



# ROCK EAGLE 4-H CENTER

## CEMETERY STUDIES

Independent (Teacher Led)

### Description:

Learn about and explore two historical cemeteries located near Rock Eagle property. These cemeteries are located next to the Union Chapel Church, founded in 1855. The two cemeteries are very different from one another. Students will visit the cemeteries and compare and contrast the physical and cultural characteristics of them.

### Materials:

A Cemetery Studies box will be provided for your school. If you are running out of supplies, please inform your lead staff and they will restock. A map has been included so you can find your way to the cemeteries.

**\*\*Please make sure your students treat the cemeteries with respect. Rock Eagle is fortunate to have been granted permission to use these cemeteries for classes. Please help ensure we always have this privilege.**

**\*\*The privy, or outhouse, behind the church should not be used by students. This comes as a request from the Union Chapel congregation.**

### Objective:

Compare and contrast two cemeteries, learning about the physical and cultural characteristics of each.

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## Journal Questions:

1. What is symbolism? Give an example of symbolism used in the forest cemetery.
2. In many older cemeteries, the headstones face a certain direction. Which direction is this? Why did people position the headstones this way?
3. Who do you think might have been buried in the raised grave in the forest cemetery?
4. There is a grave in the forest cemetery which has a date of 1878. What do you think the land at Rock Eagle looked like in that year?

## Introduction:

This class utilizes two cemeteries located adjacent to the Union Chapel Church, built in 1855. The first cemetery, which we will call the "New Cemetery," is surrounded by a chain-link fence and is located directly behind the church. This cemetery has modern, carved headstones and is still an active cemetery. Most of the people buried in the New Cemetery were members of the church and lived nearby.

To the right of the church, in the trees, lies the other cemetery. We will call this the "Forest Cemetery" The graves in the Forest Cemetery have headstones and footstones made from natural stones you might find lying on the ground in a forest. Nearly all the graves are completely unmarked, and it is unknown who is buried in this cemetery or when they were buried. No known excavations have taken place at this cemetery. In recent years, students studying the cemetery have found a few stones which appear to have things carved or inscribed in them. One such headstone has 1878 inscribed on it.

When your students are in the Forest Cemetery, have them take notice of the large pile of stones. These stones are likely marking a grave. Assuming it is a grave, why did this person get a grave marked like this and not a typical headstone and footstone like other graves in the cemetery? Could this have been someone of importance? Many of the graves near this raised burial vault, or sepulcher, have small distances between the headstone and footstone. Could these be children's graves? And if so, were the children placed around the raised grave for a reason?

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Perhaps a preacher, teacher, or community leader is buried beneath the raised grave. You can see there are ample opportunities in this class for students to make observations and draw conclusions.

Cemeteries are places where symbolism is often present. The headstone and footstone of a grave can represent the headboard and footboard of a bed. Some cultures believed that death was a long sleep, so a pillow and blanket might have been added to one's coffin. In early cemeteries, ground-covering plants like *Vinca minor* or English ivy were sometimes planted throughout the cemetery to represent a blanket for the sleeping dead. Most pioneer cemeteries (and many modern cemeteries) have headstones facing the rising sun (east). Some believed when this world ended, Christ would come from that direction.

The walk to the cemeteries takes about 15-25 minutes, depending from where you leave. The Cemetery Trail (see map) leads you to a small open area near the church. This is a good spot to stop and give a brief introduction about the class. Just a few footsteps from this open area is the Forest Cemetery. At this point you can have students complete the activity sheet provided. Please note that several graves in the forest are marked with blue and/or orange flags. The Forest Cemetery provides a wonderful chance for the students to make observations and formulate theories about who is buried there, when they were buried, why the cemetery is no longer maintained, etc. After completing work in the Forest Cemetery, you can walk directly behind the church and answer questions about the New Cemetery.

*The following pages include an activity sheet for the students that allows them to compare/contrast the two cemeteries, a scavenger hunt for the New Cemetery, as well as optional activities that relate to grave rubbings and eulogies/epitaphs.*

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## Cemetery Studies Activity Sheet

### Cemetery in the Forest

1. Find a stone with a date carved in it. What year is carved? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Who do you think might be buried in the raised grave?

