage