

Where
the past
is present

DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TEACHER RESOURCE LESSON PLAN

THE PORT OF DETROIT



Aerial view of Detroit, 1978

Courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University

INTRODUCTION

This lesson was originally published in *Telling Detroit's Story: Historic Past, Proud People, Shining Future* curriculum unit developed by the Detroit 300 Commission in 2001.

This lesson helps kindergarten through second grade students understand the importance of the Port of Detroit. Students will have the opportunity to examine a list of products imported through the Port of Detroit and determine their source. This will establish our link to the rest of the world and help us to realize how invaluable the Port of Detroit is to all of us in Southeastern Michigan.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Examine a list of products, categorize and establish relationships between them and try to establish the origin of them.
- Through the process of deduction, search for a commonality of all the products. All have entered our environment through the Port of Detroit.

- Determine how this product list affects our lives in terms of needs.

BACKGROUND ESSAY

The Detroit River is a 32-mile strait, a water passageway that separates Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Canada. The word Detroit means "Strait" in French. This waterway has held the reputation as an important route for commercial traffic since the development of the steamboat and the opening of the Erie Canal. The city of Detroit lines the banks of the Detroit River for 13 miles and is directly linked by water to all world markets through the International Port located on the Detroit and Rouge Rivers. The Port of Detroit is 618 miles from the St. Lawrence Seaway. The narrowest width of the strait is a half-mile and its average depth is 40 feet. Without the economic transportation lifeline of the Detroit River, Detroit would not have become such an industrial giant.

If you want to feel the splendor of this waterway, go to the lounge at the top of the Renaissance Center and watch the ships pass by. Or, you can find a place where you can walk down by the waterside and you will see ships up to 1,000 feet interrupt your view of Windsor, Canada. Another great place to experience this panoramic view is the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on Belle Isle.

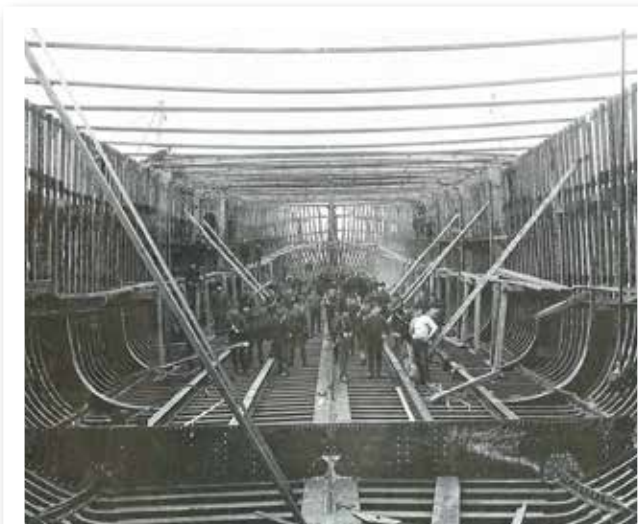
One out of every five ships traveling through this strait docks in Detroit. The amount of cargo handled through Great Lakes' ports is about 125 million tons a year. Detroit's port handles a substantial chunk of more than 14 percent of this total amount.

Steel produces the most revenue per ton of the products handled at the Port of Detroit. Steel alone makes an economic difference of \$400 million in personal income, taxes and other business revenues. Other products shipped through the port

LESSON PLAN: THE PORT OF DETROIT

are petroleum, stone/aggregates, cement, coal, ore, grain and other general cargo.

The Detroit Port Authority has plans to develop the port into a tourist and business attraction as other booming port cities such as Boston and Chicago have done. Cruise ships have started to dock here, drawn by the new casinos in downtown Detroit.



Detroit Dry Dock workers in the skeletal hull of a ship, c. 1900

Courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University

MATERIALS USED

- Chart: Product List and Origin
- Map: World Map

LESSON SEQUENCE

Opening the Activity:

1. Teacher writes the products on the board
2. The class will categorize and/or look for associations between these products.
3. The teacher will model
 - Liquids
 - Fruit Juices
 - Vegetables Juices
 - *EX. Furniture is made from wood products; asphalt/tar and rubber products are related because they both hit the road.*

Developing the Activity

1. As a group they will note examples of each

product that is in the classroom.

2. They will look for labels telling where items are made, to fill in our Product Origin Chart.
3. Any origin found will be marked on a world map with a dot.
4. At this point, the teacher tells them that all the products on the list have something in common. The class tries to decide the commonality: All have been shipped. All could have come through the Port of Detroit.

Concluding the Activity

1. Discuss several of the products answering the questions
 - What does this product do for me?
 - What if I didn't have this product?
 - Would I need something to replace it?
 - What would be a good replacement?
 - Can I live without this product?

Extending the Activity

1. Show a rough drawing of the Port of Detroit with the Renaissance Center, Ambassador Bridge, Detroit River, Belle Isle, Windsor, Canada, and entrance to the tunnel all labeled. Have little drawings of ships with the product names on them. Ask: As the result of our discussion of these products, what have you concluded about the importance of the Port of Detroit to us?

ASSESSING THE LEARNING

Students will cut out objects and make a collage of products that come through the Port of Detroit.

**For more information about the
Detroit Historical Society,
or to schedule a field trip to the
Detroit Historical Museum or
Dossin Great Lakes Museum,
visit detroithistorical.org**

CHART: PRODUCT LIST AND ORIGIN

PRODUCT	EXAMPLE	WHERE IS IT MADE?
1. Wood Products		
2. Iron Ore		
3. Sand		
4. Gravel		
5. Fruit Juice		
6. Vegetable Juice		
7. Grain Products		
8. Food Products		
9. Clothing		
10. Furniture		
11. Paper Products		
12. Printed Materials		
13. Plastic Products		
14. Medicine/Drugs		
15. Paint		
16. Asphalt/Tar		
17. Rubber Products		
18. Glass Products		

MAP: WORLD MAP

