

Ministry of Education  
Secondary Engagement Programme  
September 2020

Social Studies

Grade 8

**WEEK 8**

**LESSON 1**

**Topic:** Forts and Monuments

**Sub-Topic:** The significance of Forts in Guyana.

**Objectives:** Students will:

- Identify forts in Guyana
- Explain the significance of Forts
- Describe how Forts can be preserved.

**Concept:** Forts and monuments have historical significance. They are important to the nation because they remind us of outstanding personalities who have made significant contributions to the development of the country. They remind us of events, which took place at particular periods in the development of our history and gives us a sense of pride.

Our ancestors preserved these significant structures because they knew that long after they had passed on, the forts and monuments would continue to tell future generations the stories, which they would have liked to tell. Our responsibility, therefore, is to preserve our forts and monuments so that we can share with our predecessors the knowledge, inspiration and pleasure that we are privileged to have gained. When our forts and monuments are carefully preserved they beautify our environment and become an attraction for tourist. We can see, therefore, how our forts and monuments help us to enjoy some social and economic benefits derived from tourism.

**Content:**

**What are Forts and Monuments?**

### Forts



A Fort may be defined as a strong or fortified place occupied by troops and usually surrounded by walls, ditches, and other defensive works. It is usually used by the military and is designed to defend against attack from outsiders.

### Monuments

A monument is a type of structure that was specially created to commemorate a person or event, or which has become relevant to a social group as a part of their remembrance of historic times or cultural heritage, due to its artistic, historical, political, technical or architectural importance.

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FORTS IN GUYANA**

When the Europeans settled in Guyana they built forts up the rivers in order to protect their settlements from intruders. The forts were used as guardhouses where ammunition was stored and the militia stationed to safeguard against enemy attacks. The level of security existing on the settlements depended to a large extent on how fortified the forts were.

Because of the advantageous positions of the forts, situated on the banks of rivers, they were used as vantage points from which to launch attacks. From these advantageous positions it was also deemed convenient to launch expeditions upstream to look for gold. Forts were also used as warehouses where food and equipment for the settlements were stored. Ships coming into the colonies stopped at the forts and unloaded their wares. Produce from the colonies was then loaded and the ships sailed for Europe where the produce was sold.

Ministry of Education  
Secondary Engagement Programme  
September 2020

Social Studies

Grade 8

The forts were regarded as ports of entry and exit for the colonies as well as trading ports where trade was conducted with the Amerindians. Over the years the role of the forts changed. By 1831 when the colonies of Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice became united under the British rule the attacks ceased. Subsequently, a police force was established for security and the forts were no longer used as lookout points for enemy attacks.

The forts became neglected and deteriorated considerably over the years. Today, the remains can be seen partly covered by natural vegetation. The purpose of these forts now, is to remind Guyanese of their history. The remains have become an attraction for tourists and other travelers.

### **SOME FORTS IN GUYANA**



#### **Fort Zeelandia**

Around 1580, the Dutch established a settlement up the Pomeroon River. They planted indigo, cassava and sugar cane at Barima Point. Fort Nova Zeelandia, was established to protect the settlement from Spanish attacks. The fort was removed to Flag Island, which is now called Fort Island.

The brick structure proved a formidable fortification, so that by 1739 the seat of government in Essequibo was removed to that spot. The fort was fifty feet square with walls, which Governor Gravesande claimed would withstand the heaviest cannon. It was heavily armed and this made the planters so confident that they removed their plantation to the mouth of the river where the soil was fertile.

Ministry of Education  
Secondary Engagement Programme  
September 2020

Social Studies

Grade 8



### **Fort Nassau**

From about 1627 Abraham Van Pere, a Dutch settler in Guyana sought permission from the Zeeland Chamber of the Dutch West India Company to settle in Berbice. His intention was to exploit the resources of Berbice by trading with the Amerindians. Van Pere would do this mainly by planting export crops, such as sugar, tobacco, cotton and annatto as well as by exploring for minerals. In return for the permission that was granted to Van Pere, he was asked to give 1/5 of his income from the sale of gold, silver and other precious stones, to the Dutch West India Company. He built a fort about fifty (50) miles up the Berbice River which he named Nassau, after Prince Maurice Nassau who subsequently became the conqueror of a large part of Brazil. This early settlement, which was started by Van Pere with about forty men and twenty boys, later became a successful trading post. The Dutch bartered goods such as knives, hardware and cloth for tobacco and annatto. African slaves were few and the Dutch were dependent on the goodwill of the Amerindians who sold to them Amerindians slaves captured and taken from other tribes. The settlers who were involved in Amerindian slave trade dissipated their energies and affected the settlement adversely. There was little progress.



Ministry of Education  
Secondary Engagement Programme  
September 2020

Social Studies

Grade 8

**Fort Kyk –Over- Al**

Fort Kyk-Over-Al was erected on a little island at the junction of the Essequibo, Cuyuni and Mazaruni Rivers some twenty miles from the Essequibo estuary. Kyk-over-al is a word of Dutch origin, which means, “look over all” or “see over all”. Here, the Amerindians traded with the Dutch.

The fort enabled the governor to use it as a vantage point from which to launch attacks. Expeditions were also launched into the interior to search for gold. Dutch settlers came to Kyk-over-al in 1634 and cultivated sugar cane on a very small scale and by 1664 a single mill was operating efficiently. This fort remained primarily a trading post as the Amerindians traded annatto dye with the Dutch for knives and hardware. In 1665 the fort was captured by the British but later retaken by the Dutch after a hazardous overland expedition, which was made possible by Amerindian guides. During the period of its existence the French attacked it. When the Pomeroon settlement was destroyed, Kyk-over-al became the chief centre for sugar cane cultivation and manufacture in Essequibo as well as the seat of government.

**Fort St. Andries**

In 1740 Andries Lossner was appointed governor of the colony of Berbice. During his tenure Fort St. Andries was built at the junction of the Berbice and Canje Rivers. The construction was poor and it proved incapable of defending the colony. In 1762 its population increased, with a composition of whites, Amerindians and Negro slaves. On 6th March 1781, Fort St. Andries did not readily surrender to the English attack so the fort was captured and burnt.

**ACTIVITY**

**Answers the following questions.**

- Name the forts in Guyana.
- Explain why Forts were important
- Give three reasons why forts were situated near to the rivers.

Ministry of Education  
Secondary Engagement Programme  
September 2020

Social Studies

Grade 8

- Suggest three actions, which can be taken by the tourism ministry to attract tourists to visit the forts.

**HOMEWORK**

- Research and paste pictures in your books about the original forts. (Before they were destroyed.)
- What is the name of the State agency that is responsible for preserving our Forts and Monuments?
- Ask your parents to take you to visit the agency to find out more about Guyana's rich history.

**REFERENCE**

4. Ministry of education Teacher's guide grade 8 pages 45 to 48
5. Ministry of Education Curriculum Guide grade 8 page 7
6. <http://nationaltrust.gov.gy/national-monuments/>