

# **PERSHING MURAL PROJECT CURRICULUM**

## **Learning From the Past, Understanding the Present, and Discovering the Future**



THE PERSHING MURAL ~ A NEBRASKA CULTURAL LANDMARK

### **Making the Case for Historic Preservation**

*In this lesson, students will learn about the importance of preserving historic places and how they impact of our lives socially, economically, historically, educationally and environmentally. The students will be asked to create a persuasive poster that encourages historic preservation.*

#### **Included in this Lesson:**

- Lesson Plan: Making the Case for Historic Preservation
- Power point: Making the Case for Historic Preservation
- Power point: How to Make a Persuasive Poster

#### **Nebraska Standards Addressed:**

Connect: SS 6.2.1 Investigate how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals and society.

Create: FA 5.1.2 Students will develop their ability to communicate an idea/message by presenting their work in media arts.

Respond: FA 8.1.4 Students will examine personal, cultural, historical, and cross-disciplinary connections through media arts.

Connect: FA 8.2.2 Students will understand and apply their knowledge of a variety of presentation and communication techniques.

Present: SC.HS.15.5 Gather, analyze, and communicate evidence to describe the interactions between society, environment, and economy.

Respond: SS 8.4.3.a Identify how differing experiences can lead to the development of perspectives.

Connect: SS 1.4.1.b Compare and contrast family life from earlier times and today.

Respond: SS 6.4.3.a Identify how differing experiences can lead to the development of perspectives.

### **Objectives:**

- Students will explain how historic sites connect us to our past and preserve human stories.
- Students will explain how historic sites provide hands-on learning experiences for all ages.
- Students will list ways that preserving sites can create jobs and build the economy.
- Students will describe how building materials and construction methods differ from the past to the present.
- Students will list ways that neighborhoods are impacted by historic preservation.
- Students will identify ways historic preservation benefits the environment and promotes sustainable growth in communities.
- Students will create visual displays that explain the importance of and promotes historic preservation.

### **Grade Level:**

Written at 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Level (educators are encouraged to adjust the lesson to meet needs of Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> Grade).

### **Materials Needed:**

Any materials necessary to make a poster: poster board/paper, photos and images, stencils, letters, markers, pens, pencils, construction paper,

scissors, glue sticks, straight edges, rulers, scratch paper, erasers, computer-generated visuals and verbiage, pre-cut stenciled letters.

**Time Requirement:**

2-4 (50-minute) Class Sessions.

**Vocabulary:**

Refurbish: Made to look new again by work such as painting, repairing, and cleaning.

Restore: To bring back a former or original state.

Preservation: Protection of buildings and sites of historic significance to keep them intact or free from damage and decay.

Rehabilitate: A comprehensive project that may involve a complete overhaul of a structure to make it compatible for use through repair, alterations, and additions, while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

Craftsmanship: The quality that comes from creating with passion, care, and attention to detail; it is a quality that is honed, refined, and practiced over the course of a career.

Architecture: The art and science of making cities and buildings fit with the way we want to live our lives; it is aimed at improving human life and creating timeless and livable spaces for all the activities of life.

Repurpose: The process of reusing an existing building for a purpose other than which it was originally built or designed (aka recycling and conversion).

Sustainable Growth: Attaining a balance between economic prosperity, environmental vitality, and social equity that maintains the quality of life for current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Target Audience:** A group of people you would like to reach in order to influence, inform, or persuade.

**Persuade:** To make someone do or believe something by giving them good reasons to do it or by making them believe it.

### **Introduction:**

Preserving buildings and sites that have historic significance is paramount to making sure our history and culture live on. But the quandary becomes what do we preserve and what do we allow to be torn down to make way for new developments? How do we decide? Who gets to decide? And, how do we fund it? How do we make sure that there is representation from all walks of life, economic means, and culture when considering which sites to preserve? These are the real and often hard questions about where the past meets the present and moves into the future.

### **Direct Instruction:**

We live in an age where it has been common practice for old buildings to be torn down and entire city blocks leveled to make room for parking garages, retail, housing, and new developments. Such was the case for the Pershing Municipal Auditorium when it outlived its usefulness.



