



Big Dams Curriculum

Developed in conjunction with the public conference

Reversing the Flow: Big Dams, Power, and People in Local Context

November 6 & 7, 2009

The mission of the Center for Columbia River History (CCRH) is to promote the study of Columbia River Basin history. CCRH is dedicated to examining the hidden histories of the Basin and to helping people think about the historical record from different perspectives through creative public history products and direct engagement with Columbia River Basin communities.

Center for Columbia River History, www.ccrh.org

Washington State Historical Society – Portland State University – Washington State University Vancouver

Name _____

Date _____

Be a Historical Detective!

History detectives solve historical questions. They follow trails of investigation and they dig deeply through layers of information, closely determining evidence from different perspectives. Before you begin looking at these historical documents, I want you to think about what you already know. These documents all deal with the construction and impact of “Big Dams.”



Bonneville Dam on the Columbia
Army Corps of Engineers Image

By “Big dams” I’m thinking of enormous modern concrete barriers that store water and redirect rivers. Over the last 100 years, big dams have been built in the United States and worldwide to create electricity and for other purposes. They have changed land, rivers, and economic ways of life all over the world. What do you already know about the role of modern dams and why they were built?

What questions do you have about the history of big dams, why they were built and the impacts they have had in the U.S. or elsewhere?

Next, I'd like to ask you some questions about each of the documents. Start by providing the title of the document. Then, answer the questions.

Document Title:

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<i>1. What kind of document is this?</i>	
<i>2. When was it created?</i>	
<i>3. Who created it? What do you know (if anything) about this person?</i>	
<i>4. Why do you think they created the document? What did they want?</i>	
<i>5. What are the big ideas in this document?</i>	
<i>6. What does it tell you about the history of building big dams?</i>	
<i>7. How does it help you to answer your questions about why big dams were built or their impacts?</i>	
<i>8. What new questions does it leave you with?</i>	

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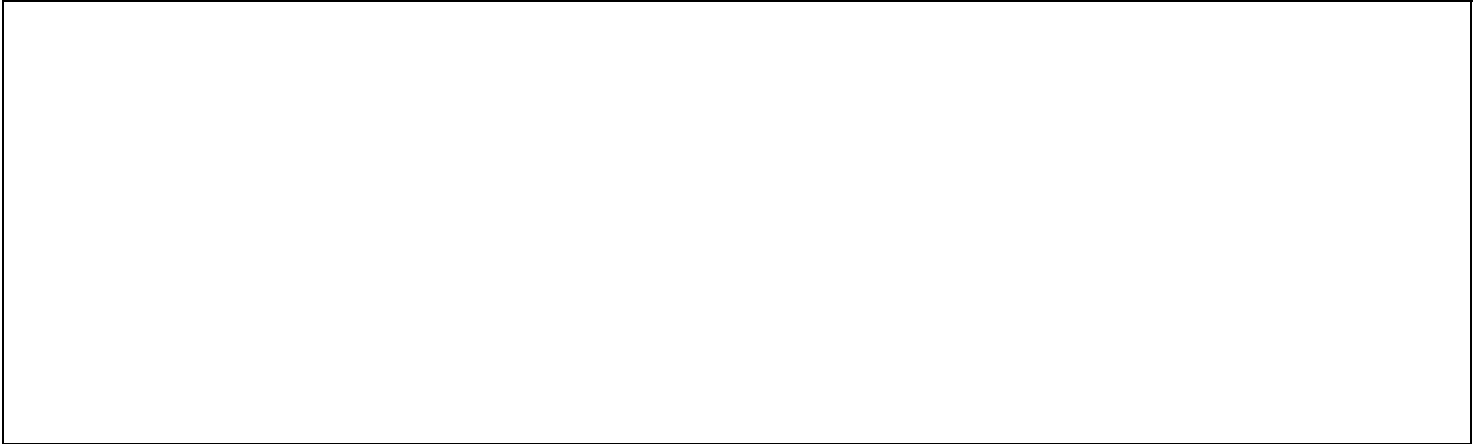
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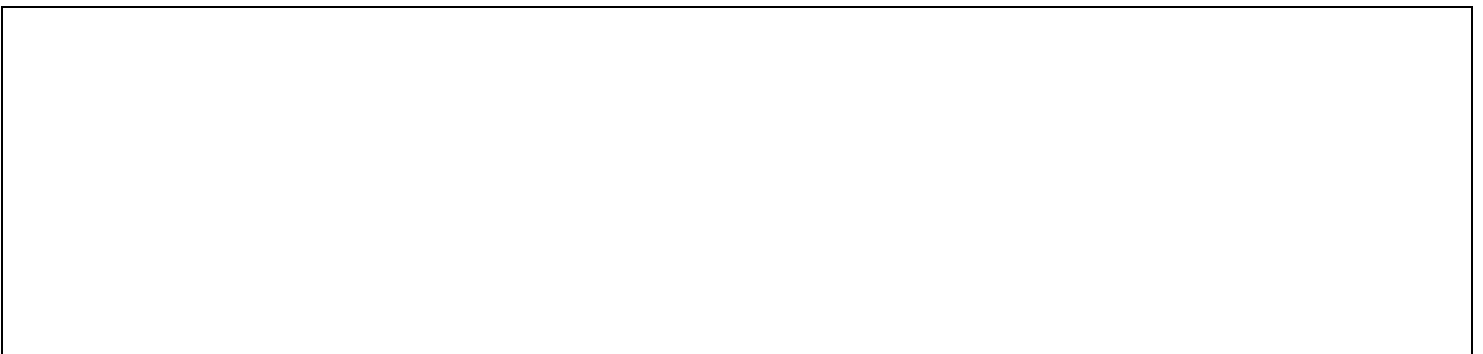
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Now that you've looked at each of the documents individually, I want you to do some thinking about them as a group. Complete the following steps to help you develop a historical argument.

1. What are some questions about the history of dam building, why they were built, and their impacts that these documents help you answer?



2. **Choose one** of the questions you think the documents do a good job of answering. **Circle it.**
3. Look through the documents. **Highlight** specific parts of the documents that help answer the question.
4. Based on what you see in the documents, what do you think is the **answer** to the question?



5. Complete the graphic organizer on the next page to **show how the documents provide evidence** for your answer.

My historical **question** about big dams is:

The **answer** to my question that I find in the documents is:

Evidence from the Documents

A specific quote from

_____ that supports my answer:

I think the person said this because:

I think this supports my answer because:

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