



State Emblems

Grades: 4-6

This lesson is based on the Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project. It is provided courtesy of the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program (OOHRP) at the Oklahoma State University Library with generous support from the Women's Archives at OSU and the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women.

Formally established in 2007, the OOHRP has collected and preserved firsthand accounts from individuals who have witnessed historic moments. The Program explores the lives and contributions of Oklahomans from all walks of life.

The Women of the Oklahoma Legislature is of one of many projects undertaken by the OOHRP. This oral history project captures and records information about female Oklahoma legislators in their own voices and provides an opportunity to reflect on their individual paths to the Capitol. It also documents more completely the presence of these women in state government.

The OOHRP invites you to explore the website (www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol/) and meet the women who have played an important role in Oklahoma politics.



Oklahoma PASS Objectives

- **Social Studies, Geographic Skills, 7:5** Compare and contrast how different cultures adapt to, modify, and have an impact on their physical environment. (Grade 5)
- **Social Studies, Oklahoma 5:4** Identify state and local governing bodies (e.g., the state legislature and city councils) and officials (e.g., governor and mayors) that make laws and carry out laws, with an emphasis on civic participation. (Grade 4)
- **Visual Art 3:1** Make original works of art using a variety of materials (media), and techniques (skills), and sources for ideas. (Grades 4, 5, and 6)
- **Visual Art 3:2** Use observation, memory and imagination in making original works of art. (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

Lesson Objective

Students will learn how the Indian Blanket wildflower became Oklahoma's state wildflower emblem, including learning about the woman legislator who introduced the bill and about the process a bill goes through to become a law, and they will use their creative skills to create their own rendition of the state wildflower. Students will also be able to identify other Oklahoma state emblems and will learn about the Oklahoma state flag.

Lesson

Each state has its own set of emblems that represent it, such as a flag, a state bird, a state flower, and a state animal. These emblems (which are actually real) are important to the state. They give an outsider an idea of the state, and they give people who live there a sense of pride. In Oklahoma, the state bird is the scissor-tailed flycatcher. These birds are very unique and cannot be found everywhere else in the United States. (Show the class a picture of the bird. Explain that the tail moves like a pair of scissors, opening up when the bird flies and closing when it perches.) Has anyone seen a real scissor-tailed flycatcher? Oklahoma's state animal is the buffalo. Before many people lived in Oklahoma, there were many, many buffalo. There are still buffalo around the state. Has anyone seen real buffalo? (Show a picture.) The state tree is a redbud. These trees are reddish-pink and are very pretty when they bloom in the spring. (Show a picture.)

Oklahoma has had an official state floral emblem since before the Territory was even a state! It is mistletoe, a green plant with white flowers. (Show a picture.) However, mistletoe does not grow in every part of the state since it needs trees to thrive off of, and it is a parasite. Some Oklahomans felt we needed yet another floral emblem to represent us, something that grows naturally in our state—perhaps a wildflower! In the 1986, *Gaillardia pulchella*, or the Indian Blanket, was declared Oklahoma's wildflower. (Show students a color photograph of Indian Blanket flowers.)

In an oral history interview for Oklahoma State University's Women of the Oklahoma Legislature oral history project (<http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol/>), Senator Billie Jean Floyd discusses how she ended up writing a bill to make the Indian Blanket Oklahoma's official wildflower (House Bill 1649, 1986 Legislative session). (Teacher: Play the audio—Excerpt 2 at <http://dc.library.okstate.edu/cdm/ref/collection/legislature/id/174/show/170>, 2:08 minutes long—or read the excerpt from Billie Jean Floyd's transcript.)(Excerpt can be found in the resource addendum.) Who influenced Senator Floyd to write the bill to make the Indian Blanket Oklahoma's official wildflower?

How does the process actually work to determine what animal should be the state animal or what song should be the state song?

A bill must be written and passed by the legislature and then signed by the governor in order to become law, and in order for anything to be declared an official state emblem, it must become law. A group of citizens may take it upon themselves to research the matter and submit a request for a bill to their legislator. The legislator reviews the issue and decides if he or she wants to take on the challenge. A bill is written and goes through the motions of becoming law.

