

**“It’s News to Me!”**  
**Teaching with Colorado’s Historic Newspaper Collection**  
**Model Lesson Format**

**Lesson Title:**

Colorado Irrigation Methods and Water Rights Disputes in the Late 1800s and Early 1900s

**Subject(s) and Grade Level(s):**

Science, History; Economics: Grades 9-12

**Focus of Lesson:** A brief explanation of what students are to learn in this lesson (content and/or skills). What is the purpose of the lesson?

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, a series of irrigation ditches was constructed along the Arkansas and South Platte Rivers to provide farmers with sufficient water to meet their agricultural needs in an arid environment. Kansas claimed that the amount of water withdrawn from the Arkansas reduced the flow of water sufficient to affect their rights to that water. The Colorado-Kansas dispute was settled by the Supreme Court.

**Standards Assessed:** Which standards will you be assessing in this lesson? Identify the content area, the standard number and any key components or benchmarks that are applicable.

**Information Literacy Standard 1:** The information literate student accesses information efficiently and effectively.

**Information Literacy Standard 2:** The information literate student evaluates information critically and competently.

**Reading and Writing Standard 4:** Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. In order to meet this standard, students will make predictions, analyze, draw conclusions, and discriminate between fact and opinion in writing, reading, speaking, listening and viewing. They will also recognize, express, and defend points of view orally and in writing and evaluate the reliability, accuracy, and relevancy of the information.

**Assessment:** Explain the assessment. (Include the formal 'assessment assignment' and any forms, worksheets, etc. in the Materials Section)

1. Activity #1 – Written list of major points covered in “teaching” other group members.
2. Activity #2 – Written letter describing photo interpretations.
3. Activity #3 - Written chart stating the position of one of the town meeting groups and the primary source in the Historical Newspaper Collection supporting the position.

**Standards Addressed:** Which standards will you be addressing (but not assessing) in this lesson? Identify the content area, the standard number and any key components or benchmarks that are applicable.

**History Standard 2:** Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.

**History Standard 2.1:** Students know how to formulate questions and hypotheses regarding what happened in the past and to obtain and analyze historical data to answer questions and test hypotheses.

**History Standard 2.2:** Students know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of historical information.

**History Standard 4:** Students understand how science, technology, and economic activity have developed, changed, and affected societies throughout history.

**Economics Standard 3:** Students understand the results of trade, exchange, and interdependence among individuals, households, businesses, governments, and societies.

**Economics 3.1:** Students understand that the exchange of goods and services creates economic interdependence and change.

**Science Standard 4.3:** Students know major sources of water, its uses, importance, and cyclic patterns of movement through the environment. Students are capable of identifying and explaining factors that influence the quality of water needed to sustain life; identifying and analyzing the costs, benefits, and consequences of using water resources.

**Time:** The number of class periods required for the lesson as well as the length of class period.

A Total of 5 class period plus outside homework for researching:

Day 1: Introduction to Colorado Digitization Project and Historic Newspaper Collection. Student Activity 1

Day 2: Student Activity 2 – research and homework to finish letter

Day 3: Introduction to Activity 3; Assignment of groups to be represented; begin research in the historic newspaper collection.

Day 4: Continued preparation and chart completion

Day 5: Town meeting presentations

**Materials / Teacher Preparation Section:** List the technology, handouts, chart paper, text resources, etc. needed to complete the lesson. Include what you need to do to prepare ahead of time for your students to complete the lesson.

Go to [www.cdpheritage.org](http://www.cdpheritage.org). Students should review the frequently asked questions section and the search tips for using historic newspapers. Students should be shown how to print, email or add an article to “my collection”. Students should be given the format required by the teacher to cite the sources used.

Handouts:

Student Worksheet #1 - Littleton History – Ditches and Irrigation

Student Worksheet #2 - Colorado Irrigation Ditches 1870 – 1910

Student Worksheet #3 - Town Meeting Scenario

Technology:

Access to the internet, printer, word processor

**Possible Procedures:** Enumerate the procedure teachers can follow to teach the lesson to students. Provide the URL for the digital primary sources that you will use.

1. Students read an overview of agriculture and irrigation in the Littleton area in the late 1800s, setting the stage to define the need for agricultural expansion in light of a growing population (<http://www.littletongov.org/history/othertopics>). Because of Colorado’s arid climate, the ability to secure water sources and delivery the water to the farms was a primary key to sound economic development. Students will engage in a pair and share activity. In the pair and share activity 2 members of the group read through one section and make a list of the major points presented in the article. They will teach the other members of the group about what they have read.
2. Activity 2 engages the students to research time appropriate photos through the Heritage West collection at [www.cdpheritage.org](http://www.cdpheritage.org) on irrigation ditches and water ditches. Students write a letter to a friend in a different part of the United States, explaining how people in Colorado got water for irrigation, the concept of a water ditch and insights into how the water ditches were constructed. This activity provides students with background information for investigating of the Kansas-Colorado Water Dispute. Students are asked to critically examine the photos and interpret ideas about the methods of construction of ditches, the size and location and the need for irrigation based on the surrounding landscape.
3. Activity 3 provides students with the opportunity to research the Colorado Historic Newspaper Collection as they prepare for a town meeting in which students role play the position of the Colorado farmer, irrigation ditch owners, engineers, and lawyers for both sides in the Kansas-Colorado Water Dispute. This Supreme Court case was about water rights and the excessive withdrawal of water in Colorado through ditches, leaving Kansas cities along the Arkansas River with diminished water flow. Students will read and review articles in the pathfinder lists as well as research additional articles to support their positions.