

House & History: The Cheeks' Changing World

Mansion & Museum of Art (90 minutes) - High School US History

About

This field trip explores economic and societal shifts that occurred during the 1920s - 1940s by encouraging students to visually analyze the art, architecture, and technology of the historic Cheekwood estate.

Objectives

1. Students will collect information by visually analyzing artifacts. (SSP.01)
2. Students will critically examine the art, architecture, and technology of Cheekwood to draw inferences and conclusions about the lives and values of the people who lived there. (SSP.02)
3. Students will leave having synthesized data in order to frame appropriate questions for further investigation. (SSP.03)

Background on the Gardens

Cheekwood Mansion & Museum of Art

Cheekwood is a 55-acre botanical garden and art museum located on the historic Cheek estate. Originally built as the home of Leslie and Mabel Cheek in 1929, Cheekwood is one of the finest examples of an American Country Place Era estate. Originally, the 36-room house (excluding service quarters) included eleven bedrooms, twelve bathrooms, and two elevators. While the bedrooms no longer exist, guests can tour the Drawing Room, Library, Loggia, and Dining Room, among other restored spaces.

Since being converted into a museum of art and botanical garden in 1960, Cheekwood has presented world-class art exhibitions, spectacular gardens and an historic estate unlike anything else.

Content Standards Covered

US.31: Describe the impact of new technologies of the era, including the advent of air travel and spread of electricity.

US.34: Describe changes in the social and economic status of women during this era, including: flappers, birth control, clerical and office jobs, and the rise of women's colleges.



Vocabulary

Architecture – The art or science of designing and building structures and especially ones that can be lived in

Classical – relating to ancient Greek or Latin literature, art, or culture

Furnishings – The filament of a flower holds up the anther (which produces pollen).

Georgian Architecture – Georgian architecture is an architectural style characterized by symmetry, balance, and proportion that traces its origins back to 18th century England, during the rule of King George.

Industrialist – A person involved in the ownership and management of manufacturing.

Modern – Relating to the present or recent times as opposed to the past.

Nobility – A class of people with high social status and power, typically connected to royalty.

Nouveau Riche– French for “new rich.” This term was used to describe people who have recently become very rich and like to show this publicly by spending a lot of money.

The Roaring 20s – A period of time marked by feelings of excitement and wonder around modernity and a break with tradition, through modern technology such as automobiles, moving pictures, and radio, bringing "modernity" to a large part of the population.

The Great Depression– A period of time of great economic struggle following the stock market crash of 1929.

Pre-Visit

Prior to attending the field trip, it might be beneficial to review some of the content vocabulary listed above. While the field trip is based around visual analysis and inquiry based learning, students will have a deeper understanding of what they see at Cheekwood if they are already familiar with the larger historical context of the 1920s in the United States.

Overview of the Day

1. Students will start off at the Frist Learning Center. Students will be greeted by an educator, and they will be given an overview of the guidelines and the materials covered during their pre-visit.
2. Students will be preassigned to groups of 15 or fewer. One educator will be placed with each group and remain with that group the entire time.
3. Groups will rotate through the mansion, using a guided note-taking sheet to analyze the exterior architecture, note patterns and motifs in furniture and furnishing choices, track technological advancements included in the house, and contrast the lives of the Cheek parents, children, and Cheekwood workers.



Post Visit

After visiting, students can use the notes they took during their visit to continue their analysis of social, economic, and technologic changes during this time period. Students can create presentations analyzing, comparing, and contrasting two artifacts they observed at Cheekwood. They can also engage in longer-term projects such as essays or research papers.

Post-Visit Book Suggestions

Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

As I Lay Dying by William Faulkner

Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston

Julia Morgan: An Intimate Biography of the Trailblazing Architect by Victoria Kastner