

Lesson Plans for Arkansas Students

## Historic Cemeteries:

# "History Written in Stone"

Learning from local and statewide historic places

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A student explores a historic Conway cemetery.

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**An Agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage**

## TEACHING THE “HISTORIC CEMETERIES” LESSON

### GRADE LEVELS

4-12

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Can cemeteries teach us about local history?

### ARKANSAS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

(Updated Summer 2011)

#### Social Studies, Grades 4-8

G.2.4.1 Students will research elements of culture in a community, state, or nation (e.g., customs, traditions, art, religion)

H.6.4.10 Students will examine artifacts relating to events in Arkansas history.

H.6.4.12 Students will analyze changes in Arkansas from past to present.

G.2.5.1 Students will describe customs, celebrations, and traditions of selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups in Arkansas and the United States.

G.2.5.3 Students will recognize examples of cultural diffusion, cultural exchange, and assimilation.

G.2.6.3 Students will identify the occurrences of cultural diffusion, cultural exchange, and assimilation in local and national history.

G.2.7.1 Students will examine creative work as examples of cultural heritage (e.g., statuary)

#### Visual Art, Grades 4-8

VA.7.4.1 Students will discuss the importance of art in history and heritage.

VA.7.4.2 Students will examine the styles and historical periods of art throughout time.

VA.7.4.4 Students will recognize art as creative expression in different cultures, places, and times (e.g., local and global community events, traditions, celebrations, customs)

VA.7.5-8.2 Students will examine the styles and historical periods of art throughout time.

#### Art I-IV, Grades 9-12

RR.5.AI-IV.3 Students will reflect upon the personal, social, and global impact of art (e.g., self, gender, family, community, historical, cultural, environments, visual cultures)

RR.5.AI-III.4 Students will communicate ways that the social, physical, natural, and/or economic environments affect visual art and the ways visual art affects these environments (e.g., conservation, recycling, emerging environmental issues)

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students will use primary sources to explore important local figures and the history of their community. They will also learn about symbolism and culture while examining funerary art.

### MATERIALS/RESOURCES

Copies of *Grave Marker Survey* for each grave students survey; copies of *Cemetery Scavenger Hunt* questions to distribute on the field trip; polaroid/digital cameras for students to take photos of the markers and cemetery features that relate to their scavenger hunt questions (optional); clipboards for students to write and sketch (optional); colored pencils, crayons, or markers for cemetery sketches (optional).

### INTRODUCTION OR FOCUS

Cemeteries are wonderful teaching tools. A cemetery is an outdoor history museum, wildlife refuge, botanical garden and art gallery. They are easily accessible and interdisciplinary. In a cemetery exploration, students can use their skills in social studies, science, art, math, history and language arts.

The purpose of studying a cemetery is to encourage an appreciation of its unique historical significance. History “comes alive” when students realize that the people buried there actually lived and helped make their community what it is today. By studying the ages, names, symbols and epitaphs in a cemetery, students can learn about their community’s ethnic, cultural, religious and historical background.

A cemetery is a tangible link to the past, and a place that is sacred. When students understand the importance of cemeteries, they are more likely to become adults who will participate in the responsible conservation of cemeteries in their communities.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

1. Review *An Introduction to Historic Cemeteries* with your students, or ask them to read it as homework.
2. Prepare for the field trip using the hints in *Field Trip Preparation*.
3. Choose from one of the following options:
  - **Short Cemetery Study:**  
Divide the students into groups and hand each group one *Cemetery Scavenger Hunt* question. Give a deadline for the students to meet back as a group and discuss their findings. When the group reconvenes, you can discuss the Group Questions on the *Cemetery Scavenger Hunt* page.  
  
Give each student a set number of *Marker Surveys* (each student could complete from one to five surveys, depending on time and age level). They can choose the markers they are most interested in to survey.
  - **Thorough Cemetery Study:**  
If you want to conduct detailed follow-up research and investigation, it would be best to use this method. Have the students fan out to survey an entire cemetery or cemetery section. Assign each student certain markers to survey. When your students have surveyed the entire cemetery/cemetery section, you can then do follow-up classroom activities based upon the survey information. This way you will have a complete record of the cemetery's birth years, death years, names, etc.  
  
Divide the students into groups and hand each group one *Cemetery Scavenger Hunt* question. Give a deadline for the students to meet back as a group and discuss their findings.
4. Once back in the classroom, students can discuss their findings and do some of the activities listed in Follow-Up Classroom Activities.

**Scenerio 1-Short Study:** Ms. Luna's fifth-graders took a field-trip to their local historic cemetery. The students divided into pre-arranged groups of four to do the *Cemetery Scavenger Hunt*. When finished with their scavenger hunt question, the students picked out their favorite two markers and filled out a *Marker Survey* for each one. The group spent the last half-hour of the field trip discussing their findings.

Once back in the classroom, the students looked up the meaning of the marker symbols they saw. They used the internet to research some name origins. The students wrote their own epitaphs. They made butcher paper drawings of their favorite markers and posted them in the hallway. Finally, students wrote essays about their cemetery visit.