First the bill must be presented by a member in either the House or the Senate. It is read and then goes to committee for a hearing. The committee studies the bill. Sometimes public hearings are held so that legislators can get responses from the public. If there are citizens who really want to see a bill pass, they may lobby legislators, meaning that they go talk to their representatives, tell them why a bill is so important, and try to convince them to support it. The committee then decides what to do with the bill. They can pass it, reject it, or take no action on it. The bill goes back to the House or Senate, wherever it was introduced, and it is read, debated and amended, or no action is taken. If it passes a third reading in the House or Senate (wherever it started) it then goes through the entire process again in the other chamber. All amendments must be approved by the original chamber. If these are all approved, the bill is then signed by the leaders of both houses and sent on to the governor for his or her signature. The governor can sign the bill into law or veto all or part of it. If it is signed by the governor, the bill goes on to the secretary of state's office to officially make it a law.

Many times the bill a legislator passes makes a new law about something, such as requiring everyone to wear seatbelts or to stop at stop signs. Many new issues come up over time. Take the seat belt law for example. Years ago wearing a seatbelt was not required by law. After it was realized how many lives could be saved, a law was passed that said you had to wear seatbelts. In the future new things will be discovered that should be law. Can you think of something that should be a law that is not? (Have some class discussion. Some ideas: mandatory recycling, bicyclists having to wear helmets, no smoking anywhere, no talking on cell phones while driving, etc.)

Sometimes, though, bills don't cause new requirements. A bill can also be about something like a new state emblem or a new piece of artwork to be put up at the capitol. (Did you know the state capitol houses numerous works of art? See the enrichment section for more details!) Who knows what color the Oklahoma state flag is? (Answer: blue) (Teacher: Have an Oklahoma flag handy for the students to study.) The Oklahoma flag was designed by an artist from Oklahoma City named Louise Funk Fluke. The blue represents a sky-blue field. The round object in the middle is an Osage shield made of buffalo skin and is adorned with eagle feathers. The peace pipe and olive branch both symbolize peace, and the six small crosses stitched on the shield are meant to be stars, representing high ideals. The word "Oklahoma" was not originally stitched on the flag. In 1941 the legislature passed an amendment adding the state's name to the flag. In 1988 the legislature looked at the flag again and decided on an official shade of blue for the flag. (This was because the color differed too much when people reproduced the flag, and the legislature wanted to be sure the color was the same sky blue that they had chosen.)

So, you can see that the legislature was heavily involved with something as seemingly simple as our state flag. The representatives and senators had to take the bill through the process of becoming law:

writing the bill, presenting it, holding public hearings, voting on it in committee, sending it over to the other chamber, amending it, passing it there, and finally having the governor sign off on it. This is just the process that had to be completed for the Indian Blanket to become our state wildflower.

After the law was passed making the Indian Blanket the official Oklahoma state wildflower, Senator Billie Jean Floyd had a part in commissioning a large quilt, the Indian Blanket Quilt, which is displayed on the first floor of the Oklahoma State Capitol. More about the quilt can be found online at <http://www.arts.ok.gov/capitolart/permart/paintings/wallace/blanket.html> . Another painting that hangs in the capitol that features Indian Blankets is “The Earth and I Are One” by Enoch Kelly Haney, the representative Senator Billie Jean Floyd mentioned in her interview as having helped pass the bill. You can see it at <http://www.arts.ok.gov/capitolart/permart/paintings/haney/earth.html> .

Today we are going to each create an image of an Indian Blanket flower. (Have supplies available for students to use in red, yellow, and green. This could be construction paper, scissors, glue, blank paper, crayons, markers, etc. Keep the color photo up so they can see the red flower with yellow tips.) We will then put all our pictures together and have a field of Indian Blankets! If you drive through most parts of Oklahoma, you may just see an entire field of Indian Blankets.

Teacher: Under the list of materials, there are also a number of links to activity sheets. Look over them and decide which sheets are best for your class. Students could take these home for completion.

