

Alcatraz Project Kit

Congratulations! You're going to Alcatraz! Use these project ideas to enrich your educational experience. Read through them before you go to make sure you understand the terms and concepts, and to help you determine if you want to expand upon any of them. **You'll find fun facts and printable worksheets at the end of this packet.**

a- elementary level activity b- middle school level activity c- high school level activity

Language Arts

Alcatraz inspires the imagination. What would it have been like to live there? What would it have been like to have been a prisoner there? Use your surroundings and your imagination to create a piece of fictional writing.

- a. Draw a storybook or write a short story with illustrations inspired by the island.
- b. Write a short story inspired by your visit, including a main character and the main elements of a story (setting, plot, conflict, and resolution).
- c. Choose between writing a fictional first-person narrative or a screenplay inspired by your visit.

Materials required: Notebook, pen/pencil

Submission: A copy of your writings/drawing, and any pictures/videos

Teaching or learning notes:

Applied Math

The engineering and design of Alcatraz is intricate. Everywhere you look there is visual math. Notice the accuracy of the engineering, and all the application of math all around you. Everyone who worked on the island had to be proficient in math. Find applications for mathematical thinking and calculation all around you.

- a. Go on a shape hunt. Draw and label the shapes you find. Also, draw a representation of at least two patterns you find.
- b. Look closer at one aspect of the prison. It can be anything: cell design, general layout, a hallway or room, etc. Detail the math it would take to create it. Try to identify at least one part of your chosen area which would require math or skill beyond your current understanding. What could you do to learn that skill?
- c. Math is everywhere. Imagine you are one of the people working at the prison. Describe your project and what you would need to know and do to complete it. Choose at least one application of math that you see, estimate measurements, and use calculations to show how the worker designed and created that element.

Materials required: Notebook, pen/pencil, calculator or smartphone (optional)

Submission: Your calculations, estimations, and conclusions, and any pictures/videos

Teaching or learning notes:

Science

There is a science to keeping people in. What features of the island and its buildings show how the designers tried to create the perfect fortress for keeping people in? How are these elements different than keeping people out?

- a. Draw and/or write about one feature of the island or prison which was specifically for keeping people in.
- b. Identify three features for keeping people in and explore the science behind how it works. Is it just a barrier? Does it have a mechanism? Can you find examples of the use of physics, geometry, chemistry, perspective/relativity, etc. in what you've found?
- c. Identify three features for keeping people in and discuss how these are similar to or different than keeping people out. Design your own fortress, labelling elements for keeping people both in and out. Include explanations of how those elements work.

Materials required: Notebook, pen/pencil

Submission: A copy of your drawings, diagrams, or designs, and any pictures/videos

Teaching or learning notes:

Social Studies

Alcatraz has a rich history. Visit www.alcatrazhistory.com and learn more about the island's history. When was it built? How long did it take to build? What was it originally used for and what has it been used for since? Why is this island significant?

- a. Write or draw about the beginnings of the prison and what it might have been like to have been there.
- b. Choose one person who was influential to the history of the island and detail who they were and their importance to Alcatraz.
- c. Choose one area of the island to study. Detail its specific significance and history, including individual aspects of its design.

Materials required: Notebook, pen/pencil, smartphone (optional)

Submission: A copy of your writings/drawings, and any pictures/videos

Teaching or learning notes:

FUN FACTS

- Alcatraz Island was originally owned by Julian Workman, after it was given by the Mexican governor to him in 1846. He sold the island to the U.S. government in 1846. It became a military compound called Fortress Alcatraz. Civil War prisoners began to be shipped to Fortress Alcatraz in 1861. In 1933 the Fortress became the property of the Bureau of Prisons, and in 1934 the U.S. Department of Justice turned it into a federal prison.
- Alcatraz is named after seabirds. In 1775 the first European sailed through the Golden Gate. He was Spanish Lieutenant Juan Manuel de Ayala, and he named the island 'La Isla de los Alcatraces' (which means Island of the Pelicans) because of the many colonies of brown pelicans on the island.
- Alcatraz was the site of the first lighthouse on the Pacific Coast. It was built and activated in 1854.
- “It looks like Alcatraz has got me licked,” Al Capone reportedly told his warden. In fact, Convict No. 85 became so cooperative that he was permitted to play banjo in the Alcatraz prison band, the Rock Islanders, which gave regular Sunday concerts for other inmates.
- In 1962, prisoner John Paul Scott greased himself with lard, squeezed through a window and swam to shore. He was so exhausted upon reaching the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge that police discovered him lying unconscious in hypothermic shock. Today, hundreds complete the 1.5-mile swim annually during the Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon.
- Alcatraz’s first warden, James A. Johnston, knew poor food was often the cause of prison riots, so he prided himself on serving good food, and inmates could return for as many helpings as they wanted. Inmates who behaved had access to privileges including monthly movies and a library with 15,000 books and 75 popular magazine subscriptions. Overall, some prisoners considered the conditions inside Alcatraz to be more attractive than at other federal prisons, and several asked to be moved there.

Alcatraz

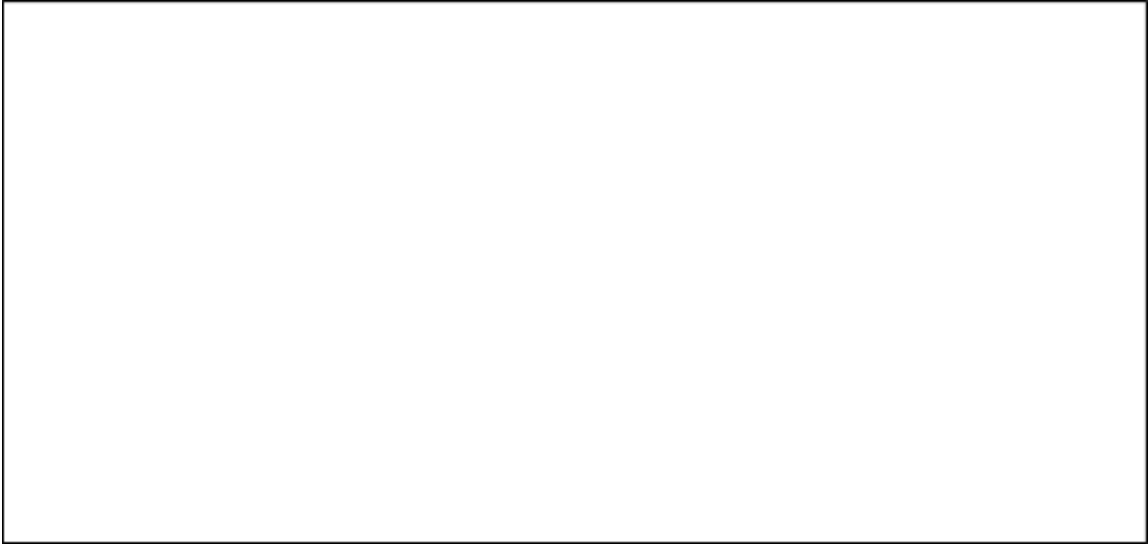
1. Draw a picture of San Francisco as seen from Alcatraz.



2. Describe the isolation cells.

3. What is one thing you learned about prison life?

4. Describe or draw your favorite part of the island.



5. Draw or describe one of the exhibited cells.



6. What is one thing you learned about Alcatraz history?
