Teacher Orientation Resources

Indiana’s Bicentennial Celebration

Thank you so much for choosing Conner Prairie as your Bicentennial Celebration destination! From its Native American roots to its current place as the Crossroads of America, there are a lot of reasons why Indiana is a special place. Celebrate what it means to be a Hoosier during your day at Conner Prairie.

We have put together a self-guided tour activity guide for teachers, students, and other guests to use as they further explore and uncover more about Indiana’s 200 years.

William Conner House

William Conner lived in two different worlds: a Native-American world and a European-American world. In the house you will learn about Conner’s transformation from a fur trader with a Lenape family to a white settler helping to lead a growing community.

- For more information, visit Conner Prairie’s Conner Homestead page.

Questions to ask and consider:

- Why do you think William Conner chose to build his home in this location? Would this still be an ideal location today?

- What role did William Conner play in helping establish Indianapolis as the new capital of Indiana?

- What role did William Conner play in negotiating with the Lenape tribe to move off their land? What do you think about his role in these negotiations?

- How does the Conner home compare with modern homes? What things are similar and what things are different?

- How did the land change during this time as more land was settled? Do we change the land in modern times? How?
Animal Encounters Barn

In the barn, get up close to your favorite farm friends! Pet lambs, goats and calves. Conner Prairie animal specialists are on hand to assist and share their expertise about our historic breeds of livestock and how Conner Prairie plays an important role in preserving them.

Since at least the mid-1980s, Conner Prairie has helped ensure the future of agriculture through the genetic conservation and promotion of endangered breeds of livestock and poultry. They became endangered because agriculture changed or they may have fallen out of favor with progressive farmers (but still have desirable traits such as good mothering skills or disease resistance.) These rare breeds are part of our national heritage, connecting us to our past and representing the earth’s biodiversity.

- For more information, visit Conner Prairie’s Animal Encounters page

Questions to ask and consider:

- How were animals used in the early1800s? How do we use animals today? Are the uses the same or different?

- How do the breeds at Conner Prairie connect to Indiana’s history?

- Find out what is medically interesting about the Ossabaw Island hogs. How can these hogs help us with modern day medicine?
Treetop Outpost & Nature Walk

A four-story treehouse sits at the center of this new experience area, inviting you to climb to the top and take in the view! Inside and around its base you’ll find ways to connect with nature in exciting activity areas and learn about Indiana’s natural resources. Unearth artifacts of the past in a recreated archaeology site. Build things just like Hoosiers did years ago. And, add to the forest sounds around you by playing instruments. Then take a trek along the Nature Walk and discover a different view of the prairie. Your students can explore Conner Prairie’s natural setting up close as they walk through a forest and along the top of a levee that is flanked by woods, farmland, prairie, and the White River. Along the way they will discover plant and animal life that calls this part of Indiana home. This pathway includes interpretive signs that provide information on ecosystems and land use.

- For more information, visit Conner Prairie’s Treetop Outpost page

Questions to ask and consider:

- How do the items in the 3 dig stations represent historic Indiana? How do the items in each of the different digs relate to each other?

- What different sounds can you hear at Treetop Outpost? What do you think is making those sounds? Would people in the 1800s have heard the same sounds or different sounds?

- Use the hand lenses to explore the different objects found in nature inside the treehouse. What additional details can you see with the hand lens?

- Climb to the very top and look out through the viewfinder. What do you see? Do you think settlers 200 years ago would have had a similar view or would the land have looked different?
Create.Connect

Experiment in Create.Connect, an indoor exhibit space celebrating Indiana's innovative spirit! The different sections of Create.Connect touch on early Hoosier aviation, inventors, wind power, and rural electrification. Design and build a paper glider. Design a chain reaction machine. Build a simple electrical circuit and find out what the debate was about bringing electricity to rural farms. Challenge yourself to put wind to work by building a windmill. Discover how all this science, technology, engineering, and math have a place in Indiana history.

