

“Small Town Paradise” Study Guide

Language Arts (Skills: Listening, note taking, summarizing and writing, referencing historical events, doing online research and using an online archive):

Writing a biography: Go online to the FIU Archive, www.miamibeachvisualmemoirs.com, and click on the link for the FIU Digital Library). Choose an interview of someone who looks interesting to you, based on the brief notes on their background. Listen to the entire interview and take notes of important quotes and details.

Create a *timeline* of the person's life starting with their birth. Mark some important events in history that occurred during their lifetime (e.g., the Great Depression, World Wars I and II, the Vietnam War, hurricanes that affected Miami Beach). If they served in public office, make a space on the timeline for that.

Write a 500-word *biographical summary* of that person's life based on what they reveal about themselves in the interview. Where were they born? Where were they raised? Where did they go to school? What do they remember about their student life? Did they witness any important events or changes?

Social Studies: The importance of local history and historic preservation

Why is it important to know the history of the place where you live? Write an essay on where your family comes from and what you have been told about the birthplace of your grandparents. Include a family story that has been handed down. What are some aspects of your family history that are important to you and your family?

Is there something in your neighborhood that you believe should be preserved for future generations? It can be a structure, a building, a park, a tree or a whatever. Write a **persuasive argument** about why you think it should be preserved.

Remember to support your case with facts and logic. Take a photo of it if you have access to a camera to accompany your essay. If you feel strongly about preserving it, try to get your essay published in the school newspaper, in a blog, or in a community newspaper.

Media production: Videotaping: Find someone interesting to interview about the history they lived through - an older relative like a grandparent, a neighbor or family friend, even a parent. Prepare a set of questions to ask them about their past. Prior to the interview, ask them to find photos they can share during the interview. Digitize those photos and intercut them with video excerpts to make a profile of the person. If you don't have a way to videotape, do a write-up instead or make a power-point using photos and facts about the person.

Tourism and Hospitality Academy: Create a mock-up of a *travel brochure* about Miami Beach for teenage visitors. What do you think youth your age would find interesting about the history of Miami Beach? What places would they enjoy going to? Use photos of your own or download them from Miami Beach tourism websites and City of Miami Beach archives. Use Art Deco, Mediterranean Revival, or Miami Modern (MiMo) design elements that echo the historic districts.

Virtual tour. Find photos and moving images online. Create a tour for young people of the Art Deco District, including features of architecture, place of interest, historic hotels, where to rent bikes, paths for roller blading. Ask permission to put it on your school's

website. You may want to collaborate with the Tourism and Hospitality Academy and design a brochure to go with your tour.

Special Event:

Miami Beach 100th Anniversary Celebration Quiz Show

Plan a Quiz show event for your school community modeled after the popular and long-running television show “Jeopardy.” Or use your own ideas of what a quiz show format should be like. If you google “quiz shows” you will find dozens of old shows on YouTube.

Find community sponsors who will offer prizes for the quiz show contestants. Some suggestions: restaurants offering a dinner for two, free windsurfing lessons, tickets for an under-21 dance cruise, a free Art Deco tour, tickets to the ballet or the New World Symphony.

Your film and television students can videotape the show for re-runs on your closed circuit television system. If your production reaches broadcast standards (see your media teacher) you might try to interest want local cable stations to air it.

Contestants can study Miami Beach history in advance of the event to enhance their chances of winning. You may decide to have teams of two and each team could name themselves something clever.

Here are some sample true and false statements and some fill-in-the-blank questions, like you might hear on the popular National Public Radio show on Saturday mornings, “Wait! Wait! Don't Tell Me!” Your history teachers and other authorities on Miami Beach history can help supply questions.

True or False?

1. Collins Avenue was named after a Quaker farmer from New Jersey. (True, John S. Collins who bought lots of the land on Miami Beach and the adjacent mainland in order to grow tropical fruits.)

2. Miami Beach became an official city in 1918 at the end of World War 1. (False, 1915.)

3. Miami Beach always welcomed Jews and allowed them to live wherever they wanted. (False. MB was actually anti-Semitic in its early days and hotels advertised Gentile clientele only.)

4. Miami Beach hotel owners tore down their buildings in the 1920's and switched to the more stylish Art Deco style to attract more tourists. (False. A hurricane erased the landscape in 1926 and South Beach was rebuilt within a few years in a popular style which was relatively inexpensive and suitable for the tropical environment.)

5. South Beach has always been a popular place to visit. (False. In the 1970's South Beach's former glory had faded and was mostly populated by the elderly. In 1980, there was a huge exodus of Cubans who came in crowded boats. Many had been freed from prison so they would leave Cuba. Crime shot up on South Beach and there were nightly shootouts, robberies and illegal drug dealing.

6. The idea to make a historic district from South Beach came from a woman in her 60's from New York who husband had just died and she needed something to do to take her mind off her grief. (True - Barbara Baer Capitman and her husband had relocated to South Florida because her husband got a teaching

position at FIU. Three years later he died. Ms. Capitman needed a purpose to recover from her grief. Saving the Art Deco buildings became her mission.)

7. During World War 2, residents of Miami Beach could see ships burning out at sea from being torpedoed by German submarines. (True)

8. One of the most famous criminal masterminds in American history lived on Miami Beach. (True - Al Capone, the most famous criminal in the U.S., bought a luxury home on Palm Island and eventually died there from old age and illness.)

9. The beach was once smaller and closer to Ocean Drive. (True - The Army Corp of Engineers widened the beach to protect the shoreline.)

10. A famous American comedian on television moved his entire show to Miami Beach so he could play golf year 'round. (True, Jackie Gleason, of The Honeymooners.)

Fill in the Blanks:

Carl Fisher, who was Miami Beach's first real developer, made a fortune from his invention of _____. (sealed headlamp for automobiles)

The ledges over the windows on Art Deco buildings which help shade the windows are called _____ (eyebrows).

What famous Italian clothes designer was murdered on the steps of his mansion on Ocean Drive? (Giovanni Versace)

Name a famous actor who played a detective on Miami Beach.
(Frank Sinatra, Don Johnson, Phillip Michael Thomas).

What famous Miami Beach hotel built a new wing just to block out the sun on the rival hotel next door? (Fountainbleu. The owner hated his rival, Eden Roc.)

What famous television show in the 1980's made Miami Beach look glamorous again and caused an increase in tourism? (Miami Vice)

What kind of music was most popular on Miami Beach in the 40's and 50's? (Latin music, especially Cuban)

What famous notorious gangster lived in a mansion on Palm Island? (Al Capone)

What famous news woman and talk show host went to Miami Beach High School for two years while her father was establishing a famous night club here? (Barbara Walters)

Who was Fish Mary? (a local Beach resident who made her living catching and selling bait to fisherman on the Miami Beach pier, later bulldozed)

Lincoln Road Mall was named after President Abraham Lincoln. Who gave it that name and why? (Carl Fisher admired Lincoln and named the major road after him.)

What famous handsome American actor was trained during World War 2 on Miami Beach, causing young female movie fans to hang out on the beach hoping to see him. (Clark Gable, most famous for playing Rhett Butler in Gone With the Wind)

Resources:

FIU Digital Archive

City of Miami Beach, Clerk's office

YouTube etc.

Miami Design Preservation League's Art Deco Tours and the Art Deco Museum

Bibliography:

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