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3. Find graves that are positioned head-to-head like this.

\_\_\_\_\_ | | \_\_\_\_\_

Who might be buried this way?

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4. Do you think any of the graves in this cemetery might be children's graves? Why or why not?

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5. Find a grave that appears to be sunken. What causes a grave to become sunken?

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6. Give one example of something you see in the cemetery that demonstrates that people cared about those who were buried here.

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## Union Chapel "New" Cemetery

1. At the Scott graves, why are there small blocks marked with an "S" near the graves?

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2. How many people are buried in the Scott family plot? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What Scott family member was born during the U.S. Civil War?

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4. In this cemetery, who was the youngest person to die and how old was she?

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5. Who died on his birthday and how old was he?

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6. Find the person with the oldest date of birth. What year was she born?

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7. What year was the oldest tombstone (with a date on it) placed in the ground?

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8. Name a family with a plot in the cemetery whose surname (or last name) is the same as a celestial body that orbits the Earth.

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9. What family shares a surname with that of a famous rock singer who made his home in Graceland?

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## Cemetery Studies Answer Sheet

### Cemetery in the Forest

1. Find a stone with a date carved in it. What year is carved? There are 2 stones known to have dates inscribed in them. The dates are 1878 and 1888.

2. Who do you think might be buried in the raised grave? Answers will vary, but may include a preacher, teacher, community leader, etc.

3. Find graves that are positioned head-to-head like this. \_\_\_\_\_  
| \_\_\_\_\_

Who might be buried this way? Answers will vary, but may include siblings, spouses, etc.

4. Do you think any of the graves in this cemetery might be children's graves? Yes/No

Why do/don't you think this way? Answers will vary, however, there are several graves that have a smaller distance between the headstone and footstone. Many of these are around the raised grave.

5. Find a grave that appears to be sunken. What causes a grave to become sunken? Answers will vary, but possible reasons can include body/coffin deterioration and/or soil shifting from simply digging a hole.

6. Give one example of something you see in the cemetery that demonstrates that people cared about those who were buried here. Many possible answers including: presence of Vinca minor, presence of a sepulcher (or burial vault), cemetery is next to a church, etc.

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## Union Chapel "New" Cemetery

1. At the Scott graves, why are there small blocks marked with an "S" near the graves? They mark the boundaries of the Scott family plot within the cemetery.
2. How many people are buried in the Scott family plot? 9
3. Which Scott family member was born during the U.S. Civil War? Henry Reid Scott.
4. In this cemetery, who was the youngest person to die? Baby Irene Scott  
How old was she? 4 days old
5. Who died on his birthday? How old was he? Charlie I. Mooneyham  
1 year old
6. Find the person with the oldest date of birth. What year was she born? 1836
7. What year was the oldest tombstone (with a date on it) placed in the ground? 1903
8. Name a family with a plot in the cemetery whose surname, last name, is the same as a celestial body that orbits the Earth. The Moon family
9. What family shares a surname with that of a famous rock singer who made his home in Graceland? The Presley family

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## Cemetery Scavenger Hunt

1. What is the name of this church? \_\_\_\_\_
2. When was the church founded? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who gave the land for the church? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is special about Jessie Wagner's grave? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the oldest grave in the cemetery? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who has the design of the Rock Eagle on his/her grave?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Who died when they were exactly one year old? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Name two (2) people who served in the U.S. military during World War II.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Name two (2) children who did not live to be one year old.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Who has a poem on his/her grave? What does the poem say?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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11. Find three (3) people born in the late 1800's.

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12. What is the oldest birth date in the cemetery? How old would this person be if she/he were alive today?

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13. Who has seashells on his/her grave? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What does the sign say about trash? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Who lived to be a centenarian, a person who is at least 100 years old?

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# ROCK EAGLE 4-H CENTER

## Cemetery Scavenger Hunt (Answer Sheet)

1. What is the name of this church? Union Chapel United Methodist Church
2. When was the church founded? April 1855
3. Who gave the land for the church? Irby Hudson Scott
4. What is special about Jessie Wagner's grave? There are several figures of cows around her grave.

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5. What is the oldest grave in the cemetery? Mattinee Moon Presley (died September 18, 1903)
6. Who has the design of the Rock Eagle on his/her grave? Cecil E. Johnson (Feb. 2, 1918 - Oct. 2, 1990)
7. Who died when they were exactly one year old? (Charlie I. Mooneyham (June 11, 1919 - June 11, 1920)
8. Name two (2) people who served in the U.S. military during World War II.. Evy C. Moon (Mar. 5, 1921 - Aug. 3, 1959); (Henry) Allen Welch (Nov. 6, 1920 - July 31, 1993); Cecil E. Johnson (Feb. 2, 1918 - Oct. 2, 1990)
9. Name two (2) children who did not live to be one year old. Bobby M. Brooks (Aug. 17, 1935 - Oct. 12, 1935); Odis Crawford (Oct. 18, 1915 - Jan. 24, 1916); Baby Irene Scott (May 16, 1916 - May 20, 1916)
10. Who has a poem on his/her grave? What does the poem say? Sister Annie E. Wheeler (Feb. 2, 1907 - May 21, 1979)  
To my sister Nice to chat with, good to know, Glad to have her where I go, Kind in trouble bright in joy, Suits exactly - can't say why, Sweet and wholesome, always true, That's my sister, Yes, That's you! "George"
11. Find three (3) people born in the late 1800's. Answers will vary.
12. What is the oldest birth date in the cemetery? How old would this person be if she/he were alive today? Sarah E. Favors Avery (1836-1924); 168 years old as of 2004
13. Who has seashells on his/her grave? Mrs. Robert G. Newsom (1888-1948)
14. What does the sign say about trash? Please do not throw old flowers or trash over fence.
15. Who lived to be a centenarian, a person who is at least 100 years old? Lillie S. Presley (1903-2003)

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### Grave Rubbings (an optional activity)

Materials Needed: Paper (or students' journals, if they have them), crayons

Procedure:

*-This activity brings students in direct contact with tombstones in the cemetery. Please remember to take special care as not to disturb the graves and/or items placed on or around them.*

Have students choose a tombstone that appears interesting to them. Instruct students to carefully place a piece of paper over the tombstone, in particular over areas that may be more difficult to read or decipher. Next, instruct students to use the broad side of a crayon and gently rub the paper while holding the paper firmly against the stone. A gentle stroke will ensure that the finer intricacies of the tombstone can slowly be revealed, plus this method will prevent students from breaking through the paper or losing control such that they end up coloring on the grave. After each student has completed their grave rubbing ask if they happened to notice anything different between their rubbing and the actual tombstone. Perhaps even discuss how grave rubbings might be useful to people studying old cemeteries. What might be revealed through a grave rubbing that is harder to notice with the naked eye?

Students can also share their work with each other and discuss what they would like to have on their tombstone. If someone were to do a grave rubbing of their grave, how might that look?

### Eulogies (an optional activity)

Materials Needed: Paper (or students' journals, if they have them), pencils or crayons

Procedure:

*-This activity deals with dying. It may or may not be appropriate for your particular group.*

Have the students sit down somewhere. Ask the students if they have ever been to a funeral. Talk to them about what a **eulogy** is. Do they remember hearing someone give a eulogy?

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Ask the students to pretend they have died. Who would give their eulogy and what would that person say in the eulogy? Have the students write down what they think someone would say for their eulogy. This gives the students a chance to reflect upon their lives up to this point.

Here is another way to approach this activity. Tell the students to imagine themselves in the future. They have died at the age of 91. Have them write what they think their eulogy might say then. This gives the students a chance to think about what their lives may be like for the next 80 years.

You may want to have some of the students share their eulogies with the class.

A shorter variation of this would be to have the students write their own **epitaph**. What do the students think would be written on their epitaph if they were to die tomorrow or 20, 40, 60, etc. years in the future?

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