Steamboats Of Florida: Steaming ‘Round Florida’s Waterways

Grade Level: Middle/Secondary

Time: 2 periods of 45 minutes

Concept: Using maps, primary sources, and background information, students will be able to describe the main reasons for the use of steamboats along Florida’s waterways.

Objectives: Students will:
1. use maps to research steamboat routes.
2. use pictures/primary sources to describe steamboat travel.
3. discuss how roads, highways, and airports replaced waterway travel.
4. research and discuss the growth/decline of Florida towns and cities along waterway routes.

Materials:
Florida map of steamboat routes and ports of call.
The Florida Archives Online at http://fpc.dos.state.fl.us
Primary sources such as advertisements, brochures, travel rates and routes, blueprints/plans for a steamboat, and newspaper clippings.

Background Information:
Florida waterways, important to the Native Americans of Florida, were equally important to early American settlers of Florida. In the early 1800’s steamboat travel was vital to the transportation of goods, services, and people. At that time, the topography of Florida proved to be too costly and too time consuming to travel through. Steamboats became the means of mobility for tourists, farmers, and tradesmen. Steamboat lines offered the traveler scheduled stops and enough boats to get them where they wanted to go.

Florida steamboats traveled far inland, sometimes provoking a hazardous trip. Steamboats were built of shallow-draft so that they would not drag or scrape the bottom when loaded with cargo. At night, the crew would light baskets of logs to light the way for travel.

Lumber, furniture, farm goods, and people were just several of the items transported by steamboats. Rates of travel depended on what class people wanted to travel. A first class trip from New York to Sanford, Fl cost $27.50, while a person traveling steerage paid $13.50. The early 1900’s gave way to railroad travel and eventually the switch was made to highways and airports. Most of the steamboats by then were unused and dismantled for other purposes.

Procedures:
Initiating Activity:
*Note: Prior to this activity, the teacher should research the Florida Archives Online website to download images of early Florida, both land and sea.
1. After the teacher has researched the images and downloaded several for the classroom, the
images should be displayed around the classroom or on the board. A map of Florida, current or old, should also be hanging in the classroom. Ask the students to look over the images and the map and come up with some suggestions as to why steamboats were popular in the early 1800’s.

2. Using the steamboat route map, have the students discuss the rivers and cities along the waterways. Are these waterways used today? Why or why not?

**Strategies:**
1. Using the Florida Archives Online, have pairs of students search for pictures of steamboats.
   * Note: with each photograph, the Archives provide a title, date, subject heading, and sometimes a brief discussion of the steamer.
2. Have the students describe the pictures and record their thoughts and observations.

Sample Questions for students to use when observing:
   a. What time of year is it? How can you tell?
   b. Do you think the time of year affected maritime travel? Why or why not?
   c. What does the picture reveal about
      Climate?
      Technology?
      Economic Status?
      Occupation?
      Division of labor?
      Travel?
      Trade?
      Goods and people?
   d. Why do you think this picture was taken?
   e. Did the look of steamboats change over time? If so, describe how they changed.
   f. Do you think the picture portrays an accurate picture of Florida at that time?

**Culminating Activity:**
Pairs of students could give an oral presentation of what they discussed on the images of steamboats, highlighting a photo of choice.

**Extension Activity:**
Pairs of students could research a Florida city/town from the list provided and discuss the reasons for the growth/decline of the area depending on travel and trade. Graph the use of steamboats, railroads, highways, and airports throughout Florida’s history.

List of Florida cities and towns:
   Apalachicola
   Branford
   Cedar Key
   Chattahoochee
   Fernandina
   Jacksonville
   Green Cove Springs
   Palatka
   Silver Springs
   Dunnellon
Enterprise
Okahumpka
Sanford
New Smyrna
Titusville
Kissimmee
Tampa
Bradenton
Punta Gorda
Ft. Myers
Jupiter
Miami

Students can take their own pictures of waterways near home and school and research its use and disuse.

**National Geography Standards:**
Standard 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
Standard 4: Physical and human characteristics of places.
Standard 17: How to apply geography to interpret the earth.

**Sunshine State Standards:**
SS.A.6.3.1: understands how immigration and settlement patterns have shaped the history of Florida.
SS. B. 1.3.1: uses various map forms and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies.
SS.B.1.3.7: understands the spatial aspects of communication and transportation systems.

**Web Sites:**
Florida Archives Online- http://fpc.dos.state.fl.us
http://www.steamboats.org
http://members.tripod.com/~Write4801/riverboats.html

**Books:**
Images of America Series: