

Lesson Plan

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Elizabethan Biography

Suggested grade level:

middle school -- high school

Content Area:

English/Language Arts

History

Project: Students will interview Elizabethan characters and write their biographies.

Ninth grade students will research the Elizabethan time period in preparation for reading William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. After their research and character sketches are completed, they will answer, in character and with historical accuracy, the interview questions submitted via e-mail from their middle school counterparts.

Sixth grade students will learn methods and styles of writing biographies as well as techniques for gathering information - specifically interviewing. At the conclusion of the introductory lessons on writing, students, using on-line e-mail, will interview high school students who will be posing as Elizabethan characters. Information gathered during this process will then be used to write biographies.

Overall Objectives:

Students will learn to research using both paper and electronic resources.

Students will learn to take notes and summarize information.

Students will learn to incorporate historical data to create a believable historical character.

Students will learn to properly document their sources.

Students will learn to formulate interview questions that will elicit needed information.

Students will learn to summarize information from an interview and write it in a narrative format.

Students will learn to use resources available to research a particular time period in history.

Students will learn to write biographies.

Students will learn about the Elizabethan time period.

Students will learn to use e-mail for correspondence.

Students will learn to present information orally.

Procedure: At the high school:

1. The research unit will be introduced as a lead-in to the study of the Shakespearean play, Romeo and Juliet. After the instruction sheet is read and explained, groups will be formed with the consent of the teacher. Groups will decide their plan and divide their responsibilities.
2. Note taking and documentation lessons will be given before research begins. Mini-units on narrow sub-topics will begin each class period.
3. Students will receive a "review of possible sources" from the reference librarian. Her instructions will introduce students to books, specialized magazines, reference room materials, vertical file folders, CD-Rom resources, and Internet among others.
4. After teacher and librarian instructions, students will begin the researching and recording of information process.
5. With the conclusion of class and private researching, the students will reconvene in the classroom to begin sketching out the major life-history points of the invented "Elizabethan personality" with a view of working in research information to expected interview questions.
6. At the conclusion of personality construction, students will provide an oral introduction of their "personality" to their classmates.
7. After the high school research has been completed and the middle school study of biography and interviewing have been completed, through a series of e-mail conversations, students will exchange information. High school students will initiate the exchange of information by requesting pen pal partners and providing a brief introduction. Middle school students will ask their interviewee questions about his/her life in order to gather the material to write the biography. High school students will respond to

the questions with information gathered during research time. Students may find it necessary to do further research in order to fully respond to interview questions.

Procedure:

At the middle school:

1. As part of Language Arts lessons, students will be given an introduction to the biographical form of writing. The students will also be given instruction in the writing of biographies.
2. Students will divide into small groups (4-5) for the purposes of research into Elizabethan England. This information will be used to formulate questions for the on-line interview.
3. Students will be given a list of resources by the librarian/ media specialist to use for research into Elizabethan England. Students will be given instruction on the use of the media center's resources prior to the lesson.
4. Students will research life in the Elizabethan era. Students will gather information on the daily life and important events of this period. This information will be collected using search strategies previously discussed in class and the information will be assembled through note-taking.
5. Individual students will select a subject for interviewing from a list of "personae" provided by the collaborating high school teacher. The collaborating high school students will provide the class with 'introductions' via e-mail.
6. Students will be given instruction on questioning and note taking techniques prior to the creation of the interview questions.
7. Students will develop a list of questions to elicit information for the biography. The questions that are used will be developed to elicit pertinent information from the subject.
8. Students will send questions via e-mail to their subjects and compile the information from the answers that are returned. Students may, during this process, find it necessary to send follow-up questions to their subjects.

8. Students will write a biography using information gathered from the on-line interview. Background information from the introductory research may be used to enhance the biography that is written.

Evaluation:

High school students will be evaluated periodically during their library researching on note taking, documentation, and thoroughness. Later, their personality sketch and its oral defense will be evaluated according to the rubric. Finally, their e-mail letters (with appropriate citation of sources) will be evaluated for accuracy and good writing. A post-writing, informal discussion period will be held to discuss problems and assess benefits.

Middle School students will be evaluated during the research process on note taking and documentation of historical research. During the interview phase, students' questions and note taking will be evaluated. Finally, the student's biographies will be evaluated on the basis of content, clarity and thoroughness.

Note: high school students meet on alternate days for 96 minutes.
middle school students meet daily for 53 minutes at a time.

Time Frames: High School

Day 1

Introduction of unit goals and procedures

Grouping of students

preliminary in-class researching using teacher-assembled sources

Day 2

Class room instruction and practice on note-taking

Plagiarism topic reviewed

Librarian introduction of sources

Library research time

Day 3

Class room instruction on citation of sources

Problem solving

Library research time

Day 4

Bibliography format in class (especially internet/ electronic)

Library research time

Day 5

In-Class-collaborative time for Elizabethan character sketch writing

Sharing of information

Day 6

writing of letter requesting pen-pal exchange and electronic mailing

Day 7

Romeo and Juliet Act I scene 1-3 read in class

Day 8

Romeo and Juliet Act I complete.

Video: Act I

Read and prepare response to e-mail inquiries

Day 9

response construction and writing

Romeo and Juliet Act II

Day 10

Romeo and Juliet Act II

Video: Act II

Day 11

final response to e-mail questions

Day 12

Romeo and Juliet Act III

Day 13

Romeo and Juliet Act IV and V

Day 14

Video: Act III-V

Themes discussion

Day 15

Themes and quotes

Review

Day 16

Test

Time Frames: Middle School

Day 1

Introduction to the Biography lesson

Explanation of goals and procedures

Grouping of students

Day 2

Review of note-taking strategies

In-class discussion of Elizabethan era

Review of librarian-provided sources

Library research

Day 3

Library research

Day 4

Library research

Day 5

Informal group presentation of gathered information

Day 6

Presentation of 'character' sketches/introductions to class

Selection by the students of their 'subject'

Question list preparation

Day 7
Question lists e-mailed to characters

Day 8
Review of biography writing
Formulate outline of biography

Day 9
Distribution of e-mail responses
Data from responses collected and put into outline

Day 10
Follow-up questions formulated and e-mailed

Day 11
Responses distributed
Organize information for Biography

Day 12
Biography writing

Day 13
Draft biography due

Day 14
Drafts edited

Day 15
Biography writing

Day 16
Final Biography due

Bill, these are the dates for us at the high school level.

3/10 day 1 intro

3/12 day 2 research

3/16 day 3 research

3/18 day 4 research

3/20 day 5 in-class collaboration and assembling of personal data

3/24 day 6 re-research

3/26 day 7 in-class writing of pen pal letters with brief introduction by "character"

4/1 day 8 in-library posting on e-mail of pen pal requests

spring break

4/13 day 9 Romeo and Juliet Act 1