

“Okefenokee” a Georgia Outdoors Production Teacher Guide

Synopsis

Humans have inhabited the great Okefenokee Swamp for thousands of years. First settled by the Native Americans and later by Americans, the swamp has yet to be tamed by mankind. Rich with history and immense beauty, the Okefenokee Swamp is a landmark of Georgia’s wildlife and certainly a unique place on this earth.

“Okefenokee” a Georgia Outdoors Production, explores the history and wildlife of the swamp. Narrated by host Sharon Collins, the viewer travels through the swamp and sees firsthand what it is like to live there for present and past inhabitants. From the ruins of abandoned trains and railroads to stories of moonshine and a village of swampers, “Okefenokee” is sure to make your class get in touch with the untamed side of nature.

Pre-viewing Questions

1. Has anyone heard of the Okefenokee Swamp before?
2. What kind of animals lives in a swamp?
3. Do you think that prehistoric swamps have any benefit to modern civilization?
4. What do you think it would be like to live in a swamp?

Post-viewing Questions

Part 1

What do you think is so appealing about living in a swamp? Would you like to move into the wilderness one day? If so, why?

Part 2

Coal was developed through millions of years of fossilization of swamps like Okefenokee. Currently, coal is the main source of power for the United States. Since this is not a renewable energy, it would take millions of years for coal deposits to be replenished by present day swamps. Should the United States invest in renewable energy? What do you think would happen if the United States were to run out of coal or other fossil fuels?

Part 3

In the early 1900’s the Georgia state legislature authorized the sale of Okefenokee and allowed lumber companies to cut down the cypress trees for sale. Was this the right decision by the state government? If so, why? If not, why not?

Part 4

Okefenokee Joe grew up in the Okefenokee Swamp. What do you think life was like for him growing up? What do you think it means to be “swampwise?”

Part 5

How do you feel about living in a swamp after watching “Okefenokee?” Would you like to visit Okefenokee sometime? What benefits do you think would come from taking some time away from modern society and connecting with nature?

Quiz Questions

Part 1

1. Okefenokee is one of the largest [blank] in the United States.
(Swamps)
2. Chip and Joy Campbell quit their high tech jobs in North Carolina to live in Okefenokee. What do they do to make money in the swamp?
(They give tours.)
3. Generally, how long has the great Okefenokee Swamp been inhabited by people?
(2,500BC/any answer that says it was in pre-history)

Part 2

1. There are some plants in the swamp that eat living animals. What kind of animals do they eat?
(Small bugs and/or small fish.)
2. Spanish explorers who ventured into the swamp in the 1500’s reported that three Indian nations inhabited it. However, over time those nations left the swamp. What was the last Indian nation to inhabit Okefenokee?
(The Seminole Indians)
3. What makes up the ground in the swamp? When fossilized, what does this substance turn into?
(Peat, coal.)

Part 3

1. The cypress trees in Okefenokee grow in the water. What are they resistant to that would allow them to grow in this way?
(Rot)
2. Hebard Cypress Company built a railroad into the swamp in order to do what?
(Harvest the cypress trees and transport them to be sold.)
3. People who lived on Billy’s Island in Okefenokee formed a small but prosperous town. What did they call themselves?
(Swampers)
4. In the 1930’s, alcohol the federal government outlawed the production and sale of alcohol. What did the Swampers do in response to prohibition?
(They illegally produced alcohol on rafts in the swamp.)

Part 4

1. In 1937, what did Franklin Delano Roosevelt do to protect Okefenokee?

(He signed an executive order establishing the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge/he made it a wildlife refuge.)

2. In 2007, a wildfire destroyed a large area of the swamp. Was this a positive or a negative for the swamp's health?

(Positive because without wildfires, the islands would grow too large and Okefenokee would begin to turn into solid land instead of a swamp.)

Part 5

1. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources is looking to promote the State of Georgia using what natural feature?

(The Okefenokee Swamp)

2. Before General Floyd claimed Okefenokee from the Seminole Indians, what did he call it? (Hint: It's what connects the Pyramids, The Oracle, The Hanging Gardens, and The Colossus)

(A wonder of the world)

Geography Activities

Locate Okefenokee Swamp on a map of Georgia