ACTIVITY

1. Read the Encyclopedia of Alabama article on Skyline Farms. This article provides a brief history of the colony. Students can read the article themselves or you can summarize the article for them.

2. Have students search the Prints & Photographs Collection (keyword: Skyline Farms Alabama) for images of the colony in the 1930s (see “Selected Images from the Library of Congress” on the next page for more images of Skyline Farms). The images offer glimpses into various elements of life at Skyline Farms, including education, music, dance, work, home life, and crafts.

3. Have students pick one of these topics and find images that relate to it.

4. Students should use the Primary Source Analysis Tool to analyze the photographs they have chosen. Teachers should refer to the Teacher’s Guide, Analyzing Photographs & Prints to prompt discussion.

5. Is Skyline Farms portrayed as positive or negative? What did you learn from the photographs?

6. Then have students pretend that they were hired in the 1930s to create a poster or a brochure advertising life at the colony. Students should think about who the audience is for their poster or brochure. Is it aimed at colony members or the general public? Have students share their work with the class.

OVERVIEW

This lesson activity explores the community of Skyline Farms, Alabama, formally known as Cumberland Mountain Farms, through photographs. Three Farm Security Administration photographers, Arthur Rothstein, Carl Mydans, and Ben Shahn, photographed Skyline Farms between 1935 and 1937.

GRADE LEVELS & SUBJECTS

5th grade Social Studies (Tennessee)
6th grade Social Studies, English, and Visual Arts (Alabama)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY


2. Then, show students the untitled image below of three children at Skyline Farms. Point out the black circle in the image.

3. Search the Prints & Photographs Collection (keyword: Skyline Farms Alabama) to find other images of these three children. Compare and contrast the photographs. Why did Stryker hole punch this negative? Why do photographers take multiple images of the same subject? How do you think photographers felt when their images were “killed”? Look here and here for more hole punched images of Skyline Farms.
EXTENSION

Search the Prints & Photographs Collection for images from another community established by the Resettlement Administration, such as Gee’s Bend. Compare these photographs to the ones taken of Skyline Farms. How are they similar? How are they different?

NOTE ON FINDING IMAGES

Additional images of Skyline Farms that are untitled, such as the ones featured on page 3, can be found on the Library of Congress Web site by first searching the Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives Collection (keyword: Skyline Farms Alabama), then clicking on an image, and then selecting, “Browse neighboring items by call number.” Since the images are untitled and are often located next to untitled images of other communities, you must carefully examine each untitled photo to determine whether or not it is of Skyline. Compare and contrast titled photos of Skyline with untitled images. Ask yourself, are there similar features (i.e. people, architectural components, landscape)?

TENNESSEE CURRICULUM STANDARDS

5th grade Social Studies
5.16 Describe how New Deal policies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt impacted American society with government-funded programs, including: Social Security, expansion and development of the national parks, and creation of jobs.

ALABAMA CURRICULUM STANDARDS

6th grade Social Studies
7. Identify causes of the Great Depression.
Objective 6.7.1: Define the Great Depression.
Objective 6.7.2: Identify events leading to the Great Depression.

6th grade English
21. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. [W.6.1] a. Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly. [W.6.1a] b. Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. [W.6.1b] c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons. [W.6.1c] d. Establish and maintain a formal style. [W.6.1d] e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented. [W.6.1e]

6th grade Visual Arts
7. Describe historical and cultural influences on works of art.
Selected Images from the Library of Congress

Untitled [1935-1942]

Untitled [1935-1942]

Untitled [1935-1942]

Untitled [1935-1942]

Untitled [1935-1942]

Untitled [1935-1942]