**Scenerio 2-Thorough Study:** Mr. Thompson's tenth-graders visited their local cemetery. After completing and discussing the *Cemetery Scavenger Hunt*, each of the 24 students was assigned six markers to survey. Thus, the entire cemetery of 144 markers was surveyed. Once back in the classroom, the students began their research. They calculated the average age of death, determined whether women or men lived longer, and graphed the death rate by decade.

They asked the local library and historical society to help them research the lives of some of the deceased people, and identified their contributions to the community. They researched the origins of last names to determine what countries are represented in their historic cemetery. They also determined the meaning of the marker symbols they saw.

Grave markers showed that deceased people had participated in the Civil War, WWI, WWII and Korea. The students made a timeline of these wars, and researched how these wars affected their community.

Finally, the students wrote essays describing what they learned from their cemetery study and why it is important to preserve historic cemeteries. They also created time capsules for the year 1944 and the current year.

## **FURTHER REFERENCE**

Grave Concerns: A Preservation Manual for Historic Cemeteries in Arkansas Available from the AR Historic Preservation Program for \$5. Call (501) 324-9880.

[www.gravestonestudies.org](http://www.gravestonestudies.org)

[www.angelfire.com/ky2/cemetery](http://www.angelfire.com/ky2/cemetery)

[www.mtsu.edu/~then](http://www.mtsu.edu/~then) (go to the Cemeteries link)

## **ENRICHMENT/DIFFERENTIATION**

**Organize a cemetery clean-up:** Contact the AHPP for information on the proper way to clean and care for a historic cemetery.

**Have a “Tales Of the Crypt” presentation:**

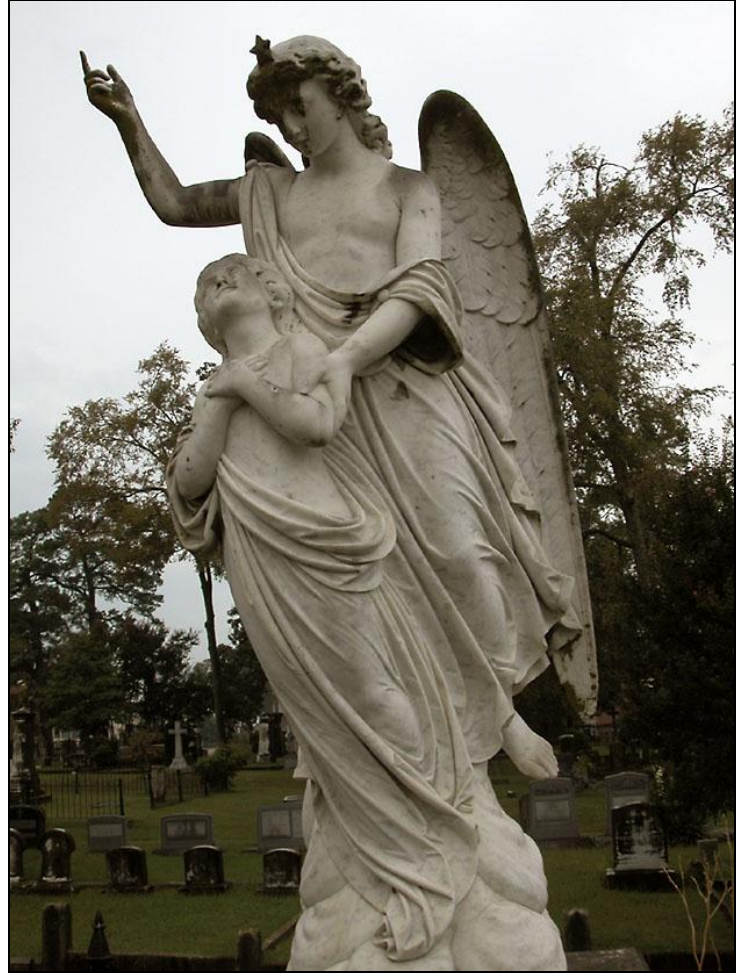
Each student will research the life of a person buried in the cemetery, and prepare a 5-10 minute monologue on that person’s life. Students dress in costume and hold the presentation at the cemetery. The audience walks from grave to grave as the students give their monologues. To find out how other schools have successfully conducted “Tales Of the Crypt” programs, request a copy of the AHPP’s manual, *Tales of the Crypt: a Living History Project for the Preservation of Arkansas’s Historic Cemeteries*.

**Design a gravestone:** Each student will design a gravestone for a prominent local or state historic figure assigned to them. Allow time for students to research their assigned person. Ask students to think about what this person’s gravestone may look like. What shape would it be? What would it say? What symbols would it have? Instruct students to draw the tombstone, and include a written epitaph to describe the person. If possible, encourage students to locate the historic figure’s actual gravestone and compare and contrast the students design with the original.

**Time capsules:** Students fill a box or bag with items from a year in the life of a person whose grave they have visited. Compare with a time capsule the class compiles for the present year.