*Courtesy of History Nebraska Archives (circa 1970)*

After being “THE” gathering place in Lincoln for concerts, tradeshow, sporting events, and performances for 57 years, its doors closed permanently on August 6, 2014. A gathering place with 15,500 seats, Pinnacle Bank Arena in the West Haymarket District, was the new destination for Lincoln entertainment and sports.

But what to do with Pershing Auditorium? For nine years committees met, proposals were drawn up, and alternative uses for the building were explored. At the end of the day, it was decided that the most economically feasible direction to go would be to tear down the Auditorium and use the site for another purpose, especially with the high cost of asbestos remediation. With demolition of the Auditorium scheduled for the summer of 2023, it was decided that affordable housing, retail, and green space would take its place.

But before the demotion commenced, a dedicated committee of volunteers were able to raise the funds to save the iconic, historic Pershing Mural found on the West side of the Auditorium from destruction. Because of the preservation initiative, the Pershing Mural was carefully dismantled and refurbished to be relocated for future generations to enjoy.

So, when it is so common to tear down and rebuild, why go to the trouble to save historic buildings? Following are some considerations for making the case to protect and preserve historic sites:

**Culture:** Preserving and restoring historic buildings connect us to the past. They are physical reminders of where we came from and they connect us to a neighborhood or community. Architects and builders can employ techniques to make a new building look old, but they cannot capture the essence of an historic structure. Historic places also preserve and promote the human stories of the people who built, lived, or worked in them.

**Education:** Historic buildings are a record of ourselves and our communities. Preserving important historic resources creates a visible connection with the community’s history and culture. They can present many educational opportunities which cannot be provided by strictly classroom-held lessons. Physically visiting, touching, and experiencing

historic places can spark students' imaginations in ways that in-class learning cannot.

**Economy:** Preserving and restoring historic buildings brings in tourism dollars and gives a boost to the local economy. Established, historic buildings may attract new businesses because people are often fascinated by them. Preservation also helps create jobs for tradespeople who restore, preserve, and maintain historic buildings. Additionally, sometimes it is more cost-effective to refurbish or repurpose an historic building rather than incur the costs of demolition and rebuilding. Historic buildings can be affordable for businesses to rehabilitate with the possibility of tax incentives, grants, and other support for their restoration.

**Building Materials:** Older buildings, especially those built prior to World War II, are often made of higher quality materials (such as heart pine, marble, or old brick) using superior craftsmanship—they were built to last. Replacing these buildings using similar materials would be impractical and unaffordable. There is a limited inventory of historic buildings and once they have been demolished, there is no going back.

**Building Methods:** Visiting old structures is a way for architects and builders to study past techniques and designs and see how they influence present-day construction. As an example, when the roof of Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral was destroyed by fire in 2019, artisans, architects, and construction workers utilized medieval techniques dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Cathedral was constructed. It would have been easier and faster to use modern tools (electric saws, drills, nails, etc.), but the rebuilders wanted to preserve the Cathedral using the "old ways." In fact, they have gone so far as to use axes to harvest and transform oak trees into the beams needed for the reconstruction.

*Note: To learn more about the reconstruction of the Cathedral visit: NPR "To rebuild Notre Dame's fire-ravaged roof, carpenters use centuries-old techniques" <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/11/1179648233/notre-dame-paris-fire-rebuild-roof#:~:text=Hourly%20News-,Notre%20Dame's%20fire%2Ddamaged%20roof%20is%20being%20rebuilt%20using%20medieval,by%20the%20end%20of%202024>*

**Unique Design Features:** Historic buildings often have detailing and features that are not usually found in new construction—facades, unusual

glasswork, spires, domes, columns, cupolas, cornices, balustrades, etc. These unique features give buildings their own identity and distinctive character, which makes them more interesting than modern buildings. They also support and maintain old methods of workmanship. *(Note: A link to architectural terms can be found at: Buffalo as an Architectural Museum <https://buffaloah.com/a/DCTNRY/vocab.html> )*

**Neighborhoods:** Restoring old buildings to their original appearance not only adds character but can help rehabilitate an entire neighborhood. Repurposing structures, such as remodeling an abandoned but historic industrial building into a small business space or a mixed-use development can give new life to an entire neighborhood. A rehabilitated historic building or neighborhood might be the focus of a new residential or commercial development. An area restored to its original appearance can serve as a magnet for new visitors and residents. They also preserve traditional development patterns, denser business districts and walkable neighborhoods.

