



Texas Archive of the Moving Image

## Lesson Plan: **A Booming Industry: Oil in Texas** (Social Studies, Grade 4)

### **Objective:**

Using prior knowledge and archival footage, students will demonstrate understanding of the nature, both positive and negative, of the developing oil industry in Texas and evaluate the significance of the new technology compared to previous technologies, such as the railroad, and how it impacted and changed the lives and landscapes of Texas.

### **Description:**

When Spindletop erupted on January 10, 1901, Texas was no stranger to change. In the last few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Texas economy and landscape had already faced dramatic changes due to the coming of the railroad. Farmers' and ranchers', who had traditionally relied on man-power to move their goods and cattle to the markets, began to take advantage of the speedy and more cost-effective transportation provided by the railroad. Just as the lives of Texans had been drastically adjusted upon the arrival of the railroad, so too would their lives, culture, and businesses be profoundly changed by the discovery of oil in Texas. Using archival film taken from oil fields, this lesson plan explores Texas History and culture, technological innovations related to the oil business, and the impact of the oil industry on Texas. The lesson targets TEKS in Social Studies for grade 4.

### **Films:**

- Ray Jelinek Collection, no. 11 – Oil Drilling Operation  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Ray\\_Jelinek\\_Collection%2C\\_no.11\\_-\\_Oil\\_Drilling\\_Operation](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Ray_Jelinek_Collection%2C_no.11_-_Oil_Drilling_Operation)
- Riches Loom for Village Folk in Texas Oil Rush, 46 seconds  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Riches\\_Loom\\_for\\_Village\\_Folk\\_in\\_Texas\\_Oil\\_Rush](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Riches_Loom_for_Village_Folk_in_Texas_Oil_Rush)
- Explosion Starts Oil Fire, 40 seconds  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Explosion\\_Starts\\_Oil\\_Fire](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Explosion_Starts_Oil_Fire)
- Flames Bar Rescue at Blazing Gusher Where 8 Met Death, 38 seconds  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Flames\\_Bar\\_Rescue\\_at\\_Blazing\\_Gusher\\_Where\\_8\\_Met\\_Death](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Flames_Bar_Rescue_at_Blazing_Gusher_Where_8_Met_Death)



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### Accompanying Worksheets:

- Oil Lesson - Recap 20  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/education/lesson\\_plans/oilrecap20.pdf](http://www.texasarchive.org/education/lesson_plans/oilrecap20.pdf)

### Resources:

- Spindletop – Gladys City Boomtown Museum, <http://www.spindletop.org/>
- Texas Almanac, Oil - <http://www.texasalmanac.com/history/highlights/oil/>
- Products made from Oil - <http://www.eldr.com/files/images/oil2.gif> and <http://www.anwr.org/features/oiluses.htm>
- Bredeson, Carmen. *The Spindletop Gusher: The Story of the Texas Oil Boom*. Houston: Bright Sky Press, 2010.
- Melmed, Laura Krauss. *Heart of Texas: A Lone Star ABC*. New York: Collins, 2009.
- Dasef, Marva. *Tales of a Texas Boy*. Texas Boy Publications, 2007.
  - Story of what it was like to grow up in Texas during the Great Depression – includes first-hand accounts of people buying shares in oil wells, working at an oil well, etc.
  - Based on the life of the author's father
- Farndon, John. *Oil (DK Eyewitness Books)*. New York: DK Children, 2007.
- Cox, Mike. *Historic Photos of Texas Oil*. Nashville: Turner Publication Company, 2009.
- Olien, Roger M. and Diana Davids Olien. *Oil in Texas: The Gusher Age, 1895-1945*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.  
<http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/excerpts/exolioil.html>
- Burrough, Bryan. *The Big Rich: The Rise and Fall of the Great Texas Oil Fortunes*. New York: Penguin Press, 2009.

### Process:

#### Prior Knowledge

1. Students should have a working knowledge of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Texas history, including the early economy of Texas and resulting changes brought about by the introduction of the railroad.
2. Students should be aware of the importance of oil in the present economy.

#### Hook

1. Divide your classroom board in half.
2. Ask the students to brainstorm the changes that occurred in Texas industry and society as a result of the arrival of the railroad.
3. As they brainstorm, write their answers on the left side of the board.
4. Then ask students to brainstorm the changes that occurred in Texas industry and society as a result of the discovery of oil at Spindletop (and the resulting oil boom).



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5. As they brainstorm, write their answers on the right side of the board.
6. After they have finished sharing ideas, have them work with a partner to find three similarities and differences of the impacts of the railroad and the oil industry in Texas.
7. Have three or four pairs of students volunteer to share the similarities and differences they found.
8. Discuss: Ask the students why they think the similarities and differences they discussed existed? Which similarities or differences they think were most important? What impact all of the changes they discussed had on Texas?

#### ALTERNATIVE:

1. Rather than having students brainstorm as a class, partner the students and give them a large sheet of paper.
2. Have the student work with their partner to complete numbers 2 and 4 from above on their own paper. If you would like this to be detailed, you may want to let them use their notes and books.
3. Once they have listed the impact, have them circle the similarities in one color and the differences in another.
4. Have three or four pairs of students volunteer to share the similarities and differences they found.
5. Discuss: Ask the students why they think the similarities and differences they discussed existed? Which similarities or differences they think were most important? What impact all of the changes they discussed had on Texas?

