

# I. What a Town Needs

## WHAT?

Students will determine factors a town needs to maintain success.

## WHY?

To identify geographic, economic, social elements necessary to maintain a town's success

To compare and contrast ghost towns with operational towns

To describe the elements of success in the students' town

To identify cause and effect relationships

To gather information from the Internet successfully

To communicate ideas and findings

To draw conclusions

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills Addressed in this lesson:

### *History*

- Understand common characteristics of communities, past and present

### *Geography*

- Understand how humans adapt to variations in the physical environment
- Understand the concepts of location, distance and direction on maps and globes
- Understand the location and patterns of settlement and the geographic factors that influence where people live

### *Social Studies Skills*

- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology
- Communicate in oral and visual forms

## TAKS:

- Objective 1: Issues and Events in U.S. History
- Objective 2: Geographic Influences on Historical Issues and Events
- Objective 3: Economic and Social Influences on Historical Issues and Events
- Objective 5: Critical-Thinking Skills

## HOW?

### Materials needed:

- A wall map of Texas
- One sticky note for each of the following locations to place on the map: Huntsville (Cincinnati), Rusk (New Birmingham), Lufkin (Aldridge), Palestine (Plenitude), and Tyler (Burning Bush)
- Handout titled “Ghost Town Tales”
- Handout titled “What a Town Lost”
- Handout titled “Successful Towns”
- Handout titled “What Do You Think?”
- Internet access for student use

Suggested Teaching Time: 2 class periods

### Suggested Procedures:

1. Brainstorm the question: What does a town need to be successful? Write student responses on the board. It would be helpful to lead students to include such elements as: A variety of places that provide jobs and access to means of transporting goods such as major highways and railroads.
2. Divide the students into home groups as a base for a jigsaw activity. In each group, each student selects one of the following Texas ghost towns: Cincinnati, New Birmingham, Aldridge, Plenitude, Burning Bush.
3. Students form ghost town groups. Example: All of the home group representatives of Cincinnati meet together.
4. Distribute the handouts titled “Ghost Town Tales” and “What a Town Lost.” Students read about their group’s ghost town and complete the data retrieval chart, “What a Town Lost” for their group’s ghost town.
5. It would be helpful for the teacher to check the information each group records for reasonableness and accuracy.
6. Students return to their home groups. Each student tells about his/her town and reports on how his/her group completed the data retrieval chart. Students complete their charts as they listen to the individual reports.
7. Return to the brainstorm list and ask students which elements on the list the ghost towns lost. Place an X mark beside the designated items.

8. Ask for volunteers to locate towns on the Texas map. Have volunteers place the pre-written sticky notes listed in the Materials Section on the appropriate places on the Texas map.
9. Tell the students that they have discovered why certain towns are not successful and eventually close. Now they will examine why certain towns very near the sites of the old ghost towns have remained successful.
10. Distribute the handout “Successful Towns.” Have the students work in pairs to complete their data retrieval charts by consulting the following Internet addresses:  
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/index.html>  
<http://www.huntsvilletexas.com/>  
<http://www.rusktx.com/>  
<http://www.tylertexas.com/index2.htm>  
<http://www.cityoflufkin.com/>  
<http://www.palestine-online.org/>
11. Have each pair work with another pair to compare their findings and make adjustments to their charts.
12. Have the class consult the brainstorm list again. Ask students which elements on the list the successful towns have. Place a check mark beside the designated items.
13. Have students meet in their home groups’ and distribute the handout titled, “What Do You Think?”
14. As a group, students record five elements they think are important for a successful town. The groups report to the class and add items they hear from other groups they judge to be important.
15. As a group, students list elements on their “What Do You Think?” handout that they think make their own town successful.
16. Return to the brainstorm list. Ask each group to tell one item they wrote on their own list. If the item is part of the brainstorm list, place a star beside it. If it is not on the list, add the item to the list if it is appropriate.

**Evaluation:** Individually students write a paragraph titled “What a Town Needs.” Instruct students to tell why they think towns need certain elements in order to be successful.

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Information about ghost towns comes from:

Bowman, Bob. *The 35 Best Ghost Towns in East Texas*. Bob Bowman and Associates, 1988.