



Lesson Title	Savannah's Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1820
Grade Level(s)	6-10
Timeline	1 50-minute class period

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How has disease shaped communities?

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will read, comprehend, and analyze relationships among American literature, history, and culture.
2. Students will read and analyze a variety of nonfiction texts. Students will use information from texts to clarify understanding of concepts.
3. Students will collaborate and report on small-group learning activities.

STANDARDS

Social Studies

L6-10WHST4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

SS8G1b. Distinguish among the five geographic regions of Georgia in terms of location, climate, agriculture, and economic contribution.

L6-8WHST7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

SSSocIC1a. Explain how unequal distribution of power and resources affects the life chances of individuals in that society.

BACKGROUND

Students should have some familiarity with the population of Savannah during the 19th century. Students should [examine the population of the city](#) and make a hypothesis as to why the city's population dropped during the 1820s.

In 1820, an outbreak of yellow fever swept across the City of Savannah killing nearly 700 people. At this time, people were not aware of what was causing the disease and had no vaccine to prevent it. Use [this short clip](#) to establish background knowledge on yellow fever.

MATERIALS

- Internet connection
- Computer or smart device

VOCABULARY

yellow fever: a serious disease that causes fever and often yellowing of the skin and that is passed from one person to another especially by the bite of mosquitoes

epidemiology: the study of how disease spreads and can be controlled

PROCEDURES

Step One:

Ask students some of the following questions and record their answers on the board.

- What do you think medicine was like in the 1800s?
- How do you think doctors treated diseases during this time?
- In what ways do you think sanitation in medical facilities today is different from medical facilities in the 1800s?
- What was sanitation like in major cities during the 1800s?
- What does the term “infectious disease” mean to you?
- Give some examples of infectious diseases that you have learned about in the past.

Step Two:

1. Have students break into four groups and assign each one to read one of the following articles:
 - a. ["Eyewitness Accounts" by Samuel Breck](#)
 - b. [The Diseased City](#)
 - c. ["A Short Account of the Malignant Fever"](#)
2. Once the groups have read the assigned articles, have them discuss the following questions:
 - What were some of the suggested causes for the yellow fever outbreak?
 - How did people react to the outbreak?
3. After the groups have had adequate time to discuss these questions, have them perform a jigsaw. (A jigsaw is an instructional strategy that helps facilitate the summarization of reading or ideas. In this case, students will begin in one of four groups, and each group will be responsible for reading a certain article. When the groups switch, all new groups should be composed of a member from each of the original groups. In the new groups, ask students to summarize their articles for the new group and discuss the answers to the same questions as above.)

ASSESSMENT/CLOSING

Students will read about the yellow fever epidemic in Savannah using [this article](#). Then, they will imagine they are living in Savannah during the time of the yellow fever outbreak. Have them write a journal entry on what it might have been like living in Savannah during this time. They can take the perspective of someone suffering from yellow fever, someone whose loved one has yellow fever, or simply an onlooker in Savannah.

EXTENSION/INQUIRY

“Solve the Outbreak” is a free app from the Centers of Disease Control that allows students set out on a mystery to solve serious epidemics. Students will be led through a series of questions, prompts, and data in order to solve simulated real-life disease outbreaks. The tool can also be great practice for students for standardized testing for science based on its multiple choice format, reading comprehension requirements, and graph interpretations throughout.

Each case should take approximately 20 minutes for each student to complete.
There are links for more information to offer a diversified learning experience for users.
The game has a badge system and can track correct responses for student assessment.

Teacher Tip: It’s important to cycle through the room and make sure students are making informed, educated decisions for the case rather than flying through them.

MODIFICATIONS

1. Provide students with a summary of the articles, or highlight specific paragraphs for them to read.
2. Give students extended time to complete the journal entry. Grade content and grammar/mechanics separately, or do not deduct points for grammar/mechanics
3. In the closing activity, have students watch [this video](#) instead of reading the selected article.

RESOURCES

["Eyewitness Accounts" by Samuel Breck](#)
[The Diseased City](#)
["A Short Account of the Malignant Fever"](#)
["Before There Was Ebola, There Was Yellow Fever"](#)
["Solve the Outbreak" app](#)
[Mass Grave in Savannah GA - Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1820](#)