

ACTIVITY GUIDE

Welcome to *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* where we will learn about change happening in rural towns across the nation. Use this guide to explore the exhibition in more detail.

SECTION 1 WELCOME TO CROSSROADS: CHANGE IN RURAL AMERICA



A rural crossroads, FreedImage.com/Bettina Schwehn

Find the panel titled: *Tracing Change: What Are Your Choices?*

Rural America was developed by many different people: Native Americans who were already here, immigrants who came in search of a better life, and people who were forced to move. But now all people who live in rural areas can have a chance to decide the future of their community.

Let's read how some towns are tackling change in rural America. Read the flipper questions and answers in this section. Do some of the answers surprise you?

Write a question you have about your own community here:

What would your answer be?:

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Crossroads: Change in Rural America is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution, Utah Humanities, and local partners statewide.



This educational guide is a creation of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, a professional partner for the Utah tour of *Crossroads: Change in Rural America*, a Museum on Main Street exhibition brought to you by the Smithsonian Institution and Utah Humanities.



SECTION 2 IDENTITY

Sugar beet field workers in Colorado, 1972, courtesy National Archives

Find the panel titled: *Creating Identity: On the Other Side of a Lens.*

Photographers capture many types of rural life. Some show people at their best; working the land and taking pride in their homes. But some photographs show a different image of backbreaking work, poverty, and inequality.

Which of the artworks here show an upbeat optimistic version of rural America and which show some of the harder sides of life? Which version would you like to depict in your art?

Make a quick sketch of people or places in your town:

SECTION 3 LAND



Miller's Swimming Hole, Ginger Hole, Missouri, 1902, courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society

Find the panel titled: *Land: Sense of Place.*

Read about what a "Sense of Place" is. Can you describe what it is to a friend?

A sense of place relies on knowing a place through all your senses. Imagine your own home or community.

What images and memories come to mind? Let's list some words that remind you of your own place.

	SOUNDS	SMELLS	SIGHTS	TEXTURES	TASTES	FEELINGS
example:	crickets	hay	mountain	rough	berries	tired

Let's write a short poem using some of these words you have written. This is your own Sense of Place poem!



SECTION 4 COMMUNITY

Downtown Montpelier, Vermont, by Doug Kerr

Find the interactive panel titled: *Build a Community*.

You can build your own community in this interactive! What do you think a rural community needs to thrive? Make your town and explain what's there to a friend.

But, what is left out of the options you have? A horse stable? A community garden? A swimming pool? Think about your ideal community and write down something the exhibit forgot. **You could even draw it!**

What does your town need? _____



South Texas Panorama, Alice, Texas, Post Office, by Warren Hunter, 1939, courtesy Smithsonian American Art Museum

Look to your right and find the panel titled: *Sustaining Community*.

In this section you can read all about how rural people worked together to create better communities.

From better roads and schoolhouses to learning about raising better crops and keeping bees, these efforts required data gathering. What is data, you ask? At its basic level it is information gathered over time. This information can help people understand something about their community, something they might want to encourage or change.

You too can gather data about something you think is important. Let's practice! Gather data about the people you are with right now.

How can this data help you understand your community?

Question: Where do the people in your group currently live?

Name of Person	Rural	Suburban	Urban

Question: Where do the people in your group want to live in the future?

Name of Person	Rural	Suburban	Urban

RURAL: A place with fewer people than land.

SUBURBAN: A place with more houses that are close together than business buildings.

URBAN: A place with many people, houses, and buildings.



SECTION 5 PERSISTENCE

Businesses and festivals attract visitors to Telluride, Colorado.

Find the panel titled: *Persistence*.

Rural communities all have stories about the change in their towns, especially when it comes to revitalizing their main street. Read the flipbook in this section to read some stories from rural Americans.

Some of these stories are written down, but many are gathered through oral histories. Oral history is a way to learn about past events from stories told by people who lived through them. Oral histories are recorded so they can be listened to, remembered, and saved.

Your own community has people in it with many stories. Think of someone you know that you would like to interview to get an oral history about your town. Or challenge yourself to get several stories from different people about one historical incident or building in your town.

Write down some ideas you may have for your oral history project:

Here are some questions for your subject to get you started:

- What is your full name?
- Where and when were you born?
- Where did your ancestors come from?
- What did your community look like growing up?

SECTION 6 MANAGING CHANGE

Art installation near Reedsburg, Wisconsin, courtesy Wormfarm Institute



Find the panel and post office box interactive titled: *Let's Talk*.

With so much change in rural America, how can you help guide the future of your town?

You can help start the discussion. Take a postcard and answer one of the questions, then put it in the mailbox.

Is there a question that you wish was asked but wasn't on one of the cards? You can write your own question on the postcard and then answer it too!

Draft your question here then write it on the postcard to put in the mailbox:

Draft 1 _____ ?

Draft 2 _____ ?

Draft 3 _____ ?

Thank you for learning about *Change in Rural America*! Take this guide home with you to remember all that you have learned, and to continue to be a changemaker in your own community.

