

Lesson Plan

Camp Stark, NH: Prisoner of War Camp During World War II

This is an adaptation of a lesson plan prepared by Chris Lewis while participating in the New Hampshire Historical Society's New Hampshire History Summer Institute.

What Students Learn

- Students should be able to describe or identify political, personal, and geographical boundaries created by World War II (WWII) to the citizens and prisoners of war (POWs) assigned to Camp Stark;
- students should be able to describe natural and man-made environments created by the development and location of the camp and should be able to explain how the environment affected the everyday life of POWs, guards, and local citizens;
- students should be able to compare and contrast POWs from Camp Stark with residents of the Camp Stark area;
- students should be able to describe and distinguish the different political groups that organized the population of POWs and describe how this organization affected the political and economic climate at the camp;
- students will research the effect of non-governmental groups on the political, physical, and social environment of the camp.

Procedures

Question #1. What political, personal, and geographical boundaries did the prisoners at Camp Stark experience? Answer the same question in relation to other United States POW camps during WWII.

Methods: (1) Use maps of New Hampshire and Stark to locate the camp. Then use that information to form opinions on the area's influence on the function of the camp and on the prisoners' reaction to the environment. Trace the route by train that the prisoners took to get from Fort Devens to Percy Station, near Camp Stark. (2) Use Moore's article, "Hitler's Afrika Corps . . .", to continue working with map skills by locating the other POW camps in New England. (3) Also use Moore's article and students' responses to the study sheet for the article to help address the issue of political and personal boundaries in the POW camps, particularly Camp Stark. (4) Since many POW camps were formed from old CCC camps, read "History of the Corps Movement."

Question #2. What was life like for prisoners at Camp Stark? Compare a day in the life of a cadet at a CCC camp to the typical day of a prisoner.

Methods: Read "Strife in a Bitter Place" (Koop, 40-75) to answer the above question. Also, consult Salmond's *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942* to make comparisons between the everyday life of a corpsman and that of a prisoner.

Question #3. What was the relationship between the POWs at Camp Stark and their keepers and local townspeople?

Methods:(1) Read “From Barriers to Bonds” (Koop, 76-96) for a discussion of the changing relationship between prisoners and keepers. Also find and play a rendition of the song “Don’t Fence Me In,” which ironically became the camp song. (2) Discuss why American conscientious objectors, who also were confined to camps, were not treated as well as POWs. (3) Discuss POW strikes. Why did they strike? Were they justified? Research and discuss the POWs’ reasons and the results of their strikes.

Lesson Materials

Study Sheet to Accompany Moore’s article, “History of the Corps Movement.”

Bibliography

Most entries, as well as other teacher resources, are available through the New Hampshire Historical Society’s Tuck Library and its Museum Store.

Croteau, Madeleine. *German-American Friendship Day: 10th Anniversary Reunion*. Stark: Stark Improvement Fund, Inc., 1996.

Dearborn, Ned. *Once in a Lifetime: A Guide to the CCC*. New York: Charles E. Merrill Co., 1936.

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Gurney, Allen. “Former Foes Became Fast Friends in New Hampshire,” *As We Are* (Premier Issue, 1994): 27.

“History of the Corps Movement,” NASCC: The National Association of Service and Conservation Corps. 1999 [accessed 17 July 2000]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.nascc.org/thecorps/history.shtml>.

Holland, Kenneth and Frank Hill. *Youth in the CCC*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1942.

Koop, Allen V. *Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988.

Kramer, Arnold. *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*. New York: Stein and Day, 1979.

Maps a la Carte, Inc. “Topozone: The Web’s Topographic Map.” 2000 [accessed 24 July 2000]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.topozone.com/>.

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Salmond, John A. *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1967.

Stark [NH] Bicentennial Commission. *History of Stark, New Hampshire, 1774 - 1974*. Littleton: Courier Printing Co., 1974.

UNH Dimond Library. “Percy, NH Quadrangle,” *Historic USGS Maps of New England*. 17 September 1999 [accessed 24 July 2000]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://docs.unh.edu/nhtopos/Percy.htm>.

Assessment Tools and Techniques

Research, writing, and discussion activities are associated with each question.

**Study/Activity Sheet for Reading John Hammond Moore's
"Hitler's Afrika Corps . . . in New England," *Yankee
Magazine* (June, 1976): 83-88+**

1. Why and when were POWs from Europe sent here?
2. What is the Geneva Convention? Research the document and highlight its main points. Then compare and contrast by researching the treatment of American POWs in Europe and Asia and Axis POWs in the United States. Research could bring up some debate.
3. In many camps Nazi and anti-Nazi groups battled each other despite efforts to separate them. The real hard-core Nazis were weeded out and sent west to a camp in Alva, Oklahoma. Why? What were the different factions fighting for?
4. Camp Houlton was considered to be a typical camp. What was the camp like? Compare it to Camp Stark by creating a chart.
5. Note the reasons, methods, and destinations that POWs used to escape their camps—especially the Hobbstown, Maine, piece.
6. Relate the curious story of escape made by a Camp Stark POW.
7. Discuss the methods and reasoning behind the United States handling of the POWs when the war was over.

Curriculum Information

Information relating to the *New Hampshire History Curriculum* refers to the K-12 resource in two volumes developed by the New Hampshire Historical Society in partnership with Public Service of New Hampshire, the New Hampshire Department of Education, and the New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies. The K-6 volume is available on-line through the school programs section of the Society's Web site (<http://www.nhhistory.org>).

Grade Level

High School

New Hampshire Social Studies Standards

Civics 1, 3, 4; Economics 1, 2, 5; Geography 1, 2, 4, 5; US/NH History 2, 4, 5; World History 2

New Hampshire History Curriculum Focus Topics

Boundaries; Natural Environment and People; Cultures, Races and Ethnic Groups; Politics; Non-governmental Groups; Self-expression

New Hampshire History Curriculum Eras

1929–1945: Great Depression and World War II