

Eco-History at Matheson Hammock Park Pre and Post Visit Activities

Introduction:

The following are a list of ideas of how to introduce the rich natural history of southern Florida, inquire about the threats to these special places, and discover ways that we can make a difference in Miami's conservation. We recommend these ideas be used as pre- and/or post-visit lessons for this historic site visit.

Grades:

3-12

Objectives for PROGRAM:

- Students will identify and study the unique Tropical Hardwood Hammock habitat, its uses by humans in the last 10,000 years, and the significant environmental threats and restoration efforts within the confines of this park.
- Students will understand that where we live influences how we live.
- Students will understand we have a place in the natural world.

Vocabulary:

Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.)

Endangered

Exotic

Mangrove Swamp

Oolitic Limestone

Seminole

Tropical Hardwood Hammock

Cutler Fossil Site

Environmental Restoration

Extinct

Miccosukee

Paleo

Threatened

West Indies

Ecosystem

Epiphyte

Hunting Grounds

Migration

Pine Rockland

Tropical Climate

Introduction to the site (for teacher to familiarize themselves with the site):

Matheson Hammock Park is the largest remaining hammock environment in Dade County. In 1930 the park opened on land donated by the Matheson family to Dade County for conservation purposes. A tropical hardwood hammock is a unique environment located on a limestone ridge close to the ocean. The plants are all part of a broad-leaf evergreen forest with mainly West-Indian plants and animals, unique in this country to South Florida. The plants here are at a slightly higher elevation, and the limestone creates good drainage for the roots of the plants. The high canopy created by the broad-leaf evergreen forest allows humidity to be trapped in the hammock allowing for many tropical plants to thrive.

Pre-Visit Conversations

Activity 1: What is in a museum?

Duration of Activity: 40 minutes

Objectives of activity:

- To introduce students to collections and in particular those at HistoryMiami.
- The museum collects within four categories, Documents, Fossils, Artifacts and Replicas.

Instructions:

STUDENTS:

Take out a piece of paper

Fold the paper in half (vertically)

Number both halves of paper from 1-10

Label the upper left side: My Collections and the upper right side: Museum's Collections

Write down what you collect on the left and what you think the museum collects on the right.

TEACHER:

A book, letter or map (a document), a rock or leaf (can be a fossil someday), an object that is authentic (an artifact like a family heirloom) and an object that is a replica (maybe a piece of costume jewelry)

- After everyone has done this, have students share some of their collections.
- Then have students share their ideas for a museum collection (there is no right or wrong)
 - You can then share with the students the four things you put aside
 - Have them try to put them into categories (documents, fossils, artifacts and replicas)
 - You can share with them that these are the four categories the Museum at HistoryMiami collects in.
 - Have the students try to pull four similar object from their person – their textbooks, something from their backpack – they will see how they are carrying collections with them at all times as well.
 - Have students explain WHY those pieces from the collection are in the category they are in.

Key questions for students:

- What is a collection?
- Why do people collect?
- Why do museums collect?

Activity 2: South Florida's plant life

Duration of Activity: 45 minutes

Objectives of Activity:

- To have students gain an understanding of the various plants of South Florida.

Materials

- A collection of leaves from around the school.
- Crayons
- Attached objects study sheets
- Plain sheets of paper

Instructions:

www.historymiami.org

1. The instructor shows the class a leaf and encourages them to answer questions on the attached natural objects study sheet
2. The students then create rubbings of the leaves and label them to create a wall hanging for your room.
3. The instructor can now share with the class that they are going to be learning more about the object and its connections.

Activity 3: “From Wilderness to Metropolis”

Duration of Activity: 20 minutes – writing prompt

Objectives of Activity:

- To engage students in thinking about the effect they are having on their environment

Materials

- Copies of the attached image

Instructions:

1. Read the title of the quilt square, “From Wilderness to Metropolis” aloud to your class. Make copies of this photograph so students can take a look. Prompt students to interpret what this title is referring to.
2. Ask students to write about what they already know of Florida’s wilderness, and to cite specific examples they see in Miami that indicate the city’s ever-growing expansion.

Post-Visit Conversations

Activity 1: What can you do?

Duration of Activity: 60 minutes

Objectives:

- The students demonstrate that they have learned, understood, and remembered the content of the Matheson Hammock Park Program

Instructions:

1. Divide students into groups, groups of 4 students are ideal.
2. Discuss the following topics:
 - a. What are the threats facing Florida’s Tropical Hammock environment?
 - b. What can you do as a student to help preserve the environment?
 - c. Do organizations help the environment?
 - d. What are some organizations in the area working to preserve South Florida’s environment?
3. Create a poster (a 11x14 piece of paper should suffice) of different things you can do to help the environment.

Other Potential Post-Visit Ideas

Clean-Up Activity: Take part in and/or organize a clean-up activity in the community.

Create a Podcast: Choose one of the ideas you discussed for a way you can help the environment and create a podcast telling others how they can do it too!

Activity 2: Log writing

Duration of Activity: 15 minutes or homework

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Objectives:

- Students will reflect on their visit and connect with their growth.

Instructions:

After the museum visit, students will spend time on writing a personal log. This will help with retention of information they have gathered.

Key Questions for students:

- Where and when did you go?
 - What did you see, hear, touch, do?
 - What was your favorite part? – Why?
 - What new piece of information changed the way you thought about the world? – Why?
 - Which words and ideas stood out the most? – Why?
 - What do you think about the experience?
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Thank You!

Thank you again for your participation and we look forward to working with you again soon!

We have many programs available, as well as professional development workshops for object and inquiry based approaches to learning and the Picturing America series.

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Regards,

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If you need a sign language interpreter, or materials in accessible format, please call 305-375-5379 or email: accessibility@historymiami.org.

Natural Object Study

Study your group's object carefully.

Try to answer as many questions as possible.

Draw your object in the frame



1. Is it an artifact, a replica, fossil or a document?

2. Where did it live?

3. Are there clues of what happened in its life or why it died?

4. What is color is it?

5. Is it heavy?

6. What does it sound like?

7. What kind of texture does it have?

8. Is it fragile or strong?

9. Is it a complete object, or part of one?

10. What did it do in its life? _____

11. What shapes do you see in the object? _____

12. What about its design helped it in its environment? _____

13. Has the object changed over time? _____

14. Does it remind you of anything? _____

15. How does it teach you about the past? _____

16. Where can you find out more about it? _____

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From Wilderness to Metropolis