

Overview of Sounds of Sloss Video (Run Time 05:35)

The video Sounds of Sloss captures the visual and auditory experience of taking a tour through Sloss Furnaces from the eyes of three children. Crossan, Anna, and Chris use a variety of percussive instruments to create sounds at different locations and preserved artifacts at Sloss Furnaces. The viewer not only discovers the various artifacts and metal arts sculptures and tools present onsite but also experiences some of the sounds of Sloss Furnaces.

Background Information About Sloss Furnaces

Sloss Furnaces, located in Birmingham, Alabama was one of the largest manufacturers of pig iron in the southeast United States. James Withers Sloss, a north Alabama merchant and railroad man, launched the Sloss Furnace Company in 1881. Sloss Furnaces produced a type of iron called *pig iron*, which was used as a component in the creation of cast-iron pipe and steel. Since all the necessary components for producing pig-iron could be found in the nearby Jones Valley area, Birmingham was an ideal location for the company. The blast furnaces that were built at the Sloss site brought an influx of immigrants and rural Alabamians to Birmingham to work for Sloss and related industries and thrust Birmingham into the Industrial Revolution.

Production at Sloss Furnaces was discontinued during the early 1970's. In 1981 Sloss achieved National Historic Landmark status and in 1983 it opened to the public as an industrial museum. Sloss Furnaces is the only 20th century blast furnaces in the world that is being interpreted and preserved as an industrial museum.

Sloss Furnaces has become a Birmingham tourist destination, center for community events, and home of one of the finest onsite metal arts programs in the United States. Working together, the artists-in-residence expand their metal arts skills while creating new works of art. In addition, they share their skills with others, such as young apprentices who come to Sloss Furnaces for summer programs. These artists create sculptures to be placed onsite and for sale in the Sloss Furnaces gift shop. They conduct educational outreach programs for visitors and schools.

Vocabulary

Anvil- used in metal arts to bend hot steel into different shapes

Blowing Engine Room- Built in 1902 to house eight steam engines, this room is the oldest section of Sloss Furnaces. In 1949-50, turbo blowers were installed.

Casting- a manufacturing process by which a liquid material is usually poured into a mold, which contains a hollow cavity of the desired shape, and then allowed to solidify

The Cast-Iron Art Scrap Heap- where scrap cast-iron is kept by onsite Sloss metal artists

Cast-iron sculpture- three-dimensional art that has been formed and created through the process of casting iron

Coal- a black rock formed from prehistoric plant remains, composed largely of carbon and burned as

a fuel

Direct-carve sand- a mixture of tightly compacted sand and resin into which an image can be carved

The Exiles sculpture- Made of steel, this sculpture was built in 1985 by a team of male and female artists. It is one of the earliest sculptures built onsite at Sloss Furnaces, and represents the strong shoulders of the men who worked at Sloss during its time as an industrial factory.

Iron ore- rocks and minerals from which metallic iron can be economically extracted

Ladle car-: carrying molten iron, these cars were operated by a steam-powered pulley system to be cast in areas throughout the factory

Limestone- a sedimentary rock made of compressed shells, sand, and tiny fossils

Raw materials- material that came from nature and is in an unprocessed or minimally processed state

Scale cars- limestone, iron ore and coke were dumped into two skip cars, one going up to fuel the furnaces and one skip car going down to gather more materials for the next scale car.

Scale Car Tunnel- Only three Sloss workers worked together in this tunnel to dump raw materials from one very large scale car into the furnaces. The materials dumped were limestone, iron ore and coke. The workers would push one material at a time through the tunnel to provide the furnaces with the right amount of tonnage for each material.

Skip cars- small containers that gathered materials for the furnaces from scale cars; skip cars were constantly traveling throughout the furnaces by way of a steam-powered pulley system

Turbo blower- produced wind (oxygen) that was heated and vented into the bottom of the furnaces to keep them at the correct heat level. Two pounds of air would help produce one ton of pig iron. The daily capacity of what Sloss Furnaces could produce a day was four hundred tons of iron, which meant the turbo blowers produced eight hundred pounds of air each day.

Upside Down Man cast-iron sculpture- a sculpture at Sloss Furnaces created by onsite metal artists

Grade Level:

4th Grade (This lesson can be used in a variety of grade levels, by targeting specific standards and questions asked for the grade being taught.)

Course of Study:

Arts Education (2006)

Visual Arts

Grade 4

6.) Perform rhythm patterns, including syncopation and eighth- and sixteenth-note combinations on various rhythm instruments.

Social Studies (2004)

Grade 4

10d.) Describe significant social and educational changes in Alabama during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries...Discussing cultural contributions from various regions of Alabama that contributed to the formation of a state heritage. Examples: folklore, folk art, vernacular architecture

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