**“Day of the Dead”:** In Central America and South America, All Soul’s Day and All Saints Day are celebrated with “Dia de Muertos” festivals that last for days. Sweet shops sell confections in the shape of skeletons and skulls, families prepare outdoor altars of food and gifts for departed loved ones, and families picnic in cemeteries. Incorporate a study of these customs on All Soul’s Day, or with units on Mexico, Central Ameica and South America.

Research “Day of the Dead,” or Dia de Muertos using primary and secondary sources.



Mt. Holly Cemetery, Little Rock

## An Introduction to Historic Cemeteries

The word “cemetery” is derived from the Greek word “koimeterion,” which means “a sleeping place” or “dormitory.” Over time, people have created many different ways to bury and honor the dead. The way communities deal with their deceased depends on their technology, climate, topography and cultural beliefs. For example, in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, people are interred above the ground. The water table in New Orleans is so high that it is hard to dig a grave without it filling with water.

### **TYPES OF HISTORIC CEMETERIES:**

**Frontier graves** date back to the 1600s. These isolated, plain landscapes are often unrecognizable as burial grounds. Since most of these sites are unrecorded, the location and number of these sites is unknown.

**Family cemeteries** are private burial grounds for members of a family. Family cemeteries are typically found in rural areas, and are often near a residence. These cemeteries usually have wooden and stone markers, but sometimes have commercial markers. Professional markers could only be obtained if the family could afford them and if there was a way to get them to the cemetery (these markers were very heavy).

**Church graveyards** are reserved for deceased members of the church. Church graveyards are located near the church.

**Community cemeteries** were reserved for the deceased members of a community. The establishment of a community cemetery was a sign of population growth. Community cemeteries tend to use markers and sculptures made of stone, especially marble. Placed in a garden-like setting, these sites were donated by community members or purchased by the city.

**Memorial parks** first became popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Most Arkansans today are buried in memorial parks. A memorial park is operated and maintained as a business. Burial lots are purchased from the business, and people must pay upkeep fees for family members who are buried there.

### **CEMETERY PRESERVATION**

Many of the historic cemeteries in Arkansas are neglected. One reason that Arkansas’s historic cemeteries have been abandoned is because the rituals involved with burying the dead have changed. In the past, it was the family, friends and members of the community who would perform the activities associated with death. From building the coffin to digging the grave, death was dealt with on a personal basis. “Wakes” were held in the home of the deceased person’s family. The body was laid out in the house and family and friends visited the home to say goodbye. The deceased were acknowledged long after their death through events such as Decoration Day. On cemetery cleanup days, the family would unite to clean up the cemetery and honor the dead.

As the funeral industry developed, family members became mere visitors to the funerals of their loved ones. Instead of making the coffin, washing and dressing the deceased person, holding the wake, and digging the grave—other people were paid to do these tasks. Thus, most people today do not feel a personal interest in cemeteries, the way they did in the past.

In the past, individuals cleaned up their family’s plot with hand tools and manual weed cutters. Today, cemeteries hire people to use lawnmowers and insecticides. These modern machines and chemicals have caused stone damage and the removal of markers and fencing.

As people move away from their small, rural communities to seek better opportunities, there is often no one left to look after the resting place of the dead. Nature has reclaimed many of these rural cemeteries. In urban cemeteries, pollution has led to the deterioration of many statues and markers.

## Field Trip Preparation <sup>1</sup>

- If you are not familiar with the cemetery you intend to use as a teaching resource, take time to visit the site prior to the class visit. Visit the office or contact the caretaker or sexton to explain your reason for visiting and when you would like to bring your class. Also inquire about rules, maps and historical brochures.
- It is generally best to choose the oldest part of the cemetery for your visit. It will most likely have the most interesting monuments for historical study, and you can usually work in this area without interrupting visitors.
- Use good judgment and plan well when visiting “open” or “in-use” cemeteries. You should schedule field trips to open cemeteries for the morning hours-- 8:00 to 11:00. This will help to avoid interrupting a burial service. You may feel more comfortable checking the day before your field trip with the cemetery office or caretaker to be certain no services are scheduled. If you should happen to visit when a service is being conducted, do your field work quietly in a section removed from the mourners.
- With “closed” cemeteries that no longer have burials, your students will have more freedom. However, you should still try to get permission from the owner of the land surrounding the cemetery.
- Allow at least one and a half to two hours for a cemetery visit.
- Explain to students that cemeteries are historic sites and important and sacred places to the people who have families and friends interred there. Cemeteries are to be treated with respect, even if closed. If visitors are in the cemetery, students should not disturb them but go about their work quietly. As you orient your students prior to the field work, be very clear about what is expected of them in terms of behavior and assignments.
- Explain to your students that an epitaph is an inscription or saying in memory of the deceased person. An example of an epitaph would be:

John Doe  
Gone but not Forgotten
- Depending on the ages and capability levels in your class, you may want students to work in small teams of two to four, with each team member being responsible for specific questions or products.
- Plan for safety. Remind students to wear appropriate clothing and shoes. They should be aware of uneven ground and tree roots, which may cause falls, and low lying areas which may retain water. If you visit in the summer, be prepared for bees, wasps, chiggers, ticks and snakes. If visiting an abandoned or unkempt cemetery, it is best to do so in colder months when vegetation is down. This will allow you to see stones and graves more clearly, as well as the natural and very much alive inhabitants of this green space.

