

Argumentative Writing/Religions of the World Unit

Summary

This 14 day Unit Plan integrates the Utah Core Standards for Language Arts and for Reading and Writing in History/Social Studies with the existing Utah Social Studies Standards. The students read, research, draw conclusions, and write beginning level argumentative essays comparing/contrasting major world religions. For a more thorough summary see the Background For Teachers section.

Main Core Tie

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Writing Standard 1](#)

Additional Core Ties

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 2](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 5](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 9](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 10](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Writing Standard 2](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Writing Standard 4](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Writing Standard 5](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Writing Standard 10](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Language Standard 2](#)

Social Studies - 6th Grade

[Standard 1 Objective 2](#)

Social Studies - 6th Grade

[Standard 4](#)

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

Dictionaries

- [Words in Context Vocabulary sheet](#)
(class copies:2 per student)-Day One
- [Adapted KWL Chart](#)
(class copies)-Day One
Resource books listed in Bibliography section
- [Class Text Structure Posters](#)
(2) made from Elementary CORE Academy 2004, Academy Handbook for Fifth Grade, p. 3-6 depicting information about Description Text Structure and Compare/Contrast Text Structure
- [Description Text Structure graphic organizers](#)
(class copies: 2 per student)-Day Two
- [Quote from-Appendix A](#)
: Common Core State Standards for ELA and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, p. 23
- [Essay Map Graphic Organizer](#)
(class copies)-Day Seven
- [Editing Checklist Graphic Organizer](#)
(class copies)-Day 13
- [Writing Organization sheet](#)
(class copies)-Day 10,11,12
- [Self-Teacher Assessment Rubric](#)
(class copies)-Day 13
- [Peer Assessment Rubric](#)
(class copies)-Day 14

Background for Teachers

This 14 day Unit takes students through the process of writing a beginning level argumentative essay while utilizing the Social Studies content of World Religions.

Students read informational text to find main ideas and supporting details. These are organized and recorded using graphic organizers for description and compare/contrast text structures. Students then use their graphic organizers to write by creating claims from the supporting details (evidence).

Additionally, students learn how to write introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs, use transitions, revise and edit their writing, and reflect on their work by participating in peer reviews.

Intended Learning Outcomes

English Language Arts Objectives: By the end of the unit:

Each student will be able to determine central ideas in text and how these ideas are conveyed through particular details by using a Description Text Structure graphic organizer to pull out main ideas with supporting details in text.

Each student will be able to compare and contrast two different world religions by completing a Venn diagram comparing the two.

Each student will be able to write an argumentative essay on the similarities or differences of two world religions.

Social Studies Objectives: By the end of the unit:

Each student will understand major similarities and differences of world religions by completing graphic organizers and writing an argumentative essay comparing two world religions.

Each student will identify why understanding religions in the world today is a pressing issue by including a personal explanation in his concluding paragraph of his argumentative essay.

Instructional Procedures

Essential Questions for Argumentative Writing:

- What graphic organizer will help me access prior knowledge?
- What graphic organizer will help me gather the main idea and supporting details in this text?
- What graphic organizer will help me compare/contrast two different religions?
- How do I write an argumentative essay?

Essential Questions for Social Studies:

- What are two major religions in our world today?
- What are the major tenets of those world religions?
- How do these two religions compare/contrast with each other?
- Why is understanding different religions of the world important for me in the world today?

Day One: (Language Arts Essential Question [LA EQ]-1, Social Studies Essential Question [SS EQ]-1,4)

- Write this question on the front board- What is religion?
- Partner work-Partners look through resource text books on world religion (see Bibliography section) and dictionaries to fill out the Words in Context vocabulary page (see attachments)
- Arrange partners into small groups-share what they discovered about the word-religion-what it is/is not
- Whole group share- small groups share what they discovered about what religion is/is not
- Each student receives an adapted KWL Chart to fill out with parents at home- (see attachments)

Day Two: (LA EQ 1,2), (SS EQ 1,2,4)

- Partner share- using KWL, discover your similarities/differences in KWL responses?
- Whole class discussion- KWL similarities/differences, focus on the answers in the last two columns
- Set out the resource books on religion (see Bibliography section) for students to browse:Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
- Let each student select a religion that he would like to study in more detail
- From student interests create five cooperative groups-one for each religion. Students will stay with this cooperative group for the rest of the unit anytime the instruction calls for small groups.
- Small groups-let students meet with group to decide the second religion the group would like to study
- Whole class discussion- what graphic organizer will help me gather information about the main idea and supporting details in the religion text my group is going to read?
- Show students Description Text Structure poster (see Materials section)
- Review-definition, features, signal words and graphic organizer (see attachments)for Description Text Structure
- Small group-give students time in groups to read the first book about their religion and fill out individual Description Text Structure graphic organizers for the text information (see attachments)

