

## The 1970s

**Grade Levels:** 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>

**Time Requirement:** Approximately 30 minutes to complete.

### Objectives:

The student will:

- Gain a better understanding of life in the United States during the 1970s

### Activity Summary:

Students will research one historical aspect of the 1970s (e.g. political, economic, social, and cultural) using primary and secondary sources. After completing their research, they will organize their findings into a portrait of one aspect of the decade.

### New Mexico Standards:

Modern, Classical, and Native Languages Content Standards 1, 2 and 6  
Social Science Benchmarks I-B, I-D, II-D, II-E, II-F, IV-A

### Materials:

Chart paper and pens

### Background Information:

The 1970's saw the birth of the first microprocessor, the UNIX operating system, the first personal computers, and the first video games. It was a decade of firsts for computer technology. These important innovations developed within the cultural, economic, political and social context of the 1970s. Many of the movements of the 1960s (e.g. civil rights, the women's movement, the environmental movement) became part of mainstream America during the 1970s. The Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal fueled a growing disillusionment with government. The Cold War required increased military spending while the US economy stagnated with increased energy costs, taxes, and a growing budget deficit. In Albuquerque, the economy was changing as technology, health care, and tourism replaced historically significant industries like the railroad.

**Procedures:**

1. **Prepare** with three large sheets of chart paper: one sheet for student assumptions, one for student questions, and one for approaches to finding out historical information.
2. **What was it like in the 1970s?** As a class, discuss what students know about life during the 1970s. What was the political climate? The economy? Who were the influential cultural figures? List some of the assumptions students make on chart paper. Are there any questions students have? List these on the second piece of chart paper. Teachers can provide context by sharing their experiences during the 1970s.
3. **How can we find out?** Looking at the list of assumptions students have shared, reflect on how they might verify or back up these assumptions with data (interviewing their parents or grandparents, researching on-line, scanning old newspapers, gleaning information from history books). List these approaches on the third piece of chart paper.
4. Students **chose a topic** to research (political, economic, social, cultural, regional history of the 1970s) and come up with a strategy for finding more information about their subject. Their strategy may include using secondary sources like books and archived materials, or also primary sources like interviews. They will then write out this strategy as an “investigative plan.”
5. Referencing their investigative plan, students **research** their particular topic. Teachers may wish to reserve class time in the library or assign homework to help students accomplish data collection.
6. Once students have a substantive amount of data, they **write a paper** about their particular topic, noting sources they used.
7. In small groups, students **share their research** findings. Ask students to highlight up to five key points from their research that will illuminate for others the important facts they have discovered.
8. **Regroup** and **compare** students’ findings with the assumptions they made at the beginning of this activity. Were their assumptions wrong? Correct? Were any questions left unanswered?

### Vocabulary:

Primary source

Secondary source

Regional

Social

Political

Economic

### Extensions:

1. Students who choose similar topics may work together as a group to prepare a PowerPoint presentation about their topic. Students may include photos, graphs, audio, and key points in order to communicate information about their topic.
2. Students expand on their research and write longer and more in-depth papers.
3. Students focus on the local history during the 1970s. What did their neighborhood look like 35 years ago? Who lived there? What was life like? Oral histories can be obtained from local residents, community members, family, etc.

### Modifications:

1. Rather than asking students to come with their own topics for research, assign students a specific area to explore. Then compare students' work in a "roundtable" format. Do students have different information? Have they used different sources for that information?

### Assessment:

- Observation of students' comments and participation in class discussion
- Observation of students' interactions in small groups
- Evaluation of students' research papers

### References:

<http://www.cabq.gov/library/specol.html>

Website of the Special Collections Library of the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Library System. This special collections library houses research collections on genealogy and New Mexico history and culture.

[www.abq300.org](http://www.abq300.org)

Website of the Albuquerque Tricentennial features history of Albuquerque from early settlements to the present.

<http://www.cabq.gov/museum/history/>

Website for the History Division of the Albuquerque Museum. On display at the museum is an exhibit and a film about the history of the region.

<http://elibrary.unm.edu/cswr/>

Center for Southwest Research at the University of New Mexico has an extensive collection of books, prints and photographs related to the history of the region.

**Student Datasheets/Worksheets:**

n/a