

Lesson Overview:

Who and what is commemorated within the history of our state, and how can we use creativity and technology to tell those stories today?

Why and how do we remember people, places, and events that shape our communities? In this lesson, students explore the concept of commemoration through the lens of local and state history, then connect those ideas to the modern world. After a short exploration of real historical markers, students choose one of three activity options: (1) research and present a person, place, or event of significance, (2) write their own historical marker, or (3) creatively imagine the story of a building or place through writing. Each option encourages creativity, research skills, and local engagement, while aligning with the same Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards from the original lesson.

Objectives

SWBAT (Students Will Be Able To):

1. Identify, interpret, and reflect on the significance of people, places, and events in Texas or their community.
2. Understand why societies commemorate history through markers, stories, and symbols.
3. Conduct research using valid primary and secondary sources, both print and digital.
4. Communicate their understanding through creative writing, visual design, or multimedia presentations.
5. Reflect on the importance of preserving memory in the digital age.

Social Studies TEKS

- **4.5(A):** Explain the impact of various events on life in Texas ... and notable individuals and other local individuals.
- **4.14(A):** Explain the meaning of various patriotic symbols and landmarks of Texas.
- **4.19(A):** Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as technology; interviews; oral, print, and visual material; documents; and artifacts.
- **4.19(C):** Analyze information by sequencing, summarizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, and drawing conclusions.
- **4.19(D):** Organize and interpret information in reports, databases, and visuals.
- **4.19(G):** Develop and communicate a claim and supporting evidence visually, orally, or in writing related to a social studies topic.

Materials

- Computers/tablets with internet access
- Access to Texas Historic Sites Atlas (atlas.thc.texas.gov) to search for historical markers
- Design tools (Canva, Google Slides, or poster materials)
- QR code generator (optional)
- Handouts

Teacher Preparation

- Locate local or regional historical markers using atlas.thc.texas.gov.
- Prepare examples of markers that commemorate people, buildings, and events.
- Choose the activity options that best fit your class's current unit (Texas history, innovations, culture, etc.).
- Set up digital tools (Google Map, Padlet, or Slides) for student submissions.

Vocabulary

1. **Commemorate** (*verb*): to remember something special by doing an activity or holding an event.
2. **Significance** (*noun*): how important something is.
3. **Legacy** (*noun*): something passed down to you from people who lived before, like ideas, traditions, or achievements.
4. **Primary Source** (*noun*): a record from someone who saw or experienced an event, like a photo, an object, a diary, a historic site, a video, or a news report from that time.
5. **Distinction** (*noun*): a difference between things that makes them not the same.

Pacing Guide

Activity	Time	Purpose
1. Hook: What Deserves to Be Remembered?	10 minutes	Engage students in discussion about why certain people, places, or events are remembered through markers and memorials.
2. Explore: Discover Local or Digital History	15 minutes	Examine one or two nearby or online historical markers to learn how history is preserved and communicated.
3. Main Activity (Teacher's Choice): • <i>Option 1: Write Your Own Historical Marker</i>	25 minutes	Allow students to apply learning through one creative, research-based, or writing-centered activity connecting local or historical significance.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Option 2:</i> If Buildings Could Talk (Creative Writing) • <i>Option 3:</i> Choose and Research a Story 		
4. Wrap-Up: Share & Reflect	10 minutes	Students share highlights from their chosen activity and reflect on why their topic or story is worth remembering.

Hook/Engage: “What Deserves to Be Remembered?”

Time: 10 minutes

Instructions:

1. Visual or Digital Gallery Walk:

- Display 3–4 images of historical markers, local landmarks, or people (can be Texas-based or related to your current unit).
- Option: Create a **Padlet** or **Google Slides gallery** students can scroll through.

2. Discussion Prompts:

- What do these pictures show you about the people or places?
- Why do you think the community wanted to remember these stories?

3. Class Brainstorm:

- On chart paper or digital slide, list reasons why people or places become “historically significant.”
- Students share examples from their own community.

ESL/ELL: Use labeled visuals and sentence stems (“This marker remembers ___ because ___.”)

SPED: Use fewer, high-contrast images; define key vocabulary like “marker” and “memory.”

GT: Ask students to suggest a modern event or person that should be remembered in 100 years.