#### Lesson

1. While you are informing students that they will be watching four archival films, have them divide a sheet of paper in half and put “Positive” on the left and “Negative” on the right. Instruct students that as they watch the film, they should write down things they hear or images they see that represent the positives and negatives of the oil industry.
2. Watch the film, *Riches Loom for Village Fold in Texas Oil Rush*.
3. After viewing the film, ask students to share their positives and negatives and discuss any interesting points they bring up. If they had difficulty ask the following questions:
  - a. Where were the oil rigs located in the city?
    - i. Very close to the homes and just outside of town
    - ii. In the middle of everything
  - b. What effect do you think this had on the townspeople?
    - i. Brought in money and industry
    - ii. The smells/noise/dirt so close to their homes
4. Watch the film, *Ray Jelinek Collection, no.11 – Oil Drilling Operation*.



5. After viewing the film, ask students to share their positives and negatives and discuss any interesting points they bring up. If they had difficulty ask the following questions:
  - a. What do you think it was like for those working in the oil fields?
  - b. Did you see anything that made you think it might be dangerous?
    - i. Billowing steam from the ground could burn workers
    - ii. The machinery had little to no safety devices
    - iii. Workers were working inches from large machinery that could easily break and injure them
    - iv. Looks like really hard work in the heat
    - v. Hard hats indicate potential danger
    - vi. Smoking right around the well – oil ignites easily
6. Watch the films, *Explosion Starts Oil Fire* and *Flames Bar Rescue at Blazing Gusher Where 8 Met Death*.
7. After viewing the film, ask students to share their positives and negatives and discuss any interesting points they bring up. If they had difficulty ask the following questions:
  - a. What oil field dangers did these videos show?
    - i. Explosion
    - ii. Death of workers
    - iii. Rampant fire
    - iv. Difficulty of fighting fire
  - b. What impact do you think these oil well disasters had on the environment?
    - i. Trees burned down
    - ii. Farmland could be destroyed
    - iii. Often burned for extensive periods because oil gushers “fed” the flames
    - iv. Oil “spills”
    - v. Oil from the explosion getting into the towns and getting on people, in houses, etc.
8. Ask students the following wrap-up questions:
  - a. In your opinion, was the discovery of oil in Texas a good thing or a bad thing and why?
  - b. Would you have wanted to work in an oil field? Why or why not?
  - c. What similarities do you see in the videos to Texas today?
  - d. What effect do you think the oil industry has on the environment today?

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



Students will further evaluate the impact of the oil industry on Texas, through creation and presentation of significant names, events, and concepts relating to the oil industry during the period of 1901 to 1945.

1. Divide students into partners or groups of 3 depending on class size.
2. Provide each group with a medium sized sheet of butcher block paper or a medium poster board, construction paper, scissors, map pencils/markers, and glue.
3. Students will then create an informative poster over one of the following topics:
  - a. Spindletop
  - b. Anthony Lucas
  - c. C.M. "Dad" Joiner
  - d. Pattillo Higgins
  - e. W.T. Waggoner
  - f. John D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil Company
  - g. Geologists
  - h. Wildcatters
  - i. Speculators
  - j. Boomtowns
  - k. Oil Derricks and Drilling Rigs
  - l. Working in the Oil Fields (Conditions, pay, etc.)
  - m. Refineries
  - n. Transporting Oil (pipelines, tankers, etc.)
  - o. Railroad Commission – Rules for Oil
  - p. Need for Oil during World War II
  - q. Uses of Oil and Natural Gas
4. Have students use their books, class notes, library books, TAMI video footage, and the activities and discussions above to complete their assignment.
5. Instruct students that their poster should include the following:
  - a. A description of the event, person, or concept
  - b. A list of accomplishments of the person
  - c. A list of impacts of the event
  - d. What was the effect of the event, person, or concept?
  - e. Three-five sentences analyzing the significance of the event, person, or concept to the oil-industry in Texas during the period of 1901-1945.
  - f. At least 2 relevant pictures to their presentation
6. After the groups finish their posters, have them briefly share the information they researched with the class.
7. Students should be evaluated on the following:
  - a. Accuracy and Completeness of Information
  - b. Quality of Analysis of Significance of Event, Person, etc.
  - c. Aesthetic Value/Relevance of Pictures
    - i. Neatness and Legibility
  - d. Clear and comprehensive presentation



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## **Closing**

1. Ask the students to brainstorm the importance of oil from Texas – suggest to them that this includes both the uses of oil (products made from oil) and the importance of oil to Texas and the larger world around us.
2. As they brainstorm, write their answers on the board. After they have finished sharing ideas, have them work with a partner to decide what they think are the three most significant answers in the brainstormed list.
3. Discuss: Have three or four pairs of students volunteer to share the three they think are most important and why.
4. Exit Ticket: Before the end of class, have each student complete a [Recap-20](#) statement about the significance of oil in Texas.

## **TEKS:**

### **Social Studies Grade 4**

4B: Explain the growth and development of the cattle and oil industries;

5A: Identify the impact of various issues and events on life in Texas such as urbanization, increased use of oil and gas, and the growth of aerospace and other technology industries

14A: Identify ways in which technological changes have resulted in increased interdependence among Texas, the United States, and the world

14B: Identify oil and gas, agricultural, and technological products of Texas that are purchased to meet needs in the United States and around the world