Day Three: (LA EQ 2), (SS EQ 1,2,3)

- Small group-give students time in their groups to read the second book about their religion written by a different author and add in additional information from the second book into their existing Description Text Structure graphic organizer

Day Four: (LA EQ 1,2), (SS EQ 1,2)

- Small group- give students time in groups to read the first book about their *second* religion and fill out new Description Text Structure graphic organizers for the new text information

Day Five: (LA EQ 2), (SS EQ 1,2,3)

- Small group- give students time in groups to read the second book about their *second* religion written by a different author and add in additional information from the second book into their

existing Description Text Structure graphic organizer

Day Six: (LA EQ 1,3) (SS EQ 2,3)

Whole class discussion- What graphic organizer will help me see the similarities and differences of the two different religions?

Show students Compare/Contrast Text Structure poster

Review-definition, features, signal words and graphic organizer (Venn Diagram)for

Compare/Contrast Text Structure

Small group- give students time in groups to create individual compare/contrast graphic organizers for their two religions (using the Venn Diagram graphic organizer)

Day Seven {could be two days}: (LA EQ 1,4), (SS EQ 2,3)

Whole class discussion- we are going to write an argumentative (derived from the word argument) essay for our two religions

Write this question on the front board- What does the word argument mean?

Partner share-discuss the question on the front board and create an answer

Whole class share-small groups share their answers for what argument is

Whole class discussion- show students the following quote from the Common Core (See Materials section), "Arguments are used for many purposes-to change the reader's point of view, to bring about some action on the reader's part, or to ask the reader to accept the writer's explanation or evaluation of a concept, issue, or problem. An argument is a reasoned, logical way of demonstrating that the writer's position, belief, or conclusion is valid...In history/social studies, students analyze evidence from multiple [sources] to advance a claim that is best supported by the evidence, and they argue for a historically...situated interpretation."

Whole class discussion- what is this quote telling you an argument is/is not? As a whole class make a T-Chart on the board. You are going to write an argumentative (argument) essay using this meaning for the word argument.

Small group-students work together to fill out a Words in Context vocabulary page for the phrase: argumentative essay

Whole class discussion/small group work- Look at Venn Diagrams groups created to compare/contrast two world religions. Have students in their small groups decide if their two religions are more similar or more different. Then, highlight the information from the Venn Diagram that they are going to use to justify their position for similar or different.

Whole class discussion/small group work-Have students look for highlighted Venn Diagram information on their original Description Text Structures graphic organizers and highlight the corresponding information

Whole class discussion/small group work-Students star the Main categories from their Description Text Structure graphic organizers that contain the highlighted details

Whole class discussion/small group work-show students the graphic organizer:Essay Map (see attachments). Have students fill out the three Main Reasons on the Essay Map by writing the three Main categories that they starred on their Description Text Structure graphic organizers in Topic Sentence form in the boxes provided for Main Reasons on the Essay Map. (*Note- students need to match up main categories on their two Description Text Structure graphic organizers so that the two religions share similar categories to talk about such as: Beliefs, Daily Routines, Places of Worship, etc.)

Day Eight: (LA EQ 4), (SS EQ 2,3)

Whole class discussion- write this question on the front board-What is a claim?

Partner work/whole class discussion-partners look in the dictionary for meanings of the word "claim" and then the class shares out ideas

Whole class discussion- show students Essay Map graphic organizer again and discuss how to fill out the Claim or Thesis section by giving them the following scaffolding: Religion #1 and

Religion #2 are similar (or different if that is what the students decided) to each other because they each have similar (or different) Main reason #1, Main reason #2, and Main reason #3. Like the following examples: Christianity and Islam are similar because they both worship a God figure, they have similar worship practices, and their beliefs are similar. Or, Islam and Hinduism are different because they have different gods, different beliefs, and a different prophet.