**Environment:** Preservation is good for the Environment. Preserving older buildings is a wise use of infrastructure, land, and non-renewable resources. Preservation entails an investment in the existing-constructed environment rather than using land and resources to build new. Preserving and reusing existing buildings makes better use of tax dollars by reducing the need for new roads, sewers, and utilities. Avoiding demolition reduces landfill waste and the release of toxins and pollutants into the environment. Historic preservation is an important part of “smart” or sustainable growth.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Why are historic buildings important to us as a community? To our culture?
- What can we learn from historic sites?
- What are some differences between buildings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and structures built today?
- What kinds of benefits to the economy are obtained when old buildings are restored, rehabilitated, or repurposed?
- Do you think there is still the same level of craftsmanship in construction today as there was 75 years ago?

- Why do you think so much time and care were given to repair the roof of the Notre Dame Cathedral “in the old ways”?
- In what ways do you think old and new buildings differ in their architectural design and decorations?
- What are the effects on a neighborhood when old buildings are preserved and restored? When they are demolished?
- How is preservation good for the environment?

### **Guided and Independent Practice:**

Now that the students have had a chance to learn about the value of Historic Preservation, it is their turn to convince classmates and others in the community about its importance. Using the talking points in the areas of Culture, Education, Economy, Building Materials, Building Methods, Unique Design Features, Neighborhoods, and Environment as they relate to Historic Preservation, the students are tasked with creating a persuasive poster informing and convincing their classmates and community as to why historic sites should be saved.

Posters can be a great way to advertise and promote a product, service, or event. They can also be a great tool to create powerful images to inform and persuade a target audience to think a certain way. Visuals are an effective way of delivering a message because our brains remember images better than they do text. A good poster is self-explanatory—it speaks for itself. Posters make people: STOP—READ—REMEMBER. For this assignment, the students will

- 1) Identify the target audience they are trying to reach.
- 2) Identify the topic or title of their poster (e.g., “The Importance of Historic Preservation” or “Why Should Historic Sites Be Saved”, etc.).
- 3) Identify three to five facts (from the lecture bullet points) to support the importance of Historic Preservation and persuade their target audience.
- 4) Consider possible persuasive techniques and creative methods to win over their target audience as to the importance of Historic Preservation.
- 5) Design and create a persuasive poster to encourage Historic Preservation.



When designing an effective, persuasive poster, the students should try to use the following tips: Make it...

- Catchy—grab the audience’s attention (use bold headings, snappy captions, interesting images, and color).
- Concise—keep it brief with as little reading as possible (use bullet points, not full sentences; use images to communicate).
- Comprehensive—provide all the key information (include titles and headings as well as **short** passages of text).
- Convincing—make the audience believe that information on the poster is important, reliable, and valuable (use strong images, powerful phrases, and supporting facts).

It is also important to identify the target audience they are trying to reach and persuade:

- Consider who their viewers will be.
- Decide what they want them to know about the topic.
- Decide what they want them to do or how they want them to respond.
- Determine what clever theme or slogan will make an impact the audience.

There are also some “tricks of the trade” to make their persuasive posters effective:

- Always make one or more rough drafts of the poster on scratch paper.
- Gather and organize all the materials that will be needed.
- Make sure the poster is large enough to be easily viewed from a distance of 8 to 16 feet.
- When choosing color combinations, consider what will make the message easily read and complement the appearance of the poster.
- Consider using contrast—this means use dark letters on a light background and light letters on a dark background.
- Let the most important items be the most important color.
- Remember colors that are close to the background shade will not show up well and cannot be read at a distance.
- Avoid too many colors—two or three should be fine.

- The use of colors is meant to enhance the poster and not overwhelm the main point.
- Avoid bright neon colors—they may catch the eye but they are hard to focus upon.
- When considering lettering, lower-case letters are easier to read than all capitals.
- Use capitals for emphasizing an important phrase or word.
- Use different size letters for items of varying importance.
- Pay attention to margins to keep the message from looking cluttered.
- Pay attention to spelling and grammar—ask someone else to look over the work for any errors.