Please do not ask your students to make tombstone rubbings. Historic cemetery experts teach that rubbings can cause irreparable damage to fragile gravestones. It is best to have your students take photos, make sketches, and copy down inscriptions.

<sup>1</sup> The Heritage Education Network < <http://www.mtsu.edu/~then/Cemetery/page2.html>>

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## Cemetery Scavenger Hunt <sup>1</sup>

1. Look for evidence of wars, plagues, epidemics and catastrophes in the community. What clues did you find? Do you see any years where there are a large number of deaths? (Social Studies)
2. Walk all over the cemetery and look at the topography—the lay of the land. Why do you think this site was chosen for a cemetery? Is there any space for new graves? Describe any cemetery buildings you see. What do you think they are used for? (Geography)
3. Find three markers that display the different levels of wealth in the community. How do the markers indicate different economic levels (how much money the family had)? (Social Studies)
4. Look for wildlife in the cemetery. What do you see? Is this cemetery a good or bad place for an animal habitat? Why or why not? (Science)
5. Look for the following geometric shapes: sphere, pyramid, rectangle, cylinder, cone and cube. Sketch them, and write down where you found them. (Math)
6. Determine family relationships in a plot by examining birth dates, names and other evidence. Is there any indication as to the family's ethnicity or religion? (Math/Social Studies)
7. Find markers for two children, two middle aged adults, and two senior citizens. Do the types of markers and symbols differ according to the age of the persons buried? (Art)
8. Find two of the oldest and two of the newest markers. How have the markers changed in style over the years? (Art)
9. Locate at least three interesting epitaphs. What do they tell you about the deceased person? Do the epitaphs give you clues as to the person's occupation and kind of life s/he led? Why do you find them interesting? (Language Arts)
10. Locate five different types of vegetation in the cemetery. Find two different types of plants/flowers, a bush, a tree and a flower carved in stone. Can you identify these plants/trees? Do you think these were planted as part of the memorial? (Science)

### **Questions for Group Discussion**

Sit quietly for a moment. Look around you carefully. How does being in this cemetery make you feel?

Do you feel that your community values this historic site? Why or why not?

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<sup>1</sup> If you have access to Polaroid cameras, students can take photos of their group members along with the markers and cemetery features that relate to their question.

## Grave Marker Survey

Year of Birth:

Year of Death:

Name:

Epitaph:

Condition of lettering (please circle):

Very Clear

Clear

Faded

Hard to Read

Very Hard to Read

Shape of marker (sketch):

Decorations or symbols on marker (sketch):

Can you tell what the deceased person's occupation was?

Is there evidence that the deceased person was a veteran? Was the person involved in a particular war?

Is there any indication of religious affiliation or club membership?

## FOLLOW-UP CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### SOCIAL STUDIES

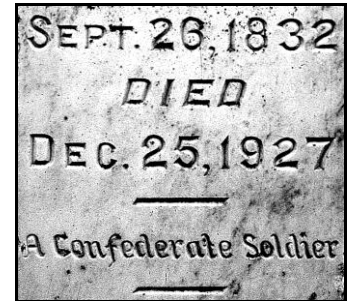
- Use *Marker Symbols and Their Meaning* to determine the meaning of the marker symbols.
- Research the country of origin of last names. Use sources in your local library or visit the following websites:

[www.genealogyweb.com](http://www.genealogyweb.com)

[www.familychronicle.com/surname.html](http://www.familychronicle.com/surname.html)

[www.rootscomputing.com](http://www.rootscomputing.com) gives interesting background on name origins

- Trace family trees. Did family size change over the years?
- Find out if the deceased people still have family in the community.
- Research the lives of the people buried in the cemetery.
- Research the life styles of the time periods represented in the cemetery.
- Do many deaths fall within a short period of time?
- What happened during that time period? Epidemics, wars, catastrophes?  
Write a report about these events.
- Create a timeline of the wars you see represented in the cemetery.
- Describe indications of wealth and occupation.
- Research stonecutting and carving techniques.
- Study burial customs of other cultures, those of such as Africa, China, India and Native America.



**Marker for a Confederate  
Veteran  
Little Rock**

### LANGUAGE ARTS

- Discuss or write an essay about your favorite epitaphs. What do they mean to you?
- Discuss or write an essay describing your cemetery visit, what you learned, and why it is important to preserve historic cemeteries.
- Discuss or write an essay describing your feelings about cemeteries and death. Did your cemetery study change your attitude toward cemeteries and death? Why or why not?

### SCIENCE

- Determine the relationship between time and amount of weathering that has occurred.
- Determine the number of years the cemetery will last with no upkeep.
- Analyze the types of stone used for markers.
- Analyze the lay of the land. Is it sloping or level, high or low in relation to community?
- Map the cemetery.
- Catalog the plants and trees found in the cemetery.

