Virtual Field Trips- Project #2

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1. **Yosemite National Park** <http://www.nps.gov/yose/index.htm>

This site is well organized, easy to navigate and visually stimulating. When viewing it, I can see the advantages of using it. The sections I think were the most useful were History and Culture, Nature, Photos and Webcams. I thought the webcams were especially interesting and would spark the students’ interest. The only possible disadvantage is students could easily be led to another national park without realizing it.

Possible activities could be a learning experience where students zeroed in on a subject area. For instance, history, culture, nature or landforms would all be possible topic areas. They could also use this site and compare their features with more than one on the site or with another national park since the sites are linked. In addition, this could be used as a spring board to have several different national parks featured. My students in fifth grade focus on the United States in Social Studies. This would be a natural connection for them. Meanwhile, my students in sixth grade focus on biomes and ecosystems in Science, so that would be a connection for them.

1. **Diaries- The Valley of the Shadow** <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/>

This site was a collection of diaries and other artifacts from two communities in the American Civil War. There are images, official records, battle maps, letters and diaries, newspapers, a reference center and soldier records. It includes these records before, during and after the war. This would be an excellent way for students to look over documents and enrich their knowledge of the Civil War. This is touched on in Social Studies in 5th grade and this would provide an opportunity to go deeper into that study. I found this site easy to navigate and very interesting and beneficial. The only drawback would be that it is a lot to sift through, which could be a good or bad thing depending on the student.

Possible activities could be for students to read various diary entries and draw conclusions about the people who wrote. They could use what they have learned about the war to do so. They could also participate in creative writing by continuing the diary or creating a diary of their own in the same time period.

1. **Dog Sledding** <http://sleddog.org/>

This site is the Fairbanks Alaska Dog Mushers Association. Included in the site is information about ADMA, races, the hall and racegrounds, calendar, symposium, support and a way to contact the organization. The first thing I noticed was a YouTube informational video about dogsledding. That is a positive in my book! My students would also be very interested in looking and reading the maps provided. I would use this to provide students with background knowledge prior to or after reading about dogsledding. There are several articles and short stories about dogsledding. I would also consider doing a Skype session with a dogsled professional musher. There was a session available last year. Hopefully that will be available again. If so, this would be a wonderful compliment to that.

1. **Hands on Universe** <http://handsonuniverse.org/usa/about/>

This website hosts an online program that allows students to investigate the universe, allowing them to apply tools and concepts related to science, math and technology. Through this website, students can view images, videos and observations from professionals that they can analyze. There are several activities built into the site that the students can do, as well as creating self-directed ones. This site would be a great opportunity for students to enrich their knowledge of space. It could also spark addition opportunities to connect with experts across the world and allow students to see the value in observation. I found this site easy to use and interesting for those interested in this content. However, it would not be an independent activity, and would require some additional planning and structure.

1. **Lewis and Clark Expedition** <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark/>

This is an awesome site! I loved that the students actually participate in the journey. There are questions along the way to help focus the students thinking. Features such as the maps, journey log and animals are all interesting features along the way. In addition, it shows students what supplies were needed, discoveries they made in plants, animals and tribes as well. It is set up as a narrative account, so that is an interesting format as well. This would be an excellent extension to use to broaden the Social Studies curriculum. It is very user and student friendly. The text is chronological as well, and time order is one of the text structures we focus on in ELA. This could be used in conjunction with a research project or a creative writing extension.

1. **New Orleans** <http://milvetstravel.net/no.html>

I really like how this site gives you an order of what to do when. This makes you feel like you are on an actual tour. For example, it takes you to the Mardi Gras parade, famous restaurants and images. One drawback is that some of the links are not working. I like the format though, and would use something similar if I was creating one of my own. I did feel that this would be a good virtual field trip to enrich students’ knowledge of New Orleans. Perhaps more specifically around the time of Mardi Gras.

1. **US House of Representatives and Senate** <http://www.house.gov/>

I often do a mini unit of study on US government and the judicial system. This site would be a good addition to dig deeper into the government. It would also be good to have the students contact their senators and/or representatives in conjunction with this virtual field trip. I think the students would be interested in watch the live cam so that they could see what goes on. Students could identify an issue in our area, and see if we could receive feedback from our representative. That would be a very authentic experience that I think all of the students would enjoy. I bet they might even be able to connect via social media, skype or in person! I feel it is very important for students to see the value of voting and speaking up for what they believe in. This trip will help them to see where they can start!

1. **Bug Club** <http://www.amentsoc.org/bug-club/fun/>

This site was more of a resource of activities and fun. Students can use the sites to create bugs and bug origami. There were also links to several online games as well. I was a tad bit disappointed, as I thought that this one would be a little more engaging. I know the students would enjoy the games and activities, but it doesn’t match up to an experience you would have if you were looking at different bugs in a hands on, up close and personal way. I would definitely like to try some of the activities with students though. It would be a good extension for my students in 6th grade to enrich their knowledge of ecosystems and biomes.

1. **Hurricane Storm Center** <http://miamisci.org/hurricane/>

Wow! This is an excellent one. It does an excellent job explaining all there is to know about hurricanes. We do an extension project on Natural Disasters in 5th grade ELA, and this would be an excellent trip for students to take. Living where we do, most students have background knowledge and/or have experienced a hurricane. This site will help them to understand how they are formed, history of hurricanes, predicting, preparing and protecting. There are also some videos, which I find extremely engaging for our students these days. There are also many maps, graphics and pictures that students can refer to. This is very helpful when discussing text features present in nonfiction text. Great resource!

1. **Near East, Egypt, Greece** <http://www.carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/>

This site has a lot to offer. Some of the links are simple, but informative. That is the case for the information related to Egypt and Africia. Both include good maps. The Greece site is updated and outstanding. It includes features such as moving graphics, sound effects and music that make it more interesting. The site is very kid friendly. The Ancient Americas sections is really good too as it is set up in a question and answer format. This site would be great for examining different types of nonfiction text structure in ELA. It would also serve well for an extension project in world geography as well as culture.