

Grade 6 Informational

Learning History in Nebraska's Museums

Nebraska's museums provide an interesting way to learn history. Visitors can view skeletons of animals from long ago. They can observe how pioneers lived. Many more experiences await visitors to Nebraska's museums.

The Great Platte River Road Archway Monument

The Great Platte River Road Archway Monument is built across Interstate 80 near Kearney. This museum tells the history of Nebraska from the 1800s to the 1950s. Part of the monument resembles a covered bridge built on two towers. The bridge is red, orange, and yellow, like a Nebraska sunset.

Exhibits tell the history of pioneers traveling the Oregon Trail. Visitors hear sounds of trains as they learn about railroad building. They learn about the history of highway travel. Visitors can see classic cars in the museum as they observe the traffic speeding below them.

Stuhr Living History Museum

Stuhr Living History Museum in Grand Island provides another way to learn about the past. Visitors can explore a Pawnee earth lodge from the 1840s. They can tour a farm and see farm machinery from the late 1800s.

Railroad Town is an exciting exhibit that offers hands-on learning. Visitors learn how people of the late 1800s lived, worked, and played. They can tour log cabins where museum workers portray pioneers doing daily tasks. They can explore a one-room schoolhouse. Visitors can observe a blacksmith at work or talk on an antique phone. They can learn how to play old-fashioned games. The shops, homes, and barns give information about the life of early settlers in Nebraska.

Durham Museum

Durham Museum in Omaha focuses on the history of the state. The building is also a part of Nebraska history. At one time, it was a train station. Nearly 10,000 people traveled through the station each day. Today the station is a museum.

Exhibits feature different types of shelter. Visitors can see a tepee, an earth lodge, and a worker's cottage. A worker's cottage was a one-and-a-half story house popular in the early 1900s. Furnished rooms show how people lived in the past.

Visitors can see how people traveled during different time periods. They can sit on a streetcar from the 1940s or walk through an old train. Displays on the wall show the history of Omaha companies.

University of Nebraska State Museum

At the State Museum in Lincoln, visitors learn about natural history. Plants, insects, and other animals are on display. Visitors learn about animals that live in Nebraska today. They also learn about animals that lived in the region long ago.

Woolly mammoth skeletons have been found throughout Nebraska. The State Museum features Archie—the largest mammoth skeleton in the United States. Archie is fourteen feet high and weighs fifteen tons.

Visitors also enjoy digging for fossils. A trip to this museum gives visitors an understanding of the animals found in Nebraska and how the state has changed.

Grade 6 Narrative

Oversleeping

So Jake spread his arms, leaped skyward from the sidewalk, and began to fly, rocketing up over the neighborhood. Suddenly he heard the distant voice of his father calling, as if from another universe, and Jake pried open sleep-heavy eyes . . .

“Get up, pal,” said Jake’s father, “or you’ll miss the school bus.”

“Just let me sleep a little longer,” Jake mumbled. Then he groaned and turned over, pulling the covers up over his head like a tent, as if to somehow recapture his dream. Jake loved to sleep. It wasn’t that he was lazy or lacked energy. Jake was a normal fourteen-year-old kid in every way. But he loved to curl up under a soft white cloud of sheets, rest his head on a marshmallow pillow, and luxuriate in the twilight world of slumber where life is exciting and dreams always come true.

So Jake was sitting at a table at Chez Maurice’s in Hollywood, having lunch with his buddy, Tom Cruise. Tom was offering Jake a role in his next movie when . . .

“Get up,” said Jake’s father, gently shaking his son’s shoulders. Jake yawned and lugged his legs over the side of the mattress, where he sat for a few moments to reconcile himself with the shocking reality of upright existence. Then he dragged himself into the shower, where he briefly dreamed of tropical rain forests, and shuffled downstairs to breakfast.

“Jake’s going to sleep his life away!” teased Taylor, his nine-year-old sister, as she sat at the table, kicking her dangling legs excitedly as if to show by comparison how wide awake she was.

“He’s just a growing boy,” said Jake’s father, washing dishes at the kitchen sink. “Right?” Jake nodded sleepily and finished his breakfast. Then he trudged out the front door with Taylor, still half-sleepwalking, and they waited on the curb for their own school buses, as usual.

At school, finally fully awake, Jake cycled through the pleasant routine of another typical day. He greeted his buddy Benjamin at the locker they shared. They discussed hockey games and books. Then there was science with Mr. Albert, math with Ms. Freed, and lunch with Benjamin, who always told great jokes. After school there was homework, dinner with his dad and Taylor, maybe a little TV, and then off to dreamland. And so went week after week after month after month.

So Jake swung the bat, sending the ball out of Dodger stadium and into the Baseball Hall of Fame . . .

“Come on, get up,” giggled Taylor, holding a ringing alarm clock only inches from her brother’s face. “You’ll be late for school!” Jake shook his head in disbelief and ducked under the covers.

Moments later Jake awakened to an empty, quiet room. He noted with puzzlement that all the buttons on his pajama top had popped off in the night. Then he pulled himself from bed and padded sleepily to the shower. The bathroom mirror reflected a face that was oddly unfamiliar—one with heavier eyebrows and new creases in its brow. Jake rubbed a hand over his face and felt the unexpected sandpaper abrasion of whiskers. Mystified and dazed, he staggered downstairs to the kitchen, where he was shocked to discover a teenaged Taylor sitting at the breakfast table beside his father, who was grayer and heavier.

“So you finally woke up,” commented Jake’s father, casually sipping his coffee. “We thought you’d sleep forever.”

“You certainly overslept!” added Taylor in a surprisingly mature voice.

Jake shook his head as if to disperse the fog of dreams. “What are you talking about?”

“You’ve been asleep for four years,” Jake’s father replied calmly. “Better get dressed, or you’ll be late for your last day of school.” This statement set Jake’s mind reeling. His last day of school? Had he really slept so long? Was he now *eighteen* years old?

Lost in a whirl of confusion, Jake went to his room to dress for school and discovered that none of his clothes fit him. He borrowed a shirt, pants, and shoes from his father—and they made him look and feel even older.

Taylor led zombie-like Jake out the front door to the curb. Boarding his bus, Jake stared in bewilderment at the aged faces of his friends. “Hey, it’s Jake!” shouted someone from the back of the bus. “He’s back!” One by one, his schoolmates began to recognize him.

“Buddy, you sure look older!” said someone sitting near where Jake stood. Jake looked down to discover his friend Benjamin smiling heartily and looking startlingly like his older brother. Jake sat beside Benjamin, who eagerly told what had happened during Jake’s years of slumber—how Mr. Albert had retired from teaching science, and how Ms. Freed had married. Benjamin spoke excitedly of hockey games won and lost; of books read and remembered; of school plays, classes, pep rallies, and car washes. They were small, ordinary events, but to Jake they seemed extraordinary because they had happened without him. He had missed grades nine through twelve. And now there would be no more school days with Benjamin, his teachers, or his other friends. Jake had slept them all away.

“Come on, buddy, get up,” called Jake’s father. Jake pried open leaden eyelids to see his father standing at the foot of his bed, looking younger and leaner. Beside him was a nine-year-old Taylor, seemingly more girlish and bubbly than ever before.

“Come on, sleepyhead!” she giggled. Her laughter seemed as bright as the yellow sunshine splashing about the room. “You don’t want to miss school, do you?”

Jake beamed and looked at his family. “No, I wouldn’t want to do that,” he said as he threw back the covers and leaped out of bed.