### MATH

- Make a graph of mortality by year or decade.
- Make a graph of mortality by age group. At what age do the most deaths occur?
- Calculate the average age of people buried in a given decade.
- Determine if women lived longer than men.
- Find the years in which the most deaths occurred.

### ART

- Sketch the symbols on markers or sketch the markers themselves. Make a bulletin board of the sketches.
- Notice and discuss the color and beauty of the cemetery.
- Analyze the changes in the design and shape of markers over the years.
- Have students create a replica of their favorite marker on butcher paper. Post the markers in the hallway for a "paper cemetery."

## Marker Symbols and their Meaning

Many grave markers have carved symbols on them. These symbols are meant to represent something about the deceased person. Symbols can express religious affiliation, club membership, occupation, or simply the way the mourners feel about the deceased person. In the past, symbols helped to convey information to people who could not read.

While these symbols do have “textbook” meanings, keep in mind that the person who chose a symbol for a marker might not have known the meaning of the symbol, or might have intended the symbol to have a different meaning. For instance, a poppy symbolizes “remembrance.” But someone could have chosen a poppy for a marker simply because it was pretty, or because the deceased person loved poppies. Even though you may never know what meaning the symbol had for the family and friends of the deceased, it is still interesting to look up the meaning of the symbols you find in historic cemeteries.

Cemetery art is art, in the truest sense of the word. The stonecutter was an artist, and some of the sculpture found in cemeteries is as beautiful to view as that found in museums. You might be able to interpret the meaning of the symbol or the artwork, or you may not. Either way, you will enjoy the inherent beauty and workmanship involved in carving these intricate designs.

**Anchor:** Christ, because he prevents people from becoming lost. Can mean the deceased person was a sailor.

**Angels:** Spirituality. Angels guard the tomb, guide the soul, pray for the soul and direct living visitors to think heavenwards.

- The angel Michael bears a sword.
- The angel Gabriel blows a horn.
- If an angel is shown without horn or sword, it is a guardian angel.
- A cherub, or “baby angel,” is most often used on children’s markers.

**Arch:** Victory

**Banner:** Victory or triumph

**Bird:** Symbol of the soul

**Book:** The Bible or Wisdom. A stack of books indicates knowledge. If the book is open, the word of God was revealed to the deceased.

**Butterfly:** Short life

**Candle Being Snuffed:** Loss of life

**Chalice:** Wine, a drink Christians use to symbolize the blood of Christ.

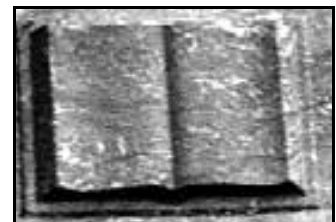
**Chain links:** Three or five chain links are a Masonic symbol.

**Child:** A sleeping child was used to symbolize death during the Victorian era.

**Coat of Arms:** Mark of status and wealth. It may be used to signify the country the deceased person came from.



**Angel**  
Earle

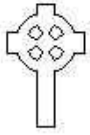


**Book**  
Jacksonville

**Columns:** Often used for war veterans.

- If a number of columns are tied together, each column represents a member of the family.
- Broken Column: Decay. It usually represents the loss of the family head.

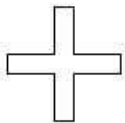
**Cross:** One of the most common images found on Christian gravestones. The cross can come in a number of shapes:



**Celtic or Irish Cross:** a cross within a circle. The circle stands for eternity. This cross is often used to mark the graves of priests and monks.



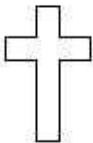
**Egyptian or Coptic Cross:** adapted from the ancient Egyptian symbol known as the ankh, which symbolizes life.



**Greek Cross:** has four equal arms



**Latin Cross**  
Helena



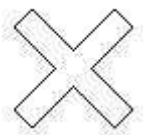
**Roman or Latin Cross:** Recreates the actual form of the crucifix.



**Jerusalem Cross:** also known as the Crusaders cross, because it was used during the Crusades. The five crosses represent the five wounds Jesus received on the cross, or the five nations active in the Crusades: Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.



**Orthodox, Patriarchal, or Eastern Cross** is one of two crosses that became popular after the Great Schism between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. The lettering represents the sign "Jesus Christ, King of the Jews."



**St. Andrew's Cross:** looks like the letter X. Legend has it that when St. Andrew was martyred, he could not bear to be crucified upon the same type of cross on which Christ had died. He requested that he be executed on another type of cross.

**Cross-with rays of the rising sun:** Glory

**Cross, heart and anchor:** Faith, hope, charity

**Crown:** Faithfulness and the glory of death as purification.

**Dog:** A "good master" or worthy of love.

**Door:** Entrance to a new life, an opening to the house of the dead or a passage to the unknown.



**Celtic Cross**  
Little Rock



**Woman and Dog**

Woman holds a sign that says:  
"Don't be afraid to stand alone."

