

**State
Historical
Society of
North Dakota**

Chateau De Mores State Historic Site

Observation Exercise

Standards:

This activity meets the following ND Social Studies Standards and Benchmarks:

- 4.1.2
- 4.1.3
- 4.4.1
- 4.4.3

It also meets the ELA Standards and Benchmarks:

- 4.1.1
- 4.1.2
- 4.3.1
- 4.3.3
- 4.3.5
- 4.3.6
- 4.3.7
- 4.3.10
- 4.3.11
- 4.3.12
- 4.4.1
- 4.4.2
- 4.4.6
- 4.6.1

Age Level:

Duration:

50-75 minutes

OVERVIEW:

The 128-acre Chateau de Mores State Historic Site is comprised of three separate parts:

- The Chateau de Mores (1/8 mile west and 1/8 miles south of Medora),
- Chimney Park (west edge of Medora), and
- de Mores Memorial Park (downtown Medora).

It is important for students to recognize the value of local history and the part it played in the development of North Dakota. The resources of the state historic sites are a valuable asset to the school and community and as such should be explored more fully.

This lesson was written to enable school students to understand some of the background about the beginnings of Medora and the de Mores family before a visit to the site.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Observe details and present findings in oral form
- Become familiar with rooms in the Chateau de Mores
- Write a descriptive essay that incorporates the 5 senses

ENGAGEMENT:

Travel writers from all over the world often visit the Chateau today to write for the tourism industry and to encourage people to come to North Dakota to visit. In 1884, those writers may not have had the title of “travel writer”, but as they wrote home about their experiences they were trying to create a word picture so that someone else could experience the same thing that they were seeing. Guests began arriving at the Chateau in 1884 even before the family arrived in the spring. One of the visitors wrote about his experience in a letter to the **Philadelphia Times**:

Materials:

- Copies of the Observation Exercise Practice and/or Worksheet
- Notebook paper
- Color images of the rooms in the Chateau de Mores (*Images are available on the website*)

"We are the guests of the Marquis, but the Marquis is not at home, and we have the free range of his big house. The building suggests a summer boarding-house by its size, and its furnishing is a cross between a Newport cottage and a hunting lodge. Couches and tables are covered with red Mackinac [Mackinaw] blankets; there are deer horns over the doors, and an enormous buffalo head stares at the occupants of the spacious breezy parlor, where easy chairs of a variety of cool, comfortable patterns invite lounging. The big dining-room and kitchen and eight guest chambers up-stairs bespeak the hospitable habits of the master of the premises. From the wide porch one looks down into the narrow valley of the Little Missouri and out on the walls of the fantastic buttes streaked with strata of red terra cotta, blue clay and dark brown lignite."

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce the idea of a travel writer who uses detailed descriptions to "draw" pictures of places for readers. Explain that students will be using their oral and writing skills to describe a room at the Chateau de Mores to their classmates.
2. Explain the process of being a travel writer - observing details, taking notes, comparing something to something else (what it is similar to or reminds you of), using adjectives and adverbs to draw a picture for the reader.
3. Practice: Divide the class into groups. Assign each group an object in the room to describe without telling the rest of the class what it is. Have each group write a description of the object and then read their description to the class. Have the class guess which object they are describing. Use the Exercise Practice Master to make charts for the students or have them use notebook paper to write their descriptions.
4. The Chateau de Mores: Hand out copies of the Observation Worksheet and give each group a color picture of a Chateau room. Have each group work together to fill out the worksheet.

5. Oral presentations: Have the members of each group stand before the class with their worksheets. Have one student hold up their room picture. Ask the group to give their answers to questions 1-3 from the worksheet. Then have each student read a description of an object in the room. (Since the objects are listed as *A-E* on the worksheet, you can ask a student to read across row *A*, for example. You can also have students write 1-2 sentences describing the object before they stand to give their oral presentation.)
6. Discuss students' descriptions with the class. Can the other students get a picture of these objects in their minds? Do they get a feel for the room? Pass the picture of the room around to the other students.
7. Conclusion: Review the importance of observing details in order to give vivid descriptions. Remind students that they will be seeing these rooms on their field trip to the Chateau de Mores. Have students be prepared to view the Chateau as travel writers by observing the details while on their tour. Also have them think about how they would describe their observations in writing.

Follow up or Homework Assignment:

Depending upon how much class time you want to dedicate to this exercise, students can use the answers from their worksheet to write a descriptive essay of the room they examined.

Here is a sample outline you may want to offer students to help them write their essays:

- Beginning - introduce the room & how it was used (create sentences from the answers to questions 1-3 on the worksheet)
- Middle - describe the objects in the room by using the descriptive words from the worksheet (have two sentences for each object; one using the descriptive words and one creating a metaphor or simile for the object)
- End - give an opinion about the room and explain what is most interesting (I like/dislike this room because _____ or I think this room is _____)

Have students proofread their first drafts, circling all the descriptive words they have used. Have them add more descriptive words where needed.

TECHNOLOGY LINKS:

www.state.nd.us/hist/chateauLesson/packet.html

Source:

Barbara Carlson, interpreter/guide Chateau de Mores
Mrs. Tammy Nistler, Lincoln Elementary School, Beach, ND

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