

Family Tree

Summary

After keeping a journal for two weeks and reading some of the journal entries found in the Heritage Gateway Site, the students will compile a four generation family tree create a family crest, and write a brief autobiography with pictures included.

Time Frame

3 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Large Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication

Materials

Each student will need a blank shield divided into 4 sections, crayons, pencils, scissors, a three ring binder notebook (journal) and materials about themselves. You can find a copy of a family shield in any genealogy book or design one yourself.

Background for Teachers

Researching four past generations is a way to complete a family tree and begin to understand one's heritage. The students will gather information from parents and or grandparents about their ancestors to complete the family tree. Then they will need to bring a collection of items that relate to themselves (Pictures, certificates, awards, stories, baby book etc). Based on the items, students will write an autobiography including a personal or family shield.

Interviewing techniques and journal writing will be taught by the teacher and used by the students to collect data about past family members and then apply this information to a personal or family shield. Even though there are only 4 steps in this lesson, remember, it will take at least 3-4 class periods held over the space of two or more weeks. Much of the real work will be completed independently or with the help of parents or grandparents.

Intended Learning Outcomes

The students will learn how to write a journal, an autobiography, and develop their own family tree

Instructional Procedures

You will be required to write in journals for two weeks. You will also be writing autobiographies, reading journal entries of some of the pioneers and designing a family or personal shield. In addition, we will be researching our roots and filling out a family tree chart. What is a crest? Show your own family crest if you have one; if not, show a personal crest that you have designed for yourself. Why did people design crests for their families? Accept all reasonable answers and discuss. In medieval times families wanted to show some of the accomplishments and doings of their families. Go to some of the URL sites listed in step 1 and show some family crests on the internet. Many of the crests tell a story about the family, where they are from, if they had knights, occupations, symbols. etc. This is what I want you to do. After looking at the internet site go on with the steps. Each step actually accomplishes an individual objective.

Before you do the family crests or coat of arms be sure to review all of the internet sites and discuss them thoroughly. Give each student a blank crest or shield (sometimes referred to as a Coat of Arms) divided into four sections with a place for the family name and symbol also on it. You can easily produce a crest pattern to run off by looking at any family crest and tracing it onto another piece of paper. In one of the sections, the students should draw a picture to represent their hobby talent or a sport they enjoy. In another section they should draw a picture of an important event in their life between the ages of birth and 8 years old. In another section, they should draw a picture of an important event in their life from age eight to the present and in the last section of the crest they should draw something about their happiest moment or greatest success in the last year. They can then add their family name and a symbol like a sun, moon, star, leaf, flower, etc. See some symbols in the links below. Give them plenty of time to color and do a good job on the crest as it will be in the front of their autobiography. Have them cut it out and mount it on a piece of colored construction paper. When complete, collect the crests and put them on display in the room or keep them safe for the students to put in their autobiographies. They should be laminated for protection. The art work is not so important as the message they wish to convey on their shield. However, encourage them to use their best coloring, drawing and art skills.

During the next period check to make sure all of the crests are completely finished. Today the students will learn that effective writing considers purpose, audience, main idea, details and time order(sequence) and will use these in beginning to write in their journals. Give each student a blank notebook and tell them that this is to be their DAILY journal. Discuss the above list of good writing practices with the class. Who is your audience?(teacher, students, family members, someone you don't even know) What is the purpose of a journal?(help others understand what it is like today, know about yourself for your posterity, memories, entertainment,to communicate ideas) Will you have a main idea each day? What kind of details need to be included in your journal entries?(you must be very specific or others will become confused.) How important is it to have chronological order in the journal(keeping the date and time of each entry, using words like after, always, before, finally, first, last, later, meanwhile, now, soon, then etc.). Why should we keep a daily journal? Let them read some of the journal entries from the Heritage Gateway site.

After the journal entries are completed,(about 2 week later) give the following hand-outs to the students and have them take the handouts home to be worked on with parents.

- A family tree chart with spaces for at least 4 generations.

- The following outline to follow to complete a mini-autobiography.

- Autobiography Instructions

- Your autobiography should include the following.

 - A family tree (4 generations)

 - A personal or family crest(coat of arms)

 - 1 page about early years, birth-4 years, where born, parents, when born, brothers and sisters names and ages. pictures, firsts.

 - School years(k-5), teachers, schools, report cards, awards, pictures, friends etc.

 - Family memories, traditions, trips, funny stories, grandparents, aunts and uncles, birthdays, parties, etc.

 - Personal goals, friends, hobbies, talents, pictures etc.

 - Any other information you wish to include.

Have them take these things home to be worked on with parents or grandparents. Give them about a week to complete the assignment. Check with them periodically to see how they are progressing and to answer any questions they may have. After the autobiographies are complete spend a class period displaying and sharing them with each other. This would be a great display for parent/teacher conference in the fall, or back to school night.

Extensions

Instead of writing an autobiography they could write a biography about a parent or a grandparent. Interviewing and oral history techniques could be taught during this lesson. Going to a local museum or the public library and reading short autobiographies would be a fun field trip. Having an older person come into the class to share 'life in the olden days' with the children would be great!

Assessment Plan

Assess the autobiographies. Grades could be given on the following basis:

- neatness; 20 points

- cover design; 20 points

Other assessments could be given orally by teacher observation of the shields, the family tree and the journals. You may even want to respond to the journals a couple of times.

- completeness; 60 points(crest, family tree, all pages, pictures, awards.

Authors

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