Jonesboro

**Dove:** A bird that appears in both Christian and Jewish cemeteries.

- For Protestants, the dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit.
- For Jews, the dove symbolizes peace.
- A dove ascending to heaven is transporting the soul.
- A sitting dove is guarding the soul.
- A dove descending from heaven is an assurance of a passage to heaven.



**Dove**  
Little Rock

**Drapery:** Sorrow and mourning

**Eagles:** Fierceness and ascension. Eagles are often found on the markers of veterans.

**Eye:** God's eye watching over good Christians

**Fish:** Christian abundance

**Flame from urn:** Christian life

### Flowers

- **Flower Garlands:** the deceased lived a "pure life"
- **Flower Bouquet:** Grief
- **Broken flower:** Life terminated
- **Lily:** Purity
- **Calla lily:** Marriage.
- **Morning Glory:** Beginning of a new life
- **Pansy:** remembrance
- **Rose:** Virgin Mary, the "rose without thorns." It also symbolizes the brevity of human life.
- **Poppy:** Eternal sleep; death
- **Lotus:** an Egyptian revival motif



**Drapery**  
Little Rock

**Fleur-de-lys** is used to signify the Virgin Mary and the Trinity.

**Fruit:** the deceased person lived a righteous life.

**Gate:** Departure from life; entrance to heaven. Death is thought to be the "gateway" to heaven.

**Grim Reaper:** Death personified.

### Hands

- **Hands pointing up:** Pathway to heaven
- **Hands clasped:** Symbolizes marriage
- **Hands praying:** Asking God for Eternal life
- **Hands blessing:** Blessing of those left behind

**Harp or lyre:** Heavenly music or joy

**Heart:** The living still care about the person who died.

- Two joined hearts symbolize a marriage.
- The Sacred Heart is unique to Catholic gravestones. The Sacred Heart depicts the heart of Jesus, surrounded with a crown of thorns. The heart represents the suffering of Jesus.



**Praying Hands**  
Alexander



**Harp**  
Hope



**Fleur-de-lys**

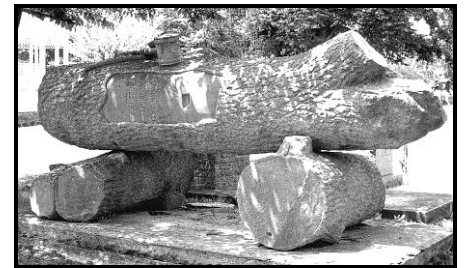
**Heavenly bodies** Moon, sun and stars are heavenly home of blessed rising soul to heaven

- The Moon: Renewed life (crescent moon symbolizes the Virgin Mary)
- The Sun: May symbolize Jesus, the Son of God
  - The Sun has also been called “God’s Eye,” looking down on all of us.
  - The Rising Sun symbolizes warmth and resurrection.
  - The Setting Sun symbolizes death.
- Stars: Hope of a new life
  - Five-pointed stars: The spirit rising to heaven.
  - The six-pointed star is called the Star of David or Mogen David. It is the emblem of international Judaism.

**Hourglass:** Time has run out

**Insignia of Organizations** denote membership. In the South, some of the common insignias found adorning markers are:

- **BPOE:** Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks, a fraternal organization  
Symbols for the group included an elk and a clock with the hands stopped at eleven.
- **CSA:** Confederate States of America
- **DAR:** Daughters of the American Revolution
- **GAR:** Grand Army of the Republic. This was an organization of Union Civil War veterans.
- **IOOF:** Independent Order of the Odd Fellows, a fraternal organization
- **Knights of Pythias:** A fraternal organization
- **Masonic Order:** A fraternal organization. Their symbol is an inverted compass over a carpenter’s square, and often has a “G” in the middle.
- **OES:** Order of the Eastern Star, a women’s organization. This group used a five-pointed star with a pentagon in the star’s center. The pentagon has an image of an altar with an open Bible.
- **SAR:** Sons of the American Revolution
- **VFW:** Veterans of Foreign Wars
- **WOW:** Woodmen of the World (used markers shaped like logs)



**Woodman of the World marker**  
Batesville

**Lamb:** Most commonly found on 19th century child markers.

The lamb always stands for innocence. Christians associate it with the Lamb of God, meaning Jesus. If the lamb is displayed with a banner, resurrection is implied.

**Lamp:** Word of God, truth and good works. Signifies the immortality of the Spirit.

**Lion:** Courage; guards the tomb

**Menorah:** Emblem of Judaism. The menorah far predates the Mogen David symbol.

**Mourning Figure:** Usually a woman. This symbol recalls the myth of Niobe, whom the gods turned into stone as she wept for her slain children.

**Peacock:** Incorrupt. It also signifies resurrection, beauty of the soul, and immortality.

#### Plants

- Ivy: Friendship and fidelity
- Thistle: Scottish descent and remembrance
- Vine: The Christian church, because wine signifies Jesus’ blood.
- Wheat : the “divine harvest.” Can also symbolize the death of an elderly person.



