

50 Years of Wilderness in the United States

Primary Source: Excerpts from “The Wilderness Act,” Public Law 88-577

Class Discussion/Analytical Questions

- 1) What motivations were behind the creation and passing of this act? Think about the purpose as well as the statement of policy in answering this.
- 2) How does the act define wilderness?
- 3) What are the positive implications of this definition? What are its negative implications?
- 4) What is the significance of this act? Think about how it has shaped the nation for the past 50 years, physically, politically, and intellectually.

Activities:

Analyzing the Wilderness Act

Have the students, in groups or as individuals, research the entire act in order to find how the act was implemented. Without the ability to enforce their declarations, acts are merely idealistic overtures that do nothing more than call attention to their cause. In a page or two, the students should explain the implementations provided by Congress and the President to fulfill the act's purposes.

Personal Reflections on Wilderness

After discussing the Wilderness Act, have the students write a reflective essay on what wilderness means to them. In their answer, the students should offer their own definition of wilderness.