- For more information, visit Conner Prairie’s Create.Connect page

Questions to ask and consider:

- How was early aviation different then modern-day aviation? What enhancements have been made to aircraft?

- Look through the guides in the patent office. Which inventor with Hoosier connections do you think made the greatest impact? Why is their invention still so important to us today?

- What are some tasks that windmills have been used for? Wind power is making a comeback today. Why do you think more people want to use the power of the wind?

- Was everyone excited about bringing electricity to the farms? What were some of their fears? Would you have wanted to bring electricity to your home in the 1930s if you didn’t have electricity?
1863 Civil War Journey: Raid on Indiana

PLEASE NOTE: Civil War Journey is recommended for grades 4 and up.

During the Civil War, Indiana was raided by Confederate cavalry troops led by General John Hunt Morgan. Hoosiers united to defend their state against this attack, but that didn’t mean they agreed on the ideas surrounding the war. In 1863 Civil War Journey, you can experience the story of what happened in Dupont, Indiana, during July 1863.

- For more information, visit Conner Prairie's Civil War Page

Questions to ask and consider:

- How do the people in the town feel about the war? Does everyone agree?

- Put yourself in the place of a new recruit! Visit the Quartermaster’s station and try on a soldier’s gear. Practice drilling at the soldiers’ camp. How was a soldier’s life in 1863 similar and different from a soldier’s life today?

- Indiana sent more than 200,000 men to fight in the war, second of any state in the Union. Ask the women of Dupont how they feel about sending so many husbands, sons, and brothers off to fight.

- How were the women able to help the war effort? Are these the same roles that women play today during war?
1836 Prairietown

- Step back in time to Prairietown, a village working to become a thriving community in 1836. Meet the townspeople, who are played by Conner Prairie’s trained staff. Take a lesson in the schoolhouse, help with chores, load or unload a wagon, watch craftspeople ply their trades, and more. Through these activities, students can compare past and present, learn about the processes that go into various trades, consider past technologies, discover the economics of the time, and explore everyday life. The residents of this fictional-yet-historically-accurate town are eager for new neighbors to help the community grow, so they are excited to meet you to see what skills you can contribute.

- For more information, visit Conner Prairie’s Prairietown page

Questions to ask and consider:

- The year 1836 would have been Indiana’s 20th anniversary as a state. Would Prairietown have celebrated the 20th anniversary?

- Visit the schoolhouse and compare what school would have been like in 1836 to a modern-day classroom. What’s the same? What’s different? Were some of the same skills taught?

- Visit the Loom House and compare how clothes were made in 1836 versus how modern clothes are made. Are the fabrics the same or different? How did they get colored yarn?

- Find out what kind of currency is accepted at Whitaker’s store. Is it the same type of money we use today? Was there a way to buy items without having money? Where did the items that people bought come from?

- Visit some of the houses around town. Do they look similar to our houses today? What is the same and what is different? How did they do tasks such as cleaning and cooking? When they weren’t working, how did they pass the time?
Lenape Indian Camp

Corn has always been important to people living in Indiana. Explore the garden in Lenape Camp and find out how important corn was to lives of the Lenape people.

There will be hands-on opportunities as you explore the history and culture of the Lenape Indians (also known as the Delaware) who lived in Indiana from 1795–1820. The area includes a trading post and a wigwam to explore. As you come into the area, you might greet staff with the Lenape greeting, “Weli kishku” [WAY-lee KEESH-koo], which means, “It’s a good day.”

- For more information, visit Conner Prairie’s Lenape Indian Camp page

Questions to ask and consider:

- Discuss with the characters how they feel about Indiana becoming a state. Does this change their lives in any way?
- The tulip tree is Indiana’s state tree. How would the tulip tree have been used at the Lenape Indian Camp?
- The Lenape tribe didn’t originally live in Indiana. Ask around to find out where they used to live and what caused them to settle in Indiana.
- How did the Lenape get their food? How is this similar and different from how we get our food today?