

Roslyn Cemetery

Lesson Two – Grade Seven

Roslyn's History of Immigration and Resilience through Photographs and Reading

Summary



As a major producer of coal and a magnet for immigration, Roslyn was at one time once was one of the most diverse cities in Washington, even before Washington became a state.

To better contextualize the Roslyn Cemetery, this lesson is designed to provide an overview of the town's historical trajectory, using photographs as a primary resource.

During this lesson, students will examine photographs and read brief texts related to various aspects of historical life in Roslyn. They can then share ideas gleaned from images and descriptions about key historical factors and events of importance to Roslyn and its 27 cemeteries. These activities will be tied together with a discussion about how sources such as photographs and texts work together to give us a more comprehensive understanding of history.



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State Standards

SSS2.6-8.2 Evaluate the breadth, reliability, and credibility of primary and secondary sources to determine the need for new or additional information when researching an issue or event.

G2.6-8.3 Explain and analyze how the environment has affected people and how human actions modify the physical environment. In turn, analyze how the physical environment limited or promoted human activities in Washington state, and how it will continue to do so.

G2.6-8.4 Explain the role of immigration in shaping societies, both past and present.

H1.6-8.5 Explain how themes and developments have defined eras in Washington state history from 1854 to the present.

Essential Questions

- What kind of life did immigrants face when they moved to Roslyn from their home countries or other parts of the United States?
- How does the Roslyn Cemetery reflect its residents' diversity in Roslyn?
- Why do you think lodges and fraternal orders were so popular when immigration to the United States was at an all-time high? (immigration peaked 1900-1915; more than 15 million immigrants arrived in U.S. during those years).
- What cultural elements do you think immigrants retained from their home countries? What elements were most important to them?
- What cultural elements would be most important to you if you emigrated to a new country?
- How do primary resources like photographs differ from secondary resources like books and texts?

Essential Understandings

- Students will understand how diversity may be created from the beginning of a community.
- Students will gain an understanding of Roslyn's historical trajectory.
- Students will recognize that historical interpretation requires the use of multiple types of evidence about the past.
- Students will gain an understanding of how a diverse mix of ethnic backgrounds made up the American population.

Primary Sources

Washington Rural Heritage Photography Collection: Roslyn Heritage
<https://www.washingtonruralheritage.org/digital/collection/roslyn>

Secondary Sources

Kershner, J. (2009, December 12). Roslyn – Thumbnail History. History Link.
<https://www.historylink.org/File/9239> (edited and abridged for this lesson)

Weiser-Alexander, K. (2021, July). Immigration – Challenges For New Americans. Legends of America <https://www.legendsofamerica.com/immigration-america/>

Materials

- From the Washington Rural Heritage website, select photographs depicting aspects of early Roslyn life—(*especially early mining, hardships, community ethnicity, fraternal organizations*). Prepare and print four groups of photos or project/share the photographs so that all students can see and examine them.
- Roslyn Heritage Photo Collection Brainstorm Worksheet
- 4 brief reading texts on Roslyn history

Teacher prep

This lesson can follow on from Unit 1 on the history of the land and location of the Roslyn Cemetery.

In preparation for this lesson read the full Thumbnail History of Roslyn text at:

<https://www.historylink.org/File/9239>

About fraternal orders at:

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/sports-and-everyday-life/social-organizations/private-organizations/fraternal-orders>

And immigration at:

<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/immigration-america/>

Bring in your own old photograph to model the sharing activity.

Prepare/cut up the Roslyn Heritage photographs.

Student prep

Family photographs are precious, so tell students to bring a photocopy of an old family photograph. Encourage them to ask family members for a photograph from their family's past. Let students know they will be talking about the photograph so they should bring something they are comfortable sharing.

Lesson Plan

WORD	DEFINITION
Asphyxiate	
Cultural (Culture)	
Diversity (Diverse)	
Epidemic	
Fraternal Order	
Heritage	
Immigrate and Emigrate	
(other words?)	

Part I

Remind students that the topic for the week is the Roslyn Cemetery and briefly review one or two ideas from the discussion in Unit 1 (if using the lesson plans in order). Let students know that today you will continue to talk about some of the important social and historical factors that make Roslyn important in Washington state history by looking at old photographs and reading.

Part II

Pair up students and have them share the photographs. Explain that:

You each have a photograph to share with your partner. Describe the photograph and tell your partner any important information you know about who, what or where it is.

Regroup as a class and develop a brief discussion on the activity. Ask students:

How is what you learned from your partner "history"?

What does a photograph teach you that is different from a book?

Part III

Put students into four groups (within these groups you may want to have students pair up or work in even smaller groups depending on class size).

Provide each group with copies of the photographs from Roslyn Heritage Collection (or display via projection). Have students examine these photographs and choose three to discuss/brainstorm ideas about the history of Roslyn. Direct students to make notes on their group worksheet. If time allows, have groups share some of their ideas with the class.

