

GHOST
WALLS

"GHOST" HUNTING

CCSS RESEARCH PROJECT

The continuing story of St. John's house is amazing. But it's not the only amazing place in American history. Every town in this country has its own ghost walls that once surrounded people who lived and worked inside them.

Think about these words from *Ghost Walls: The Story of a 17th-Century Colonial Homestead*. Do they apply to your community? Some towns and cities in the United States are far older than others—but chances are that plenty of people lived in your area before you. And they may have left behind a few ghosts.

Research Your Ghosts

Find out as much as you can about your community's history. When was it founded? Who were some early leaders or prominent citizens? What are the oldest existing buildings? What about the locations of now-vanished buildings? Where can you find artifacts from the community's past? If you live in a large city, you may want to focus on your neighborhood. If you live in a rural area, you might research the nearest town. Here are some other tips to keep in mind:

- If your community is especially large or old, if any historical events of national importance took place there, or if any nationally known figures have lived there, you may find information in books and online.
- Does your community have a history museum or a historical society? Visit and ask if you can interview someone who works there.
- Your teacher can help you get in contact with local amateur historians or people connected to local history whom you can interview.

Conduct an Interview

When you interview someone about your community, be sure to come prepared.

- Make a list of questions beforehand. (Depending on how long the interview lasts, you may not have time to get to all your questions, so put the most important ones at the top of your list.)

GHOST WALLS

- Plan to take notes by hand or on a computer during the interview. Or you may want to record the interview. It's best to do both if possible.
- Listen carefully as your interviewee speaks. The interviewee may say something unexpected. Be ready to ask follow-up questions that aren't on your master list if you want your interviewee to explain something further.
- As you wrap up an interview, thank the person for taking the time to talk with you, make sure you have the person's contact information, and offer to send a copy of your finished project to the interviewee. And follow up with a personal thank-you note.

Put It All Together

When you've finished your research, create a presentation about one or more of your community's "ghosts"—someone who lived or worked there in the past. Choose a place—a historical landmark, the original location of a no-longer-standing building, or a gathering place, for instance—and use your research and your imagination to reconstruct as much of that place's history as you can. Trace the place's journey with a PowerPoint presentation, a website, a diorama with informational captions, or a play. In whatever form you choose to present your findings, be sure to cite your sources for all the research you include. Ask your teacher for help on how to format your citations.

"GHOST" HUNTING

CCSS RESEARCH PROJECT

This activity meets the following Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.5

Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.3

Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.3

Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.3

Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5-8.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5-8.7

Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5-8.8

Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5-8.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.