

Black Canyon of the Gunnison

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Black Canyon of the Gunnison
National Park



All about National Parks Series: Teacher Guide

Overview

In the 3-minute video, Ranger Kelly introduces the mission of the National Park Service (NPS). Students take a guided look at the NPS symbol and identify key resources that national parks protect – wildlife, plants, land, water, and human history. The video can stand alone to help students understand their national parks or serve as an introduction to an activity.

We originally created the make-your-own arrowhead activity for lower elementary, the build a park activity for upper elementary, and the design a national park brochure activity for middle school and up. That said, the activities are just templates and can be adapted to younger or older students. Each activity can be used independently, or they can be layered into a bigger unit on the national park system.

Activities

Make Your Own Arrowhead

Students identified the symbols on the NPS arrowhead in the video. In this activity, students will draw their own symbol. This is a chance for students to draw a representation of the NPS mission showing resources that resonate with them. Encourage students to think about animals, plants, landforms, and bodies of water they know from near school or home. For example, a student in Western Colorado might draw an elk, an aspen tree, the Gunnison River, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, etc.

Build a Park

Students have learned about what it means to be a national park, now they will use creativity and art to design their own. Guiding questions help students to consider what their imaginary park will look like, what visitors will do for fun, what plants and animals live in the area, and what services are available. The activity is written for students to draw a map of their park. With more time, students could build their park with recycled materials, build a diorama, or give a park ranger-type presentation.

Design a National Park Brochure

After getting familiar with the mission of the NPS, students will use the NPS website to choose one of the 400+ park units to investigate. Encourage students to each choose a unique park, so collectively the class can learn from each other. Using the official site, or other online resources, students will answer guiding questions about their park to conduct structured research. Students will compile this research into a tri-fold brochure. With more time, students could create an exhibit on their park, prepare and record a 5-minute ranger program, design an informational website, write a story about their park, etc.