

Exploring Louisbourg in 3D

A one-lesson classroom plan using the Digital Louisbourg reconstruction of the Fortress of Louisbourg, as it stood in 1750.

Grades 7 to 9
Suggested level

60 minutes
One class period

History, social studies
Subject

Projector or devices
Needed

Learning goals

- Describe why France built a fortified town at Louisbourg and what life there involved.
- Explain how a reconstruction turns historical sources into a model, and why it is an interpretation.
- Use the 3D model as evidence to answer a question about the fortress.

Before class

- Open the model at digital-louisbourg.ca (3D Viewer page) on a projector or on student devices, and have the screenshot gallery ready for the gates and bastions.
- Print or write out the question cards (one per group) from the Group investigation step below.
- Map the learning goals to your own provincial or local curriculum outcomes.

Lesson flow

10 min	Hook: what is missing? Show a modern photo of the site next to the full 3D model. Ask: what do you notice, and what do you think was here? Collect guesses on the board.
10 min	Context talk Short overview: Louisbourg as the French colonial capital of Île Royale, its role in trade and defence, and the sieges. Keep to key ideas and add the details your curriculum needs.
20 min	Group investigation Groups of three or four get a question card and explore the model to answer it, citing what they saw. Sample questions: How was the town defended from the sea? Which building would a soldier visit most? What does the layout say about who held power? How would you attack this place?
10 min	Share back Each group gives a one-minute answer that points to a specific part of the model. The class adds questions the model cannot answer.
10 min	How reliable is a reconstruction? Explain that the model is built from plans, drawings and archaeology, with some gaps filled by educated judgement. Students list two kinds of evidence they would want to check a model against.

Assessment

- Group answer: did they cite something specific from the model?
- Exit ticket: one thing the model showed you, and one thing it cannot show you.

Extensions

- Students sketch a plan view of the fortress from memory, then compare it with the model.
- Write a short diary entry from a resident of a chosen building.
- Compare two reconstructions of the same place and discuss differences.
- Invite a virtual talk with the creator as a follow-up class.

About the model

The Digital Louisbourg model is based on historical plans and maps, archaeological documentation, LiDAR terrain data and photographic references. Where the record is incomplete, parts of the reconstruction involve informed interpretation. See the Research Methodology and Disclaimer pages at digital-louisbourg.ca.

This lesson plan is free to use with your classes. Classroom and school licences for the 3D model itself are described on the For Educators page at digital-louisbourg.ca. Original digital reconstruction created by Daniel C. MacNeil. © 2026 Avalon Design Studio.