Once students are satisfied with the content of their poster as well as the design, it is time to lay it out:

- Cut out letters, pictures, graphics, and captions.
- Draw light pencil guidelines and place or draw in letters.
- Lay all the components out on the posters.
- How does it look? Revise and rearrange as needed.
- Redo anything they feel should be different.
- Gently and thoroughly erase pencil marks.
- Once they are happy with the poster, glue everything in place—remembering that neatness counts.

Invite the students to visit and examine each poster and then come back together for a group discussion. The posters can be displayed in the classroom or in a commons area in the school. You could also display the posters in a prominent place in the community, like the courthouse or a library.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- As a result of this lesson, have you changed your mind about the importance of preserving historic sites?
- Historic Preservation is more than just saving old buildings and historic sites. What are other ways preserving the past impacts our lives? Our community?
- Will you look at historic buildings differently now than before?

- What was your game plan in trying to persuade your audience about the importance of Historic Preservation? Do you think you changed anyone's mind?
- Do you think you will ever become involved in trying to save an historic building?
- Have you identified any historic buildings in your community you would like to know more about?

### **Evaluation:**

The students will be evaluated on:

- 1) Use of class time
- 2) Content of their poster, including:
  - A title or main theme dealing with Historic Preservation
  - At least three talking points about the importance of Historic Preservation
  - Correctly spelled and punctuated written content
  - A persuasive argument for Historic Preservation
- 3) Design of their poster
  - Creativity
  - Use of color and contrast
  - Use of visuals
  - Use of text formatting
  - Ease in viewing
  - Neatness
  - Margins and spacing

*Note: This lesson focused on making persuasive posters to highlight the importance of Historic Preservation. You can certainly help students utilize available digital technology and software programs as an alternative to the traditional paper poster.*

### **Closure:**

“Making the case” for Historic Preservation is a starting point for getting students excited about their past and understanding how important it is in

embracing and appreciating their shared heritage, culture, and community. They will have learned that the impact of preservation on a community is much more than saving an historic site. By introducing Historic Preservation at an earlier age, students will become more aware of all the rich treasures they have in their own backyards and will become dedicated to saving them for future generations to appreciate.

## **Resources:**

Vintage Millwork Preservation. The 4 Major Benefits of Historic Restoration and Preservation, <https://vintagemillworkrestoration.com/blog/the-4-major-benefits-of-historic-restoration-and-preservation/> *Special thanks to Amos Fisher, owner, and Vintage Millwork Preservation for giving permission to use content from their website in this lesson (3-4-24).*

NPR “To rebuild Notre Dame's fire-ravaged roof, carpenters use centuries-old techniques” <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/11/1179648233/notre-dame-paris-fire-rebuild-roof#:~:text=Hourly%20News-,Notre%20Dame's%20fire%2Ddamaged%20roof%20is%20being%20rebuilt%20using%20medieval,by%20the%20end%20of%202024> *Special thanks to Jenna Molster and NPR for giving permission to use content from their website in this lesson (2-8-24).*

Buffalo as an Architectural Museum

<https://buffaloah.com/a/DCTNRY/vocab.html> *Special thanks to Chuck Lach and Buffalo Architectural Museum for giving permission to use content from their website in this lesson (2-8-24).*

Preservation Virginia: Why preservation? What are the benefits?

<https://preservationvirginia.org/why-preservation-what-are-the-benefits/#:~:text=Historic%20buildings%20are%20a%20record,lived%2C%20or%20worked%20in%20them> *Special thanks to Elyse Werling, Curator of Collections, and Preservation Virginia giving permission to use content from their website in this lesson (3-5-24).*

New Mexico State 4-H: Making Posters Tip Sheet

[file:///C:/Users/AnneWoita/Desktop/Poster-Making\\_R-191.pdf](file:///C:/Users/AnneWoita/Desktop/Poster-Making_R-191.pdf) *Special thanks to Laura Bittner, Interim Department Head, 4-H and Youth*

*Development and New Mexico State University for giving permission to use content from their website in this lesson (2-8-24).*

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Special thanks to the Pershing Mural Curriculum Committee:  
Liz Shea-McCoy, Bob Reeker, and Anne Woita

This lesson has been supported by a grant from:



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NEBRASKA CULTURAL ENDOWMENT

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And was made possible by the:

*Pershing Mural Historic Preservation Project*