Today we learned about some of our state emblems—things that represent us as Oklahomans and make us unique, such as buffalo, scissor-tailed flycatchers, mistletoe, and Indian Blankets. We learned what it takes to get something recognized as a state emblem and about the process of a bill becoming a law. We heard specifically about the Indian Blanket and how it came to be our state wildflower. We then created a field of Indian Blankets for everyone to enjoy!

Evaluation

Grading will depend upon the projects selected for students, but in all cases points can be awarded to students based upon how well they followed instructions and whether or not they completed their projects.

Materials

Teacher Resources

- Audio and/or printed excerpts from Billie Jean Floyd transcript for class reading or listening. The transcript excerpt is available in the resource addendum, while the audio is at <http://dc.library.okstate.edu/cdm/ref/collection/legislature/id/174/show/170>. (The relevant audio selection is excerpt #2.)

- The Oklahoma Historical Society has provided several handouts you can print off for the class:

State emblem coloring sheet: <http://www.okhistory.org/kids/printables/symbolscoloringpage.pdf>

Osage shield from state flag: <http://www.okhistory.org/kids/printables/shieldcoloringpage.pdf>

Oklahoma emblem bookmarks: <http://www.okhistory.org/kids/printables/bookmarks07.pdf>

State emblem crossword: <http://www.okhistory.org/kids/printables/oklahomasymbolscrossword.pdf>

State emblem word search: <http://www.okhistory.org/kids/printables/oklahomasymbolswordfind.pdf>

- Photographs of Oklahoma emblems available here -- <http://www.okonline.com/emblems.html> -- or locate them in a book to show the class color photos
- The Character First website contains further listings of character traits <http://www.characterfirst.com/>

Student Resources

- Blank paper, red, yellow, and green markers or crayons, or red, yellow, and green construction paper, scissors, glue

Enrichment

- The Oklahoma State Capitol has a lot of art inside it! Learn more about the art inside the capitol by visiting the Oklahoma Arts Council's Capitol Art Web site <http://www.arts.ok.gov/capart.html> . Schedule a tour for your class and learn about it firsthand, or choose a particular gallery and learn about the art that is there.
- Focus more on how a bill becomes a law in Oklahoma. Reference the "How an Idea Becomes a Law" document for more detail on the process http://www.okhouse.gov/information/Info_Idea.aspx . Have the class draw a simple rendition of this process or act it out.

Resource Addendum

Transcript Excerpt:

BILLIE JEAN FLOYD

<http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol/floyd/index.htm>

Pages 14-15

Billie Jean Floyd was a teacher at East Central in Ada for 31 years before she became an Oklahoma Senator. During her time in office she worked towards many good causes. One bill she worked on declared the Indian Blanket the state wildflower. She tells about it in an interview conducted by Tanya Finchum in 2007:

The other bill that I carried was fun and it was just a wonderful thing to do! There's a story behind it. When I was in high school, my science teacher was Dr. Doyle McCoy. When I was a student at the university, Dr. Doyle McCoy had moved to the university. Dr. Doyle McCoy was the science teacher there, so I had botany with Dr. Doyle McCoy—had him in high school, then had him in college. When I came back and started teaching, I taught with him several years.

Well, I got elected to the Senate then and here comes this little knock on my door one day and there is Dr. Doyle McCoy on my door. He was a botanist, and he said, "We need a state flower that we can grow that will be pretty." He said, "The mistletoe is, of course, a parasite, and it can't be grown, and Oklahoma needs a state wildflower." I said, "Well, I think that's great, Dr. McCoy." ... We looked at different things, and we came up with the Indian Blanket, and him being a botanist, he thought that was wonderful because Indian Blankets grow all over this part of the country.

So it was the way a bill is supposed to be done—I carried the bill in the Senate, and Kelly Haney, who's the renowned artist today, and also right now the principal chief of the Seminole Nation, he was in the House at that time. Kelly Haney carried it in the House, and I carried it in the Senate, and Dr. McCoy lobbied all 101 House members and all 48 Senators. He lobbied all of them, and when I introduced the bill, and when Kelly introduced the bill, it passed with flying colors.