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PBS ‘NATIONAL PARKS’ DOCUMENTARY PROJECT OFFERS RICH DIGITAL EDUCATION RESOURCES TO ENTHRALL AND INSPIRE STUDENTS

Oct. 7 webinar for provides ideas on infusing technology into instruction through free online tools and ‘National Parks’ educational media, now available on PBS Teachers® Web site

ARLINGTON, Va., Oct. 5, 2009 – Digital media resources from Ken Burns’s highly acclaimed documentary series, “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea,” including on-demand video, lessons plans, student activities, and historical archives, are now available through PBS Teachers® (pbsteachers.org). PBS Teachers is the Web portal to PBS’ preK-12 educational services and a searchable library of more than 9,000 local and national standards-based instructional resources. PBS Teachers and Classroom 2.0 are hosting a webinar on Oct. 7 to demonstrate ways to integrate the “National Parks” educational media and other free technologies into classroom instruction.

Through the “National Parks” resources, educators can create an engaging tour of the nation’s historic and natural treasures while teaching students core curriculum lessons and 21st century skills. During the PBS Teachers LIVE! [webinar](#), “Teaching About Place With Ken Burns’s ‘National Parks: America’s Best Idea’” on Oct. 7 at 8 p.m. ET, educational experts will discuss digital storytelling, including geographic and historical projects, and model classroom activities. Educators will learn how to use “National Parks” and ArcGIS, a free, downloadable, 2D/3D geo-exploration and presentation tool, in teaching about national parks and curricular topics. The webinar is sponsored by ABC-CLIO, award-winning publisher of reference titles in the field of history and social studies. In partnership with PBS Teachers, ABC-CLIO offers *The Making of National Parks*, a free collection of resources, including park profiles, biographies, maps, and images, to spark student interest in the creation of national parks, preservation and the dilemmas that come with it.

Filmed over 10 years, “[National Parks](#)” is the story of an idea as uniquely American as the Declaration of Independence and just as radical: that the most special places in the nation should be preserved, not for royalty or the rich, but for everyone. Using archival photographs, first-person accounts of historical characters, personal memories and analysis from more than 40 interviews, and stunning cinematography, the film traces the birth of the national park idea and follows its evolution for nearly 150 years through the stories of the people who helped create and save them.

The “National Parks” educational resources are designed for middle and high school grade levels and cover art, language arts, science, and several social studies disciplines, such as history, geography, economics, and civics. Among the unique resources to help educators infuse technology into instruction are the place-based digital storytelling modules. Several video screencasts along with printable quick-start guides provide educators with step-by-step instructions on using the latest technologies to create digital storytelling projects, addressing basic to advanced level technology

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skills. The modules illustrate the processes of geotagging, video editing and special effects, uploading stories to the “National Parks” site to a part of a public collection, and more.

Additionally, the “National Parks” project offers 10 standards-based lesson plans, nine day-trip activities and five *Untold Stories* discussion guides. Through *A Campfire Conversation* lesson, students study two influential leaders in the national parks movement, John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt, and make up what they think was the dialogue between the men as they discussed the future of the American landscape. The lesson *All Aboard: See America First* teaches the business and economic side of the parks, culminating in a project in which students develop promotional materials for tours. In other lessons, students construct public art exhibits of national parks, debate issues of economic development and preservation such as cars and off-road vehicles in the parks, and build a persuasive argument for creating a national park in their local area. Day-trip activities provide short, adaptable classroom projects, such as *Build a Park*, in which students design a park, devise the rules and create a tour, and *Invasive Species*, in which students learn ecological lessons about plants.

With support from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, the *Untold Stories* project brings to light stories from the national parks that focus on the role of African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans in the creation and protection of individual parks, and engages new and traditionally underserved audiences in the educational richness of the national parks. Through the *Untold Stories* discussion guides, educators and students can examine the American ideal of setting aside vast pieces of land for the purpose of preserving the natural environment and cultural history so all Americans have access to them. One of the mini-documentaries, “City Kids,” explores the efforts to bring inner city kids into the parks, often for their first encounters with wilderness, to learn about the earth, teamwork and themselves.

With resources as vast as Yosemite, the “National Parks” also provides a first source of information for student research projects. An extensive collection of images, video, historical archives, biographies of historical figures, and park profiles from the film, as well as links to resources from around the Web are available on the “National Parks” Web site (www.pbs.org/nationalparks).

For more information, or to register for the “National Parks” webinar, go to www.pbs.org/teachers/webinar. Registration entitles educators to free [membership](#) in PBS Teachers. Members receive discounts to PBS Educational Media and access to the PBS Teachers online community, where preK-12 educators can collaborate with peers and save digital media resources. PBS Teachers is also home to popular education blog, [Media Infusion](#) with award-winning educator Janet English, who focuses on practical ways to integrate technology into the classroom. On the blog this month, English offers tips on using “National Parks” resources with VoiceThread, an online tool that allows users to create and share collaborative, multimedia slide shows.

“The National Parks: America’s Best Idea” documentary series and its associated educational materials are a production of Florentine Films and WETA Washington, D.C. The film is directed by Burns, and co-produced by his long-time colleague Dayton Duncan, who also wrote the script. Funding is provided by General Motors; the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund; Corporation for Public Broadcasting; The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations; Park Foundation, Inc.; Public Broadcasting Service; National Park Foundation; The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation; The Pew Charitable Trusts; and Bank of America.

About PBS

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