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Lesson Plan: **Winds of Change: The Galveston Hurricane of 1900** (High School Social Studies)

**Objective:**

Through the use of primary sources, students will analyze the impact of hurricanes on the lives and livelihoods of the people and regions affected by them. Students will further compare the impacts of the Galveston 1900 Hurricane, Hurricane Katrina, and Hurricane Ike on the Texas coast, judging both immediate impact and long-term effect.

**Description:**

In 1900, Galveston was a booming center of trade and the largest city in the state of Texas. On September 8, 1900, the Galveston Hurricane destroyed the city claiming the lives of approximately 8,000 people. A new technology, moving images on film, captured the damage caused by the storm. Using the films taken of the wreckage, including *Panorama of East Galveston*, this lesson plan explores geography, Texas History and culture, and technological innovations. The lesson targets TEKS in United States History Studies since the Reconstruction, World History Studies, and World Geography Studies.

**Films:**

- Panorama of East Galveston:  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Panorama\\_of\\_East\\_Galveston](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Panorama_of_East_Galveston)
- Launching a Stranded Schooner from the Docks:  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston\\_Hurricane\\_of\\_1900\\_-\\_Launching\\_a\\_Stranded\\_Schooner\\_from\\_the\\_Docks](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston_Hurricane_of_1900_-_Launching_a_Stranded_Schooner_from_the_Docks)
- Panorama of Galveston Power House (Galveston, Texas Hurricane and Tidal Wave):  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston\\_Hurricane\\_of\\_1900\\_-\\_Panorama\\_of\\_Galveston\\_Power\\_House\\_%28Galveston%2C\\_Texas\\_Hurricane\\_and\\_Tidal\\_Wave%29](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston_Hurricane_of_1900_-_Panorama_of_Galveston_Power_House_%28Galveston%2C_Texas_Hurricane_and_Tidal_Wave%29)
- Panorama of Orphans Home, Galveston:  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston\\_Hurricane\\_of\\_1900\\_-\\_Panorama\\_of\\_Orphans\\_Home%2C\\_Galveston\\_%28Galveston%2C\\_Texas%2C\\_Hurricane\\_and\\_Tidal\\_Wave%29](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston_Hurricane_of_1900_-_Panorama_of_Orphans_Home%2C_Galveston_%28Galveston%2C_Texas%2C_Hurricane_and_Tidal_Wave%29)
- Panorama of Wreckage of Water Front:  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston\\_Hurricane\\_of\\_1900\\_-\\_Panorama\\_of\\_Wreckage\\_of\\_Water\\_Front](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston_Hurricane_of_1900_-_Panorama_of_Wreckage_of_Water_Front)



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- Panoramic View of Tremont Hotel:  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston Hurricane of 1900 - Panoramic View of Tremont Hotel](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston_Hurricane_of_1900_-_Panoramic_View_of_Tremont_Hotel)
- Searching Ruins on Broadway, Galveston, for Dead Bodies:  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston Hurricane of 1900 - Searching Ruins on Broadway%2C Galveston%2C for Dead Bodies](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston_Hurricane_of_1900_-_Searching_Ruins_on_Broadway%2C_Galveston%2C_for_Dead_Bodies)
- Birdseye View of Dock Front, Galveston  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston Hurricane of 1900 - Birdseye View of Dock Front%2C Galveston](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Galveston_Hurricane_of_1900_-_Birdseye_View_of_Dock_Front%2C_Galveston)

### Resources:

- Larson, Erik. *Isaac's Storm: A Man, A Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History*. Random House: New York. 1999.
- Green, Nathan C. *Story of the Galveston Flood: Complete, Graphic, Authentic*. Cosimo Classics: New York. 2005.
- <http://www.1900storm.com/>: a presentation of the Galveston County Daily News
- <http://www.hurricanedisasterslive.com/GALVESTON-HURRICANE-1900.html>: website describing the Galveston Hurricane with statistics
- <http://www.gthcenter.org/exhibits/zenith/index.html>: exhibit on Galveston from 1890-1900 by the Galveston and Texas History Center at the Rosenberg Library

### Process:

#### Prior Knowledge

1. Students should have a working knowledge of Texas geography, including the Gulf Coast region.
2. Students should be aware of the devastating impact of natural disasters on communities and the economy.

#### Hook

1. Display a map of the Texas Gulf Coast that includes Cuba; identify the cities of Galveston and Havana on the map.
2. Ask the class to make a list of how information was communicated between two separate locations around 1900. Write the students' responses on the board.
3. Ask how someone in Havana might be able to warn someone in Galveston that a storm was coming around 1900. The answer is that there was no way to



communicate this information effectively, and as a result, the Galveston Hurricane devastated Galveston Island in 1900.

