

A Gift from the Past

Reflecting on the City & County Building



Objectives

Students will:

- Examine their feelings about the loss of a cultural artifact.
- Explore the concept of stewardship.
- Discuss citizens' responsibility to be good stewards of our resources.
- Write an editorial about the impact of demolishing the City and County Building.

Teacher Background

This lesson uses the destruction of an alleged family heirloom to elicit student reaction to the loss of an unique cultural artifact. For your “heirloom,” choose an item that looks old and will break easily when dropped or knocked over. You may want to make a trip to the thrift store to find it. We leave it to you to develop the story surrounding your “heirloom.” The more actual details of your family history you weave into the story, the more heartfelt and believable your delivery will be. Emphasize how the “heirloom” connects you to people in the past. (i.e., My great-grandmother used this cup. She died before I was born, but this cup is something we share. It connects our lives.)

Setting the Stage

- 1. Tell students:** Since we have been studying the history of the City and County Building, I want to share something special from my family history with you. Take out your heirloom and tell its story. Be sure to mention that it is a “gift from the past.”
- 2.** Inadvertently break the heirloom during the course of your story.
- 3.** Ask students to share their feelings about the loss of the heirloom. After discussion, reveal that the item was not really a family heirloom. Ask students if they have family heirlooms that connect them to their past.
- 4. Ask students:** *If this really had been an heirloom, would its loss matter to people outside my family? What might we have learned about life long ago from this “heirloom?”*

Materials

- An expendable china cup or other fragile object
- City and County Building Quotes (1 overhead)

Core Curriculum Objectives

4th Grade

- Social Studies
6040-0401
6040-0402

- Language Arts
4040-0601

5th Grade

- Social Studies
6050-0503

- Language Arts
4050-0601

Utah Life Skills

- Responsible Citizenship



Student Instruction

1. Explain that the City and County Building is a gift to all Utahns from people who lived in the past. **Ask students:** *How does the City and County Building connect us to Utah's past? How does it make Salt Lake City a better place to live? What is important about the building to you?*
2. Show overhead of *City and County Building Quotes*. Select students to read quotes to the class. As a class, discuss what they mean.
3. **Ask students:** *Do you think the people who built the City and County Building wanted it to last a long time? If so, what makes you think that? Do we have a responsibility to take care of gifts from the past? What respect do we owe to people in the past? What responsibility do we have to people in the future?*
4. Ask students to think of other historic buildings in the community and list them on the board. **Ask students:** *Are these historic buildings gifts from the past, too? How do they connect us to the past? Do they make our city a better place to live? Why or why not? Do citizens have a responsibility to take care of these buildings?*
5. Write the word “stewardship” on the board. **Explain:** There is a word for the idea that we have a responsibility to care for things and pass them on to future generations. That word is “stewardship.” Stewardship can apply to many things besides historic buildings.
6. Ask students to think of other resources that need wise stewardship and list them on the board. (i.e., water, wilderness, open space, works of art.) **Ask students:** *What will be the consequences if we are not wise stewards of the resources entrusted to us? Can these resources be replaced?*
7. **Ask students:** *What values and principles do good stewards use to guide their actions?*

Student Activity

Tell students: Imagine it is 1985 and Salt Lake City officials have decided to demolish the City and County Building rather than restore it. You are a newspaper reporter assigned to cover the story. You watch the building being torn down and talk to the people in the crowd about their feelings about the demolition. Write an editorial for the paper describing what the demolition of the City and County Building means for the people of Utah. Explain how you think people in the future will view the decision to demolish the building.

Extensions

- As a class, explore how the concept of stewardship applies to resources in your community. Find out what actions each citizen can take to be a wise steward.
- Take students on a walking tour of the neighborhood around your school. Identify all the places that might be considered gifts to the community. Notice parks, open spaces, historic buildings, interesting new buildings, public art, etc. After returning to the classroom, students discuss the places they identified and why they might be considered gifts. **Ask students:** *Will these places be valued by future generations?*
- Take students on a walk around the school interior, school campus, and/or the surrounding neighborhood. Students list any signs of disrespect or neglect they see. Look for graffiti, broken trees, damaged property, etc. After returning to the classroom, students discuss how the examples of disrespectful behavior they saw impact the community. Assign students to design a public awareness campaign aimed at improving respect for public and private property in the community. Students write and perform a speech, newscast, or radio talk show dealing with the issue. Students also design a billboard promoting respect for “Gifts from the Past” or “Gifts to the Future.”
- Read one of these books about the importance of stewardship:
 - Eve Bunting, *Someday a Tree*
 - Susan Vizurraga, *Our Old House*
 - Janice Shefelman, *Victoria House*
 - Lisa Campbell Ernst, *Squirrel Park*
 - Marcus Pfister, *Milo and the Magical Stones*
 - Kristine L. Franklin, *When the Monkeys Came Back*
 - George Ancona, *Riverkeeper*
 - Agra Carment Deedy, *Agatha’s Feather Bed*



City County Building Quotes

Cornerstone Ceremony

July 25, 1892

“ The City and County Building is a living memorial of our progressiveness and enterprise, of our character and history. ”

—Judge George Barch

Dedication Ceremony

December 28, 1894

“ Salt Lake City will continue to produce fine buildings, but none upon which a people will look with greater pride. ”

—Judge Jacob Blair

“ As a citizen, I say all honor to the men who conceived the idea of erecting this structure in the heart of so beautiful a city; all honor to the taxpayers of a city who, when depression hung like a pall over them, bore their part without a complaint. ”

—LDS Church President Wilford Woodruff

