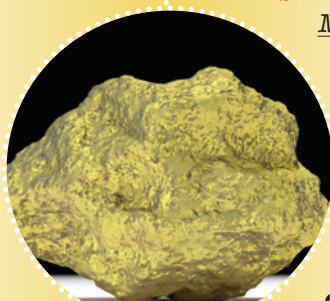


A Golden Opportunity



STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY CORRELATIONS:

Math, Grades 6-8, Goal 1: The learner will understand and compute with rational numbers.

1.07 Develop flexibility in solving problems by selecting strategies and using mental computation, estimation, calculators or computers, and paper and pencil.

Social Studies, Grade 4, Goal 6: The learner will evaluate how North Carolinians apply basic economic principles within the community, state, and nation.

6.03 Categorize the state's resources as natural, human, or capital.

6.04 Assess how the state's natural resources are being used.

Social Studies, Grade 8, Goal 1: The learner will identify key events and evaluate the impact of reform and expansion in North Carolina during the first half of the 19th century.

3.06 Describe and evaluate the geographic, economic, and social implications of the North Carolina Gold Rush.

INTRODUCTION TO LESSON: Using the Project Approach, students will envision a response to their own discovery of gold—in the early 1800s or today. Students will compare the historical value of gold to its purchasing value then and now.

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHER: The discovery of gold on John Reed's farm contributed to North Carolina's position as the leader in American gold production until 1848. The handout describes this era of the state's history.

MATERIALS

- * Rock weighing about 17 pounds
- * Art materials (paint, clay, newspaper, poster paper, plaster of Paris, rocks, etc.)
- * Reed Gold Mine handout (1 per student)

PREPARATION

- * If Internet access is not available in the classroom, you will want to gather a few facts and materials beforehand for the student exercises. At <http://www.onlygold.com/Tutorial/Pages/YourWeightInGold.asp>, you can enter a weight, in pounds, to calculate its current value in gold.
- * The "Inflation Calculator" at <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/> provides a rough estimate of what money in the year 1800 is worth today (\$3.50 = about \$42).
- * A general idea of prices of food and other supplies in the 1800s can be found at: <http://oldrecipebook.com/1800s-livingcost.shtml>. Other methods for valuing the dollar are available at <http://www.measuring-worth.com/uscompare/>.

engage > Display the rock on a table. Invite students to lift the rock and describe its characteristics. Place the rock against a classroom door to prop it open. Ask students to contemplate how they might feel if they learned several years from now that the rock is extremely valuable. What would they do with it? **Show Chapter 2 of the video.**

explore > Have students read the handout about the discovery of gold in North Carolina.

explain > Divide students into groups and ask them to discuss how Conrad Reed might have felt about the rock he discovered in 1799. Encourage students to be imaginative in answering the following questions:

- What do you think Conrad knew about the rock he found?
- Think about what might have prompted his father, John Reed, to sell the rock to a jeweler in Fayetteville. Why do you think he requested \$3.50 for the rock?
- How do you feel about the jeweler who purchased the rock for \$3.50 from John Reed? Explain your feelings.
- What do you think the Reed family did with the money it received?

elaborate > Have team members use the Project Approach to do research and complete three basic tasks:

- Have students create a two- or three-dimensional gold nugget to represent the nugget that Conrad Reed discovered.
- Have students investigate the value of \$3.50 in the year 1799 and list the goods that a family might have wished to buy at that time. They are to



Reed Gold Mine photo courtesy of N.C. Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development.

create a chart displaying how the Reed family might have spent the money. They should cite sources of information.

- Have students research the current market value of a 17-pound gold nugget. They are to create a chart displaying what they might do with that amount of money today. They should cite sources of information.

evaluate The group interviews and evaluation of the materials produced (gold nugget, charts, posters) will help you gauge the amount of research that students conducted and how they drew conclusions. Correct any misconceptions or propose additional research, if necessary.

Teacher's Notes:



BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Field experiences could include a trip to **Reed Gold Mine**, which is now a North Carolina Historic Site in Midland. Visitors may pan for gold there. <http://www.nchistoricsites.org/reed/reed.htm> • (704) 721-GOLD (4653)

Additional Resources:

Brevard Station Museum • <http://www.brevardstation.com/1800b.html> • Article on North Carolina gold mining in the 1800s.

North Carolina Geological Survey • <http://www.geology.enr.state.nc.us/>

Only Gold Web Site • <http://www.onlygold.com> • Historic gold prices.



<http://www.nchistoricsites.org/Reed/reed.htm>

Reed Gold Mine: A North Carolina Historic Site

Reed Gold Mine is the site of the first documented gold find in the United States. From this discovery, gold mining spread gradually to nearby counties and eventually into other southern states. During its peak years, gold mining was second only to farming in the number of North Carolinians it employed. The estimated value of gold recovered each year exceeded \$1 million. North Carolina led the nation in gold production until 1848, when it was eclipsed by the great rush to California.

A SIMPLE MAN

John Reed (Johannes Reith) was a Hessian soldier who left the British army near the conclusion of the Revolutionary War and came to settle near fellow Germans living in the lower Piedmont of North Carolina. Most of the people dwelt on modest family-run farms in rural areas, where they raised small grain crops such as corn and wheat.

The life of farmer John Reed would likely be long forgotten had it not been for a chance event one Sunday in 1799. On that day, his son Conrad found a large yellow rock in Little Meadow Creek on Reed's farm in Cabarrus County. This rock reportedly weighed 17 pounds and for three years was used as a doorstep at the Reed house. In 1802, a Fayetteville jeweler identified the gold nugget. He purchased it for the asked price of \$3.50—one-tenth of 1 percent of its true value.

The following year, John Reed began the Reed mining operation by forming a partnership with three local men. The partners supplied equipment and workers to dig for gold in the creek bed, while Reed provided the land. The returns were to be divided equally. The men mined mainly in the off-season, giving first priority to raising their crops. Before the end of the first year, a slave named Peter unearthed a 28-pound nugget. Using only pans and rockers to wash the creek gravel, the part-time miners recovered an estimated yield of \$100,000 by 1824.

THE FEVER SPREADS

Hearing of Reed's good fortune, other Piedmont farmers began exploring their creeks and finding gold. Men and women, both young and old, worked in the gold fields. Foreigners joined them, including skilled Cornishmen from England.



Portions of the underground tunnels at the Reed Gold Mine in North Carolina have been restored for guided tours. Photo courtesy of N.C. Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development.

Placer (creek) gold mining led to underground mining when it was learned in 1825 that the metal also existed in veins of white quartz rock. The search for underground or "lode" gold required much more money, labor and machinery. Underground work at the Reed mine was not begun until 1831. Four years later, a family squabble resulted in a court injunction that closed the mine for a decade.

John Reed was a wealthy man when he died in 1845. Soon the Reed mine was sold at a public auction. The mine changed hands many times through the years until 1912, when the last underground work took place there. Placer miners found the last large nugget at the Reed mine in 1896. The yield of the mine in large nuggets alone ultimately totaled more than 100 pounds.

VISITING THE HISTORIC SITE

Portions of the underground tunnels at the Reed mine have been restored for guided tours. A visitor center contains exhibits of gold and historical mining equipment. An orientation film highlights the first gold discovery, and tours of a restored ore-crushing stamp mill are offered. A picnic area is available, and trails wind through the historic mining area.

The Gold History Corporation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of North Carolina's gold mining heritage, supports many ongoing projects at Reed Gold Mine.