**Masonic Marker**  
Macon



**Wheat**  
Fayetteville

**Ring, Broken:** The family has been severed

**Rock:** Steadfastness and stability

**Rooster:** Awakening, resurrection

**Rope:** Eternity

**Scales:** Equality and justice. Archangel Michael is often portrayed holding a set of scales to weigh the souls of the departed. Use of the scales can also display the occupation of the deceased.

**Sea Shells/Scallop Shell:** Man's earthly pilgrimage. Also, a symbol of birth and resurrection.

**Scroll:** Law or scriptures

**Scythe:** A harvesting tool that represents death

**Sheep** are the Christians, and Jesus was the shepherd.

**Ship:** Can signify the occupation of deceased or man's journey through life.

**Snake (tail in mouth):** Everlasting life

**Sword:** Martyrdom, courage or warfare

**Swords, Crossed:** Military person of high rank

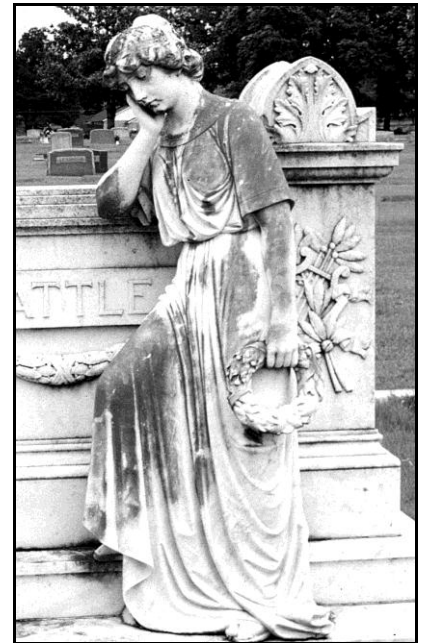
#### Torch

- A lit torch signifies life or eternal life.
- An extinguished torch symbolizes death. It can also stand for living memory and eternal life.
- An elevated torch symbolizes resurrection.
- A lowered torch symbolizes death.

**Three** (chains, points, leaves, etc.) symbolizes the Trinity

#### Trees

- A tree growing from a tomb or urn symbolizes rebirth.
  - A fallen tree symbolizes death.
  - A broken tree branch indicates mortality.
  - A tree trunk symbolizes the brevity (shortness) of life.
  - A tree stump means life was interrupted.
  - A sprouting tree shows life everlasting.
  - An uprooted tree symbolizes an unexpected death, usually from disease.
- Types:
- Almond tree: Favor from god; Virgin birth
  - Cedar tree: Strong faith; success
  - Cypress: Sorrow; death; eternal life; Roman symbol for mourning
  - Evergreen trees: Immortality
  - Oak tree: Some people believe that Jesus' cross was made from an oak tree. A symbol of Christ; eternity
  - Olive tree: Peace, healing faith
  - Palm tree: Victory, martyrdom peace
  - Willow tree: Grief, death, sorrow
  - Yew tree: Immortality.



**Mourning Woman**  
Hope

**Trumpet:** Call to the glory of resurrection

**Urns:**

- **Broken urn:** Elderly person
- **Draped and empty urn:** Soul has left the body.
- **Urn with a flame:** Eternal remembrance

**Wreath:** Ancient symbol for victory. In the Christian religion, a wreath symbolizes the victory of redemption.

### **Other Cemetery Features**

There are numerous other features that are used to mark the graves of the deceased. Below is only a brief list of items found decorating graves. You may find other items prevalent in your site. Make notes on any other objects used to mark or decorate the burial site.

**Garden Pieces**, known as "cemetery furniture," became popular during the Victorian period. Benches, small tables, planters, urns, fountains and bird baths are a few items that were used to decorate cemeteries. In the past, many people would bring a picnic lunch and spend the day looking at the markers and relaxing in a park-like setting. Objects that are more commonly associated with gardens became features associated with the cemetery landscape.

**Flowers** serve as a way to express sympathy to the mourners and as a tribute to the deceased. In the past, people would determine the importance of an individual by counting the number of wagons and attendants that were used for flower delivery. Since the 1950s, artificial flowers have to a degree replaced fresh flowers and plants. Modern innovations with flowers came with the addition of urns as integral parts of the marker and the introduction of clamp-on floral sprays.

**Sundials** are a decoration intended to remind visitors of the nearness of all to death.

**Toys** are often left at the graves of children. At one time, both adult and child graves were decorated with various objects that were associated with their life. The custom of leaving items on the grave still can be found in many cultures.

**Moving Pieces:** Pinwheels are a new decoration that brings movement to the otherwise still graveyard. First appearing on graves of children, pinwheels can now be seen on adult graves. The movement suggests constancy and the wind evokes spirit. Wind chimes can be found in some cemeteries. Windchimes evoke both sound and movement.



