THE CURSE OF DAKISLAND

CLASSROOM GUIDE

Introduction

In 1795, three teenage boys discovered a strange, man-made hole on Oak Island, a small, wooded island just off the coast of Nova Scotia, Canada. As the boys began to dig, they found a number of intriguing artifacts. The boys' discovery launched a treasure hunt that has spanned more than 200 years, cost millions of dollars and involved dozens of spectators, engineers and even famous personalities such as John Wayne, Errol Flynn and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The search had gone dormant, but now, Rick and Marty Lagina, two brothers from Michigan, have bought most of the island and have renewed the efforts to unearth the legendary treasure.

The Curse of Oak Island follows Rick and Marty on their mission to solve the mystery behind this potential treasure trove off the coast of Nova Scotia. From pirate booty to Viking hoard, what answers will be revealed and what can we learn along the way?

Curriculum Links

The Curse of Oak Island would be useful for history, social studies and literature courses. There are many cross-curricular links including STEM-related activities. The program is appropriate for middle and high school students. Educators can use clips from the series or full episodes for extended activities and research projects.

Vocabulary

Using a dictionary or an encyclopedia, students may want to define or explain the significance of the following terms from this program. Students can also keep their own list of terms to define as they watch.

Legend Oxidation Excavation Non-ferrous Metal Conductive Metal Anomaly Hieroglyphic Metal Detector Artifact





Discussion Questions

- **1.** What is a legend? Briefly describe the legend of Oak Island. What makes this story worthy of being a legend?
- 2. In Season 2 of *The Curse of Oak Island*, the Lagina brothers use a wooden caisson to aid in the search for treasure. What is a caisson? How does it work? Why would the Lagina brothers use a caisson on Oak Island?
- **3.** Why is it difficult to dig in a swamp? What sorts of challenges did Oak Island treasure hunters find relating to the tide? How long would you need to wait for the water to subside once a tide came in?
- 4. Watch the video entitled "Mysteries in the Oak Island Museum" from the following link and then complete the activity below. www.History. com/shows/the-curse-of-oak-island/videos/mysteries-in-the-oakisland-museum. Alex, Jack and Peter tour the Oak Island Museum and find interesting items on display: scissors, a shoe, links of a chain and an engraved stone. For each item, list a detail that you found to be interesting about the object. Which item was your favorite and why?



Educators - full episodes of *The Curse of Oak Island* are available online at: **www.History.com/shows/the-curse-of-oak-island**

Franklin D. Roosevelt & Oak Island



- In 1910, Franklin D. Roosevelt, at the age of 27, was part of an exploration group looking to find treasure on Oak Island, Nova Scotia.
- Photo credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. ARC Identifier: 196803

1. Primary Source Activity: Photo Analysis The following activity is adapted from a worksheet designed and developed by the National Archives and Records Administration. The original worksheet can be found at: www.archives.gov/education /lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf

Study the photograph to the left for 2 minutes. Explore the people, the objects and the activities taking place, and then form an overall impression of the photograph.





Use the chart below to list people, objects and activities in the photograph.

PEOPLE	OBJECTS	ACTIVITIES

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph:

- 1.
- .
- 2.
- 3.

What questions do you have about the people, the setting or the actions in this photo?

Where could you find answers to them?

2. Video: FDR Treasure Hunter

Watch the video entitled "FDR Treasure Hunter" via the link below, and discuss the significance of the letter. Marty Lagina mentions that Franklin D. Roosevelt may have had other things on his mind in 1938 when the letter was written – discuss what these might have been. What is significant about FDR's interest in the Oak Island treasure? www.History.com/shows/the-curse-of-oak-island/videos/fdr-treasure-hunter



Written Document Analysis

Below you will find an excerpt from an article about Oak Island. After reading the passage, complete the following worksheet designed and developed by the National Archives and Records Administration.

Liverpool Transcript 1862

Article by J.B. McCully published in the Liverpool Transcript, a newspaper from Nova Scotia in 1862

The full article can be found at: www.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/content/view/232/176/

"Simon Lynds of Onslow went down to Chester... and he then agreed to get up a company... of about 25 to 30 men, and they commenced where the first left off, and sunk the pit 93 feet, finding a mark every ten feet. Some of them were charcoal, some putty, and one at 80 feet was a stone cut square, two feet long and about a foot thick, with several characters on it.