4. Extension: Have students brainstorm one of the following.
  - a. The benefits of modern technology, such as storm radar, which inform meteorologists that a major storm is coming several days before it arrives
  - b. The problems associated with not having the technology to give people and advance warning that a storm is coming

## Lesson

1. Watch the film, *Panorama of East Galveston*, or one of the other suggested films. Rather than react verbally, have students write down what images they see.
2. After viewing the film, ask students:
  - a. How does this film look different from the images you see on your TV at home?
    - i. Black and white, blurry images, jumpy images
  - b. Why does this look different from the images we watch?
    - i. This is one of the oldest surviving moving images filmed just a few years after moving images were invented.
  - c. What similarities do you see between this footage and scenes that have resulted after Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Ike?
    - i. Have students refer to their paper to see what they wrote down.
  - d. What are the major differences between the footage of the Galveston Hurricane of 1900 and what you have seen of Hurricanes Katrina or Ike?
    - i. More focus on people's personal stories and losses, less of a focus on the physical destruction of the wreckage.
  - e. Thinker Question: Why are some buildings left standing during a hurricane while others are not?
  - f. Why do people continue to resettle and rebuild Galveston Island though hurricanes continue to ravage the area?
    - i. Possible answers: ports, trade, transportation, culture, tourism.
  - g. Why is it especially unfortunate that Galveston is an island?
    - i. There was no way to get off the island as the hurricane approached, and no way to import supplies onto the island after the storm.
  - h. Though technology has changed, and more than 100 years have passed, what has not changed about the effect of natural disasters and hurricanes?
  - i. Show students pictures from Hurricane Katrina (<http://www.katrinadestruction.com/>) so they have an additional frame of reference to those provided in the videos. Then ask them, how long do



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they think it takes to rebuild an area after a hurricane has struck land?  
What do you think the long term effects are on an area after a hurricane strikes?

3. Explain to students that the Galveston Hurricane was the deadliest natural disaster in American history: between 6,000 and 8,000 people died.
4. Tell students they are going to learn about what factors enable Galveston to continue to thrive as a city, though it continues to be ravaged by hurricanes

**Independent Practice (to be completed over the course of several class periods):**

1. Divide students into groups, and give each group one of the following topics:
  - a. Understanding the science of hurricanes: how do they happen?
  - b. The shipping industry: 1900 and present day
  - c. The evolution of communication: the telegraph, telephone, Internet
  - d. The history of meteorology
  - e. Emergency response to hurricanes: 1900 and present day
  - f. Recording Hurricanes: footage of destruction then and now. (Focus on Edison's process and how the news media covers hurricanes today.)
2. Have each group research their topic in regards to
  - a. Basic background information about their topics (who, what, when, where, how)
  - b. How the topic affected Galveston Island in 1900
  - c. How their topic affects Galveston Island today
  - d. Have each group answer the question: Based on your research, why do you think people continue to settle in Galveston, despite the risk of hurricanes? (or how does your topic affect the distribution of populations along the Gulf Coast?)
3. Each group will present their findings (either through a 5-10 minute presentation or a poster), and will be evaluated on the following:
  - a. Accuracy of information about topic;
  - b. Explanation of how their topic has shaped contemporary society;
  - c. Displaying differences between 1900 and present day ;
  - d. Aesthetic value/engaging participation;
  - e. Explanation of why people continue to rebuild and settle on Galveston Island.

**Closing:**



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Explain to students that though living in a hurricane zone is dangerous, much advancement in technology and the desirability of Galveston's geographic placement has made it possible to weather natural disasters.

### Extended Learning:

1. Have students read the September 14, 2008 New York Times article "Hurricane Ike's aftermath has some still looking for a way out" by Ian Urbina (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/15/us/15galveston.html>) and respond to the following questions:
  - a. What are the major problems facing the people who remained on Galveston Island?
  - b. What are some reasons people may have stayed on Galveston Island rather than evacuating as they were told to?
  - c. What are some of the sensory images (sounds, sights, smells, etc) that the author uses to describe the scene in Galveston after Hurricane Ike?
  - d. Why does one mother refuse to go to the shelter set up on the island?
  - e. What are some similarities between the aftermath of Hurricane Ike and the aftermath of the Galveston Hurricane?
  - f. What are some differences between the aftermaths of the two hurricanes?
2. **OPTION 1:** Have students compose an imaginary narrative describing what it would have been like to experience the events of the Galveston Hurricane of 1900. Encourage them to describe the shock of many Galveston residents when the ocean current began to rise, and what the aftermath must have been like.
3. **OPTION 2:** Have students compose a letter to a family member living in Galveston who has decided to not leave the island because they want to "ride out" the storm. Students must include facts from what they have learned to persuade their relative why "riding out" the storm is not a good plan.

### TEKS:

#### US History Studies Since the Reconstruction

9A: Analyze the effect of physical and human geographic factors in major events.

23A: Analyze how scientific discoveries and technological innovations have changed the standard of living in the United States.

#### World History Studies



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11B: Pose and answer questions about geographic distributions and patterns in world history shown on maps, graphs, charts, models and databases.

12B: Analyze the effects of physical and human geographic factors on major events in world history.

23A: Give examples of major scientific discoveries and technological innovations that occurred at different periods in history, describe the changes produced by these discoveries and innovations.

### **World Geography Studies**

5A: Analyze how the character of a place is related to its political, economic, social and cultural characteristics.

6B: Explain the processes that have caused cities to grow such as location along transportation routes, availability of resources that have attracted settlers and economic activities, and continued access to other cities and resources.

8B: Compare ways that humans depend on, adapt to, and modify the physical environment using local state, national and international human activities in a variety of cultural and technological contexts.

8C: Describe the impact of and analyze the reaction of the environment to abnormal and/or hazardous environmental conditions at different scales, such as hurricanes.

19B: Analyze ways technological innovations have allowed humans to adapt to places shaped by physical processes such as hurricanes and floods.