**Angel  
Helena**





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### Mortality by Age Group

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number of deaths</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Number of deaths</b>
<b>0-5</b>		<b>51-55</b>	
<b>6-10</b>		<b>56-60</b>	
<b>11-15</b>		<b>61-65</b>	
<b>16-20</b>		<b>66-70</b>	
<b>21-25</b>		<b>71-75</b>	
<b>26-30</b>		<b>76-80</b>	
<b>31-35</b>		<b>81-85</b>	
<b>36-40</b>		<b>85-90</b>	
<b>41-45</b>		<b>91-95</b>	
<b>46-50</b>		<b>96-100</b>	
		<b>101-105</b>	

**Prepare a graph based on these findings.**

### Mortality by Decade

<b>Decade</b>	<b>Number of deaths</b>	<b>Decade</b>	<b>Number of deaths</b>
<b>1800-1810</b>		<b>1900-1910</b>	
<b>1810-1820</b>		<b>1910-1920</b>	
<b>1820-1830</b>		<b>1920-1930</b>	
<b>1830-1840</b>		<b>1930-1940</b>	
<b>1840-1850</b>		<b>1940-1950</b>	
<b>1850-1860</b>		<b>1950-1960</b>	
<b>1860-1870</b>		<b>1960-1970</b>	
<b>1870-1880</b>		<b>1970-1980</b>	
<b>1880-1890</b>		<b>1980-1990</b>	
<b>1890-1900</b>		<b>1990-2000</b>	

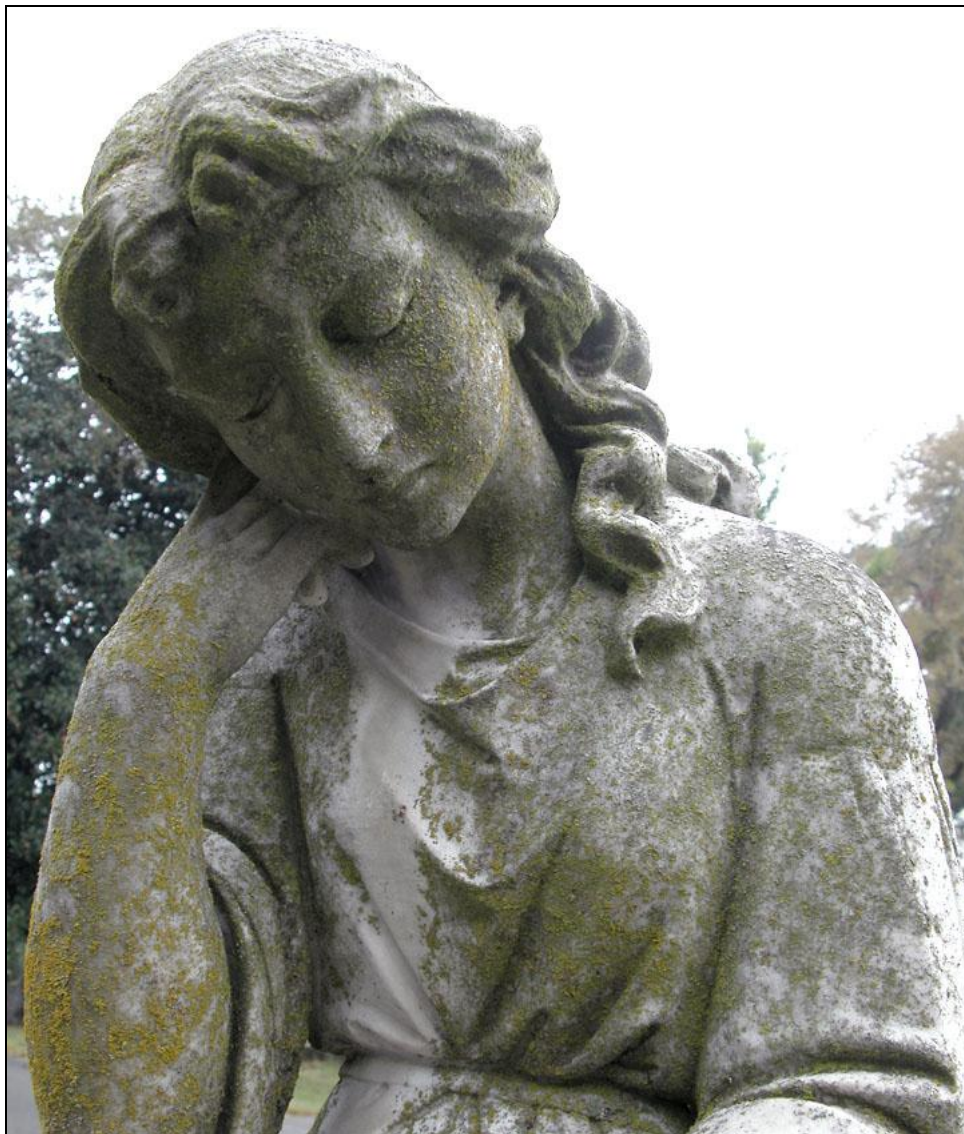
**Prepare a graph based on these findings.**

We would like to know how this lesson plan worked in your classroom or group. Please share with us your experience with using this lesson plan and suggestions for improvement.

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Mourning Woman, Mt. Holly Cemetery, Little Rock