Explore: Discover Local and Digital History

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions:

1. Explore Together

- Students go to atlas.thc.texas.gov with your class.
- Look for historical markers (special signs that tell stories about history) near where they live.
 - Select “City”
 - Type in your city
 - Uncheck all of the boxes except “Historical Marker”
 - Scroll down and hit “Submit”
- Pick 2 or 3 markers to look at and read.

2. Work in Small Groups

- In groups of 4, the students choose one marker to learn about.
- Read the information on the marker and write a short summary:
 - Who or what is it about?
 - Why is it important?

3. Share What They Found

- Each group shares one interesting fact or a question about their marker with the class.
 - *Bonus:* Groups can also add their marker to a class map or Padlet board to show where it is!

ESL/ELL: Provide sentence stems (“*This marker honors ___ because ___.*”) and bilingual resources if available.

SPED: Allow students to use text-to-speech to read marker descriptions.

GT: Have students find and compare an out-of-state or international historical marker using www.hmbd.com.

Activity Option 1: Choose and Research a Story

Time: 25 minutes

Instructions:

1. Topic Selection:

- Students select a topic that connects to your current unit - a person, building, innovation, or event.

2. Guided Research:

- Use digital and print sources (library databases, [Portal to Texas History](#), or interviews).
- Collect facts: Who, What, When, Where, Why it matters.

3. Research Organizer:

- Students complete a simple chart or digital document summarizing their findings.
- Encourage citing where information came from.

4. Class Check-in:

- Share short summaries or “fun facts” about what they’ve learned.

ESL/ELL: Provide a sentence frame chart for note-taking (“*One fact I found was ____.*”).

SPED: Provide pre-selected sources or reading passages at appropriate levels.

GT: Encourage use of primary sources (letters, photos, interviews).

Activity Option 2: Write Your Own Historical Marker

Time: 25 minutes

Instructions:

1. Review Examples:

- Look at 1–2 real historical markers to notice tone, length, and format.

2. Draft Marker Text:

- Students write a short 100–150 word marker that includes:
 - Title
 - Location or time period
 - Brief summary of importance
 - Why it deserves to be remembered?

3. Add Text to Marker Template:

- Use the provided marker template to properly construct the text to the marker.

4. Tech Option:

- Create a 1-2 minute video or podcast explaining their marker. Then, generate a QR code that links to their video or podcast.

ESL/ELL: Provide a writing frame or example marker to model structure.

SPED: Allow voice dictation tools for writing; shorten text expectations if needed.

GT: Encourage writing two versions, one traditional and one for the future (going into more detail about the current times for readers viewing the marker 100 years from now).

Activity Option 3: “If Our Building Could Talk” (Creative Writing Extension)

Time: 25 minutes

Instructions:

1. **(For Teacher) Find out the history of your school.**
 - The year the building was constructed.
 - Who the school was named after and why.
 - Any significant events that have happened in the town or at the school.
2. **Brainstorm:**
 - What do you think our building has “seen” over the years?
 - Who do you think has come through this building in the past?
 - What do you think this building would say if it could talk?
3. **Write or Record:**
 - Students write a short story, diary entry, or poem *as if* the building were speaking.
 - Option: Record an audio version or use a digital voiceover tool.
4. **Share:**
 - Students share with the class or upload to a shared “Voices of the Past” folder.

ESL/ELL: Provide prompts like “*I remember when...*” or “*I have seen...*”

SPED: Offer sentence starters or graphic organizers.

GT: Challenge students to include two different time periods in their story.

Conclusion: Share and Reflect

Time: 10 minutes

Instructions:

1. **Create:**
 - Each student will create a marker about themselves for future readers 100 years from now, answering with their name, place of birth, and one of the following:
 - *What did you enjoy doing?*
 - *What are two things that were important to you?*
 - *What are you most remembered for?*

2. Showcase:

- Display student-created markers in the classroom, hallway, or on a digital slideshow/map.

3. Gallery Walk:

- Students walk around (or scroll through) and leave one comment or question for three classmates.

4. Reflection:

- Students write short answers to one of the following questions:
 - What is one thing you enjoyed learning today
 - How do you relate to one of your classmate's marker?

ESL/ELL: Provide reflection sentence frames (*"I learned that ____."* or *"I relate to my classmate's marker because ____."*)

SPED: Offer oral reflection instead of written.

GT: Ask students to predict how future historians might interpret their marker in 100 years.