TPS-MTSU graduate research assistant Ethan Morris has created a new lesson plan, "Songs of the Labor Movement," which analyzes two specific songs (one by Pete Seeger, one by Paul Robeson), then puts them into context against the larger backdrop of the labor and civil rights movements. Includes PowerPoint, informational worksheets, student worksheets, and answer keys.

2015 marks the last year of our Civil War Summer Institutes related to the Sesquicentennial commemoration. This year our theme is "Reconstruction," and we’ll be based in Greeneville, TN, where we’ll visit the Andrew Johnson National Historic Site and other places associated with the Reconstruction story. Spots are already filling up fast, so please email your interest to Kira soon!

"A WESOME" SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

[Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir on Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley, California]

[1906]

How did Theodore Roosevelt’s outdoorsy interests in hunting and hiking have an impact on national policies towards wildlife and public parks?

THEME: THE ENVIRONMENT

The first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970, and is still going strong today (see this blog and this blog). To coincide with Earth Day, we are focusing on various environmental themes this month. Our lesson ideas on human intervention, earthquakes, animal habitats at zoos and aquariums, and the role of U.S. presidents in conservation will appeal to teachers in Science and Social Studies, from grades 2 through 12.

The history of the environmental movement in the U.S. is one area of science-history intersection in which the Library of Congress excels, with online collections and a themed resource set for teachers to use. Check out the "Important Links" box on p. 2 for more resources!

The national parks preserve wildlife

[between 1936 and 1939]
LESSON IDEA—HUMAN INTERVENTION

As shown in the image to the left, logging has been going on in the United States for centuries. How are the logs used, and how does this affect the environment? When you mow your lawn or grow a vegetable garden in your backyard, is that changing the environment in which we live? Is it harming it? What about when you plant a tree for Earth Day? While it might be too difficult or unrealistic to perfectly preserve a landscape, there are things that we as humans can avoid doing for the sake of our environment.

Have your students brainstorm about other activities we do that affect the landscape. Distribute markers and large pieces of paper or poster board. In pairs, instruct each group of students to create an “Advantages and Disadvantages” chart for these activities. Encourage your students to illustrate their work or print off images from the computer lab at your school. Each pair of students should then present their work to the rest of the class. What do all of the presentations have in common?

This lesson idea meets Tennessee state standards for grades 9-12 Environmental Science (3260.2.8).
Lesson Idea—Animal Habitats at Zoos and Aquariums

For many people in the United States, a trip to a zoo or aquarium may be their only opportunity to see live animals from other parts of the world. When people visit zoos and aquariums, they believe they are seeing animals in something close to their natural habitats. Yet, are zoos and aquariums truthful recreations of animal habitats? If they are now, have they always been? Show your students a picture of a bear in its natural habitat. Have your students describe both the environment and the way the bear adapts to the environment. Then, have the students compare the picture of the bear’s natural habitat to a picture of a bear’s cage at a Chicago zoo in 1901. What are the differences between the two? Why might there be differences? How do these differences impact the bear? Next, have the students look at a picture of a giraffe in its native habitat. Like they did before, have the students compare the picture of the giraffe’s native environment to a picture of a giraffe’s cage in 1934. What are the differences? Ask your students what they think of zoos in the first half of the twentieth century. How well did they recreate animals’ natural habitats? Have zoos made changes over the years? Have the zoos that your students have visited done a better job recreating natural habitats? Why do you think changes have taken place? To give students some visuals, feel free to show them pictures from the Nashville Zoo’s Instagram and the Memphis Zoo’s Animal Exhibits. If you want additional discussion, feel free to look at a picture of an aquarium in the nineteenth century and compare it to an aquarium environment in 2012. How have aquariums changed? Also take a look at Tennessee Aquarium’s Instagram.

This lesson idea meets Tennessee state standards for grades 2-3 Science (Standard 5; Biodiversity and Change).

Lesson Idea—Conservation as “Patriotic Duty”

“Conservation is a great moral issue, for it involves the patriotic duty of insuring the safety and continuance of the nation,” said Theodore Roosevelt in his “New Nationalism” speech in 1910, while running for a third term as president. (The conservation movement in America was already well under way.) Many presidents since TR have exercised this “patriotic duty” in order to protect plants, animals, and landscapes, against the backdrop of the larger movement for environmental conservation in the United States.

This lesson idea will focus on three episodes that highlight presidential involvement in this movement. You can go through these one by one as a class, or split your students into three groups, with each group analyzing one of the following:

- Theodore Roosevelt’s stance on conservation in his “New Nationalism” speech. Have students read the two paragraphs from this speech that directly address conservation, starting here on p. 20. Consider his connection with people like John Muir, first president of the Sierra Club.

- Franklin Roosevelt’s establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934 (the first to use federal funds). Have students read FDR’s “Address at the Dedication of Great Smoky Mountains National Park” from September 2, 1940. Consider FDR’s employment of Civilian Conservation Corps workers within the GSMNP (see here and here).

- Richard Nixon’s establishment of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, in the wake of the environmentalist movement of the 1960s. Have students read Section 2 of the ESA, and consider how new legislation was inspired by the celebration of the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970.

Why did each of these presidents say these things? What were the stated reasons, and what was the context in which these decisions were made? How do each of these three episodes relate to one another? What do they say about conservation as being a “patriotic duty”?

This lesson idea meets Tennessee state standards for grades 9-12 Environmental Science (3260.4.11), Ecology (3255.6.3), and U.S. History and Government (U.S.19, 49 & 102).
**Mountaintop Removal**

*Aerial view of Mountaintop Removal, approaching Racine* [1995]

Extracting natural resources such as coal and gas from beneath the surface is fraught with challenges. In parts of Appalachia, mountaintop removal is used as a way to mine coal. Have your students analyze the image. How does this type of mining impact the environment? How does it affect communities? Have your students research how mountaintop removal works and its long-term impacts. For older students, you might have them read this Smithsonian article on the issue.

**Earth Day**

*Girl Scout in canoe, picking trash out of the Potomac River during Earth Week* [1970]

This image shows a girl picking trash out of a river on April 22, 1970, the very first Earth Day. How does your school celebrate Earth Day? Ask your students if their families recycle at home, and, if not, why. Then, prompt your students to find ways to make the classroom more environmentally friendly, whether it’s recycling the used computer paper or making crafts and storage out of old, unused plastic bottles and containers.

**Agribusiness**

*Jewett City, Connecticut (vicinity). Estonian poultry man, formerly a sailor, who got his start in the chicken raising business by a FSA (Farm Security Administration) loan* [1942]

Over the years, small family farms have been replaced by large-scale suppliers of food. This growth in agribusiness has raised several questions: How will agribusiness impact small town economies? Will agribusiness lead to the abuse of animals? Will profit-driven farmers feed animals steroids to speed up animal growth? Will our food be fresh? Do we need local family farms to raise fresh foods?

**First National Park**

*Castle Geyser, Yellowstone National Park* [1898]

The very first national park was created on March 1, 1872, when President Ulysses Grant signed the bill and thus created a precedent in environmental conservation for the U.S. and the world. (Read the law here, and search maps of Yellowstone here.) When your students think of Yellowstone, what images come to mind? Do they think of geysers? Old Faithful? Sulfurous ponds? That’s because the park, which is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the most geothermally active and diverse in the world!