

How Narragansett Bay Shaped Rhode Island

For the Summer 2008 issue of *Rhode Island History*, former director of the Naval War College Museum, Anthony S. Nicolosi, contributed the article, “Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, U.S.N, and the Coming of the Navy to Narragansett Bay.” While the article may prove too specialized to directly translate into your classroom, the themes and topics raised within the piece can fit easily into your lesson plans. We have created a handful of activities for your classes based on the role that Narragansett Bay has played in creating the Rhode Island in which we now live.

The first activity is an easy map exercise. We have suggested a link to a user-friendly map, but if you have one that you prefer, please go ahead and use it! The goal of this activity is to get your students thinking about the geography of the state so that they can achieve a heightened visual sense of the bay—to help them understand its fundamental role in our development.

The next exercise, which is more advanced, asks the students to do research into the various conflicts into which this country has entered. It then asks them, in groups, to deduce what types of ships, weapons, battles and people played a part in each of these wars, and of course, how they relate to Narragansett Bay. We hope that your students will approach the end result creatively by styling their charts after maritime signal “flags.”

Exploring the Ocean State

Rhode Island is the smallest state, measuring forty-eight miles from North to South and thirty-seven miles from east to west. The Narragansett Bay defines Rhode Island with nearly 250 miles of coastline extending from the Atlantic Ocean some twenty-eight miles inland.

Print out the Rhode Island map from:

<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/usstates/ri.htm>

Locate and name the major river that flows into the Narragansett Bay?

1. One river flows mainly through Massachusetts into the Mount Hope Bay before it meets up with the Narragansett Bay, name that river.
2. There are several islands within the bay, which is the largest?
3. One island lies beyond the limits of the bay, ten miles in the Atlantic Ocean, what is that island called?
4. During World War II, naval bases were established in North Kingstown (Quonset Point) and Newport. Locate North Kingstown and Newport on the map and add the navel bases to the map. Quonset Point Naval Base is 7 and Newport Navel Base is 8 on the map key.
5. All the islands can be reached by boat, but two islands have bridges from the mainland. By looking at the map can you name the islands with bridges?
6. Name the cities and towns located on Aquidneck Island.
7. What is another name for Conanicut Island?
8. Which island's name is also a girl's name?
9. Name two islands that have Native American names.

Extended Activities

Create a postcard for one of the following places. You will have to do some research before you start. The post card should have a picture on the front and a short description on the back.

1. Newport Naval War College
2. Fort Adams
3. The Breakers
4. Block Island

The Coastline of Rhode Island has played an important role throughout the history of the United States. It has been especially important during the many wars that have been fought for democracy.

Research one of the wars listed and investigate the roles that ships, people, battles and weapons played in each of these conflicts.

American Revolution

The War of 1812

The Civil War

and

World War II

Briefly list the information on each flag.

SHIPS

PEOPLE

BATTLES

WEAPONS