Part IV

While in groups, provide each group with texts about Roslyn. Direct them to read together and ask these questions while they are reading:

*Are any of your ideas from the photograph activity in your section of the reading?
What are the main ideas or most important information that you find in your
section of the reading?*

Choose one group member who can lead the group discussion about the main idea from their text. Then ask groups to share the main ideas from their sections of the text.

Part V

Discuss with the class the difference between what they learned from the photographs and what they learned from reading and how these two types of sources support and/or conflict with each other. Distribute an exit slip with questions taken from the day's lesson and have students write individual responses. Collect these slips as students leave for the day to evaluate their understanding. Possible exit slip questions:

"What does a photograph teach you about history that is different from a book?"

"What is the most interesting or important thing you learned about Roslyn? Why do you think that?"

Enrichment Activities

- write a creative narrative or a poem about one of the photographs
- research one of the photographs or photograph collections further and present their findings

Using photographs to think about history

<https://www.washingtonruralherage.org/digital/collection/roslyn>

With your group, look at the photographs from the Roslyn Heritage Collection main page. Choose 3 photos to discuss and take notes on with your group. Talk to your group members about the photographs and make notes on your worksheet about your ideas.

Photograph Collection	What can you see?	What do you think it shows you about the history of Roslyn?

Roslyn, Washington.

Group 1 Reading

Roslyn, a town in Kittitas County on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains, was founded as a coal-mining town in 1886 after workers with the Northern Pacific Railroad found rich veins of coal. Within weeks Roslyn became a bustling mining community, and it grew rapidly over the next two years. The town's early years were plagued with labor strife, fires and mining disasters, including the worst coal mine disaster in Washington history, in which 45 miners died. Roslyn grew into one of the most ethnically diverse towns in the state, with a large population of African American miners and other first- or second-generation immigrants from all over Europe. Roslyn's fortunes came and went along with the coal industry. It was a bustling city of 3,126 in 1910, but soon went into decades of population decline. The last mines shut down in 1963. Roslyn became a tourist destination in the 1990s when the popular TV show, *Northern Exposure*, was filmed there. As of 2008, the population was estimated at 992; however, just outside city limits, a large new recreational-residential resort has grown up.

With your group read a little more about Roslyn below.



- Do you find any similar ideas from your work with the photographs?
- What is the main idea or most important information that you read?

Coal and development in Roslyn

Settlers and ranchers claimed to have found coal around what is now Roslyn as early as 1871 or 1872. However, it wasn't until May 1886 that a team of prospectors from the Northern Pacific Railroad found vast seams of coal, which opened the story

of Roslyn. The Northern Pacific rail line was snaking its way up the Cascades where a tunnel would be built under the mountain range's crest. The Northern Pacific could use all the local coal it could mine.

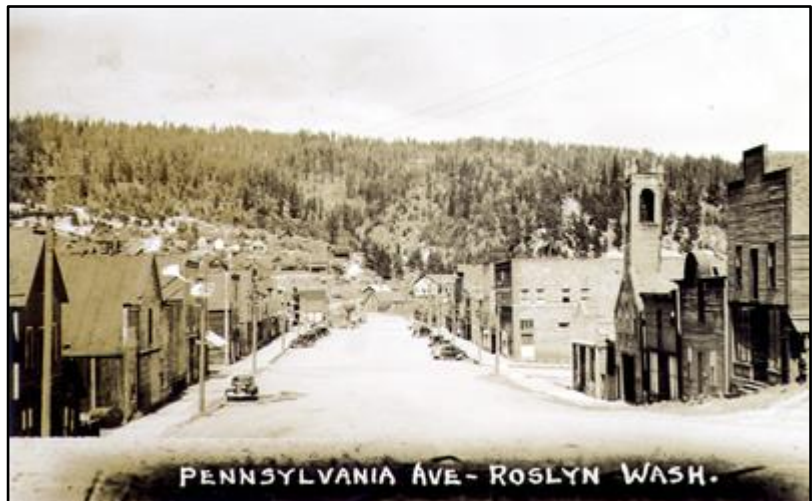
By August of 1886, the Northern Pacific had sent a crew of 18 to begin mining the coal. A branch rail line was hastily constructed to move the coal down to the main line at Cle Elum. Within weeks, hundreds of miners were at work. The name Roslyn soon became synonymous with coal. The railroad and coal company sent in hundreds of workers and a town plan was filed in September 1886. By winter, the town had a hotel, a boarding house, livery barns, and other commercial buildings. About 400 men, including a trainload of Italian miners, spent that first winter in Roslyn. Within two years, the town mushroomed to more than 1,000 people.