All the way down they were confined to a diameter of 16 feet, by the softness of the ground within that limit. The pick marks could be distinctly seen all around the sides of the pit. After they got down 93 feet, they forced a crowbar down and struck wood at five which appeared to be a platform from its being level, making in all to the supposed platform 98 feet.

They then quit the work until morning, when on commencing again they found the pit filled with water, as high as the tide level. They then tried bailing, and afterwards tried pumping, which was all to no purpose. After which they sank a new pit in order to tunnel under the treasure which was unsuccessful."

Date of the Document:

For what audience was the document written?

List three things the author said that you think are important:

Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:



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Reading and Research

Read the following passage from an article about Oak Island, and then complete the activities that follow.

Reader's Digest, 1965

A condensed version of an article by David MacDonald originally published in The Rotarian in 1964.

The Reader's Digest article can be found at: www.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/archive/readersdigest/readersdigest.pdf

"Here, ever since 1795, people have been trying to find out what lies at the bottom of a mysterious shaft dubbed, hopefully, the 'Money Pit.' Although it's now known that the Money Pit is protected by an ingenious system of man-made flood tunnels that use the sea as a watchdog, to this day no one knows who dug the pit, or why.

One legend makes the pit the hiding place for the plunder of Captain Kidd, who was hanged for piracy in 1701. Other theories favor the booty of Blackbeard and Henry Morgan, both notorious buccaneers; or Inca treasure stolen by Spaniards; or the French crown jewels that Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were said to be carrying when they attempted to flee during the French Revolution; or Shakespeare's missing manuscripts. Whatever the pit may contain, few other treasures have been sought so avidly."

- 1. Who was Captain William Kidd? Define pirate. Define privateer. Kidd was thought to be both why was he ultimately hanged? What do you think was he really a pirate or was he a privateer?
- **2.** What role could William Shakespeare have played in the mysteries of Oak Island? Can you find any information online about his missing manuscripts?
- **3.** Who was Blackbeard? And who was Henry Morgan? What is pirate booty and what types of items do you think Blackbeard or Morgan would have buried on Oak Island?
- **4.** Can you find any information on the Incas and their treasures that could have been stolen by the Spaniards? When and why would the Spaniards have been near Oak Island?
- **5.** Describe the types of jewels that were part of the French Crown Jewels that Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were said to be carrying when they attempted to flee during the French Revolution. What makes the jewels special? Do you think it is plausible that they could have ended up at Oak Island?
- **6.** And finally, if any one of these treasures were buried at Oak Island hundreds of years ago, why do you think people are still searching for these treasures? Is it the potential value? Is it the potential notoriety? Who would have ownership of the jewels if they were found?



Essay & Research Questions

Consider going on your own treasure hunt and answer the following questions:

- ▼ What time of year would you prefer to treasure hunt? Consider the seasons and temperature of the air and the ground. Discuss the equipment you would use in one season that you may not need in another.
- ▼ What types of specialists would you bring on a treasure hunt? For example, would you bring a historian? What about a construction crew? Any other specialists and why?
- ▼ What types of tools would you bring on a treasure hunt? Tools can be both physical like a saw and a hammer, but also digital, like a computer or software to analyze data. And why would you choose these tools?

Consider burying a treasure and answer the following questions:

- If you were going to bury a treasure, where would you put it?
- How would you make sure it was not easily found?
- ▼ Would you want it to be discovered? By whom?
- ▼ Would you also develop a map?
- ▼ What kind of clues would you give to find the treasure?
- ▼ How long do you expect it would stay buried?

STEM Activities and Discussion Questions

(Note: students can also write short essays or journal entries answering the questions below.)

- Metal Detectors will detect the presence of metal nearby or underground. They are often used in hobby activities and also in treasure hunting.
 - How does a metal detector work?
 - What is an electromagnet?
 - How does electromagnetism relate to a metal detector?
 - Describe the difference between ferrous and non-ferrous and how it relates to a metal detector.
 - If you had a metal detector, for what activities would you use it?
- ▼ Give three examples of how the advancement of technology has helped treasure hunters since Oak Island was first thought to have a buried treasure. Are there any drawbacks to the advanced technology?
- ▼ How do scientists approximate the age of a found object? What is carbon dating?

Additional Websites

www.History.com/shows/the-curse-of-oak-island www.oakislandtreasure.co.uk www.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/archive/readersdigest/readersdigest.pdf

