How did Population Change Between 1900 and 1950?

Jennifer Steadman
Northwood Middle School
Taylors, South Carolina
jsteadma@greenville.k12.sc.us

Overview

The population in South Carolina experienced changes between 1900 and 1950. This population change had many causes including the growth of wealth during the 1920s, the vast movement of people during the 1930s, and the effects of World War I and World War II on the population—in some cases the change was positive; in others, the change was negative. These two maps may be examined to see how the population of the state changed over the first half of the twentieth century.

Connection to the Curriculum

This activity is largely a social studies activity, but it also incorporates spatial distribution and mathematics abilities. In addition, students will have to use critical thinking skills and make a connection to language arts.

South Carolina Social Studies Standards

3-5.4   Explain the impact and causes of emigration from South Carolina and internal migration from the rural areas to the cities, including unemployment, poor sanitation, and transportation services, and the lack of electricity and other modern conveniences in rural locations.

8-6   The student will demonstrate an understanding of South Carolina's development during the early twentieth century.

Social Studies Literacy Elements

E. Explain change and continuity over time
I. Use maps to observe and interpret geographic information and relationships
P. Locate, gather, and process information from a variety of primary and secondary sources
        including maps

Grade Range

3rd and 8th grade

Time

One to two 50-minute class periods

Materials

South Carolina: An Atlas
Notebook paper
Textbook or other research materials (8th grade only)

Objectives
1. Identify the 5-10 most heavily populated cities in South Carolina for the 1900 population map and for the 1950 population map.
2. Theorize reasons for the change in population over the fifty years.

Suggested Procedures for 3rd Grade:

1. Using the map on page 23 and a city map of South Carolina, identify the cities that have the most people in 1900 [Answers: Greenville, Spartanburg, Columbia, Charleston for the 4 biggest; other smaller cities are Anderson, Georgetown, Pelzer, Beaufort, and various county seats].

2. Using the map on page 24 and a city map of South Carolina, identify the cities that have the most people in 1950 [This one requires more answers—you may want to limit it to the top ten.]

3. Ask students why they think that there are more big cities in South Carolina in 1950 than there are in 1900 and write their answers on the board.

4. Have the students write a fictitious short story about how one of the cities grew so much in fifty years.

Suggested Procedures for 8th Grade:

1. Using the map on page 23 and a city map of South Carolina, identify the cities that have the most people in 1900 [Answers: Greenville, Spartanburg, Columbia, Charleston for the 4 biggest; other smaller cities are Anderson, Georgetown, Pelzer, Beaufort, and various county seats].

2. Using the map on page 24 and a city map of South Carolina, identify the cities that have the most people in 1950 [This one requires more answers—you may want to limit it to the top ten.]

3. Also have the students examine a map of railroads in South Carolina during the first half of the twentieth century and lead them in seeing where the railroad would coincide with cities and towns.

4. Have students brainstorm reasons why a particular city might grow so much in fifty years [for example, if you teach in Greenville County, ask them to think why Greenville grew so much]. Or, you may have them brainstorm why cities all over the state grew so much.

5. Instruct the students to read the appropriate material in their textbook (find specific page numbers ahead of time).

6. The students will then write an essay (if they brainstormed the whole state) or a long paragraph (if they brainstormed a particular city) describing the reasons behind the growth of cities.

Suggested Evaluation

3rd Grade

The teacher should decide which activity should receive the most emphasis. The teacher may want to focus on participation or on the short story. If the teacher wishes to grade the short story, then he/she should use the language arts grading system he/she normally uses.

8th Grade

The teacher should decide if he/she wants to give a grade for determining the most populated cities—I personally would make that a class activity that did not receive a grade. However, I would give a grade for the brainstorming and writing assignment. If I wanted to make this a major grade, then I would have students turn in their rough draft for me to evaluate and make suggestions, and then have them turn in a final draft at a later date. I grade student writing assignments for 60% content and 40% grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, actually using paragraphs, and a title.

Lesson Extensions

This lesson could be extended in many ways. The students could do an oral history project and interview people who remembered the 1930s and 1940s and lived "in town" in South Carolina and get their take on why their town grew. They could access the U.S. Census data and get population specifics for 1900 and 1950 and create a map or a chart showing the specific increase for the state, the counties, and/or the cities. Finally, they could go on a walking tour of their local city and have an experienced guide describe the growth of the city to them.

Resources

The University of Virginia's library website contains census information through 1960. The site allows people to choose their own variables to show up in a chart. The site also allows users to see the variable information in a map by clicking on "map it!" under the category name. The website's address is http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus and is easy to navigate.

A variety of sources exist for finding information about South Carolina. A general history that is easily accessible is Walter Edgar's *History of South Carolina*.

South Carolina: An Atlas
> Produced and distributed by the South Carolina Geographic Alliance
> 1-888-895-2023
> www.cas.sc.edu/cege