The development of the Roslyn Cemetery began at this time as well, between 1886 and 1889. The cemetery was created and operated with the permission of the Northern Pacific Coal Company and later the Northwestern Improvement Company (NWI).

Roslyn, Washington.

Group 2 Reading

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Hardships in Roslyn

On May 10, 1892, an explosion deep underground in the Northern Pacific Coal Company's No. 1 mine killed 45 miners. Gases and volatile coal dust ignited when miners were trying to connect an airway to a deep level of the mine. Many who were not killed by the explosion were asphyxiated. It took days to recover all of the bodies. This was, and remains, the worst coal mine disaster in Washington state history. It left 29 widows and 91 orphans.

An epidemic of typhoid struck in 1890, followed by diphtheria in 1896 and then smallpox (or a disease closely related) in 1900. The typhoid outbreak was caused by the lack of pure water, and the problem wasn't finally solved until 1901 when a pump began piping fresh water from the Cle Elum River.

The Flu of 1918 arrived in Washington state in September through military troops arriving at Fort Lewis. Eleven cases were reported, and within two weeks, there were 700 cases. Statistics weren't kept as to the exact numbers of mortality and illness from Washington state but estimates of flu related deaths were over 4,000.

It is no coincidence that many headstones in the Roslyn Cemetery are engraved with dates that coincide with these disasters and diseases.

Roslyn, Washington.

Group 3 Reading

Roslyn, a town in Kittitas County on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains, was founded as a coal-mining town in 1886 after workers with the Northern Pacific Railroad found rich veins of coal. Within weeks Roslyn became a bustling mining community, and it grew rapidly

over the next two years. The town's early years were plagued with labor strife, fires and mining disasters, including the worst coal mine disaster in Washington history, in which 45 miners died. Roslyn grew into one of the most ethnically diverse towns in the state, with



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A Coal Mining Melting Pot

The Northern Pacific Coal Company evolved into the Northwestern Improvement Company in 1898. By August 1899, 20 cars of coal a day were being

hauled out of the main mine. The mining companies needed plenty of workers. Some came from across the U.S., as first- and second- generation citizens. Others came from many overseas countries, new immigrants. In 1900, about 40 percent of the Roslyn population had been born outside of the United States. The mix included English, Italians, Germans, Scottish, Welsh, Poles, Lithuanians, and "Austrians," which at the time meant anyone from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These countries included Austria and Hungary as well as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Croatia and parts of present-day Poland, Romania, Italy, Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro. Roslyn had an especially large Croatian community, which by 1920 made up about one-fourth of its population.

There was a strong sense of "micro-community" in Roslyn among people who shared common cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Through the development of beneficial associations and fraternal organizations, each micro-community made efforts to maintain the ethnic traditions of their homeland throughout the years. Many Roslyn residents today are descendants of these varied community members.

The Roslyn Cemetery tells the story of mining and immigration even today: The cemetery comprises 27 separate cemeteries, many of which are for a different ethnic group.

Roslyn, Washington.

Group 4 Reading

Roslyn, a town in Kittitas County on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains, was founded as a coal-mining town in 1886 after workers with the Northern Pacific Railroad found rich veins of coal. Within weeks Roslyn became a bustling mining community, and it grew rapidly over the next two years. The town's early years were plagued with labor strife, fires and mining disasters, including the worst coal mine disaster in Washington history, in which 45 miners died. Roslyn grew into one of the most ethnically diverse towns in the state, with a large population of African American miners and other first- or second-generation immigrants from all over Europe. Roslyn's fortunes came and went along with the coal industry. It was a bustling city of 3,126 in 1910, but soon went into decades of population decline. The last mines shut down in 1963. Roslyn became a tourist destination in the 1990s when the popular TV show, *Northern Exposure*, was filmed there. As of 2008, the population was estimated at 992; however, just outside city limits, a large new recreational-residential resort has grown up.

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Lodges and Fraternal Organizations

Fraternal organizations are social clubs or membership groups formed around a common bond, ideology, or personal background. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the number of fraternal organizations in the United States grew rapidly. Millions of Americans joined benevolent, ethnic, and religious societies. Understanding these organizations can provide insight into the lives of our ancestors.

Many fraternal organizations existed in Roslyn. Some, like the Sokol, which was Croatian, and Druids, which was Italian, were formed to serve ethnic communities

of immigrants new to the country. Others like the Fraternal Order of Eagles or the Moose Lodge served communities of settlers that had been living in the United States for a few generations. The goal of these organizations was to provide mutual aid, often in the form of illness, death and burial benefits in a time before Social Security. They also served their members through cultural, social, educational, and various civic and fund-raising activities.

As fraternal organizations came into being, fraternal cemeteries were also developed as distinct and separate cemeteries. Walking through the Roslyn Cemetery you can see one of the largest groupings of old city, ethnic, and fraternal lodge cemeteries in the Northwest.