

Grade Level **3-12**

Class Periods **2**

Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes:

Students will:

- Learn about the origins of surnames.
- Learn about the origins of names for towns, cities, counties, states, and people.
- Understand the ways in which nicknames are created and used.

Materials:

1. Outline map of the county
2. Outline map of the state
3. Dictionary
4. Telephone book
5. Paper and pencils or pens
6. Iowa Department of Transportation road map of Iowa

Background:

Names of communities often are taken from natural features of the landscape, original settlements, Native American words and names, and important local events. Counties and towns have been named after United States presidents and other noted politicians, famous military heroes and battles, and even leaders from other countries. Of course, the origins of some place names are inexplicable. Occasionally a geographic name will be unique.

Just as the names of towns and counties derive from a variety of sources, so do the surnames of people. A person's last name may come from an occupation, an ancestor's place of origin, a physical characteristic, a nickname based on a personality trait, or a position of social status. The same name may appear quite differently in different languages. For instance, the common English name, Smith, is equivalent to Kovac in Czech and Kuznetsov in Russian.

Procedure:

This thematic lesson plan is intended to introduce this particular topic to students. The activities are intended to introduce

students to the process of inquiry that can be applied to the study Iowa history. In many cases the same activities can be used to explore the topic in a variety of Iowa history time periods. This lesson plan can also be used in conjunction with other topical areas in this curriculum.

These thematic lesson plans underscore basic skills such as reading, writing, communicating orally, and collecting reference sources. Many of the activities will give students practice in using higher skills as in reading, writing, communicating orally, collecting reference sources and using a library; distinguishing between primary and secondary sources; using charts and timelines; and developing vocabulary. The teacher can introduce higher level skills through these activities such as collecting information from a variety of sources through observation and questioning; compiling, organizing, and evaluating information; comparing and contrasting; drawing conclusions or inferences from evidence; considering alternative conclusions; making generalizations; recognizing points of view; understanding how things happen and how things change; recognizing how values and traditions influence history and the present; grasping the complexities of cause and effect; developing a chronological sense; and understanding events in context.

Activities:

1. Write your full name.
2. Write the name of the town or city, the county, and the state where you live.
3. Discuss the differences between first and last (surnames) names, and also the uses of middle names.
4. Discuss the use of Roman numerals after names and the use of the word "Junior."
5. For each student name, look in a telephone book for other people who have the same first name and surname.
6. Look at a map for other towns and counties with the same name as the town and county where you live.
7. List names of people that derive from occupations.
8. List names of people that derive from where people lived.

9. List names of people that derive from physical characteristics and ways of behaving.
10. List first names of people that derive from religious beliefs.
11. List names of towns and counties that derive from Native American Indian words.
12. List names of towns and counties that derive from the names of trees, birds, animals, flowers, and other elements of nature.
13. List names of towns and counties that derive from compass directions.
14. List names of towns and counties that derive from colors.
15. List names of towns and counties that are identical to the names of Presidents of the United States.
16. List names of towns and counties that are the same as the names of states in the United States.
17. List names of towns and counties that are the same as the names of cities in other countries, or the names of other countries.
18. List names of towns and counties that derive from natural geographic features.
19. On an outline map of your own county, locate the names of all the towns, cities, and townships.
20. On an outline map of Iowa, locate the names of the towns, cities, and counties listed in the above exercises.
21. List as many occupations as you can that are not used as the basis for surnames that you have heard of.

Assessment of Outcomes:

1. Each student should contribute at least one name to each category mentioned in the above exercises.
2. Each student should locate on a map at least one name from each category mentioned in the above exercises.
3. Each student should define the origin of her or his surname.
4. Each student should define the origin of his or her first name.
5. Each student should name at least one occupation that is used as the basis for a surname.

Extensions and Adaptations:

Most of the activities listed under procedures can be easily adapted to meet the learning needs of most students at various ages. Many of the listed activities can be used as art, music, writing, math, or science projects. Be sure to draw on teachers within your school and resource people in your community. The folklife section of this curriculum provides a list of community resource ideas.

Resources:

Contact the Iowa History Resource Center at the State Historical Society of Iowa for a list of books, videos, organizations and ideas for studying Iowa history. Write to: Education Coordinator, State Historical Society of Iowa, 600 East Locust, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.