Small group-students work in small groups to fill out the Claim section on their Essay Maps

Whole class discussion- show students the Supporting details section on the Essay Map. Have students go back to their original Description Text Structure graphic organizers and write the specific evidence they highlighted from each main category into the Supporting details section of the Essay Map

Small groups-find the highlighted evidence and fill out the Supporting details section on the Essay Map

Day Nine: (LA EQ 4), (SS EQ 2,3)

Whole class discussion-review writing a paragraph with a topic sentence, three specific supporting details, and a concluding sentence. Each Main reason from the Essay Map is the Topic Sentence for each of the three body paragraphs in the argumentative essay. The three Supporting details from the Essay Map are the supporting details that follow the topic sentence (Main reason) in each body paragraph. Students need to write a concluding sentence for each of the three body paragraphs. So, again, each of the three body paragraphs in their essay contains a Topic Sentence (Main reason), three supporting details (Supporting details section), and a concluding sentence to tie the paragraph together.

Small groups-students work in small groups to write the "body" of the argumentative essay by writing three paragraphs, one for each Main reason

Day Ten: (LA EQ 4), (SS EQ 2,3)

Whole class discussion- how to write an introduction paragraph which contains a hook and the claim. See Craft Lessons by Ralph Fletcher p. 66-67, Nonfiction Craft Lessons by Ralph Fletcher p. 57, and 6+1 Traits of Writing by Ruth Culham p. 87-90 for teaching ideas

Small group- students work in small groups to write the "introduction" paragraph for their essay

Whole class discussion- hand out the Writing Organization sheet (see attachments) and review the Opening section ideas for good hooks in an introduction paragraph

Individual work- students revise their introduction paragraphs to create better "hooks" for their readers

Day Eleven: (LA EQ 4), (SS EQ 2,3,4)

Whole class discussion- how to write a concluding paragraph for an argumentative essay which includes a. Student's individual thoughts about why understanding the two different religions of the world is important for him in the world today; b. A restatement of the Claim; and c. A concluding wrap-up. See Craft Lessons by Ralph Fletcher p. 68-71, Nonfiction Craft Lessons by Ralph Fletcher p. 106, and 6+1 Traits of Writing by Ruth Culham p. 87-90 for teaching ideas

Small group- students work in small groups to write the "conclusion" paragraph for their essay

Whole class discussion- hand out the Writing Organization sheet (see attachments) and review the Conclusions section ideas for good wrap-ups in a conclusion paragraph

Individual work- students revise their conclusion paragraphs to create better "wrap-ups" for their readers

Day Twelve: (LA EQ 4), (SS EQ 2,3,4)

Whole class discussion-model how to tie essay paragraphs together using transition words so that the essay has an introduction paragraph, followed by a transition at the beginning of each of the three body paragraphs, followed by a transition at the beginning of the conclusion paragraph. See 6+1 Traits of Writing by Ruth Culham p. 91-92 and the Transitions section of the Writing Organization sheet for ideas. Have students look over the Writing Organization sheet for

ideas in their groups

Small group- students write their whole essay in one piece with an introduction paragraph, three body paragraphs (transition at the beginning of each of the three body paragraphs), and a conclusion paragraph (transition at the beginning).

Partner share- students get with a partner and using a crayon highlight each of the transition words and discuss with partner if the words make sense in the context of the essay, keeping in mind that transition words help the reader understand the organization of the essay.

Day Thirteen: (LA EQ 4), (SS EQ 2,3,4)

Whole class discussion- how do I revise my essay: a. Read essay out loud to see if it reads smoothly and makes sense and make any changes; b. Add details to the essay that will help the reader understand more clearly your position in the essay

Individual work- students revise their essays

Individual work- students reflect and revise their essays again using the Self-Teacher Assessment Rubric (see attachments). Students fill out just their section of the rubric. The teacher can then use this same rubric for grading purposes when the essay is submitted for grading.

Individual work- each student uses the Editing Checklist to edit his essay (see attachments)

Day Fourteen: (LA EQ 4), (SS EQ 2,3,4)

Individual work- each student publishes his essay by writing a final copy (or word processing it on a computer)

Celebration of writing!-Partner share- students trade essays with two other students who were not in their religion small group and fill out the Peer Assessment Rubric (see attachments)

Strategies for Diverse Learners

The unit emphasizes lots of collaboration in small group settings. This provides for stimulation of gifted students and for reading/writing support with struggling and special needs students.

Extensions

Student could be taught to find credible online sources using Web literacy for Educators by Alan November. Then, the research could be done online instead of using resource books.

Assessment Plan

Assessment rubrics are built into unit instructional procedures.

Bibliography

Religion Resource Books: (could use any resource books that cover specific religions and their tenets)

Religions of the World: Islam by David Self

Religions of the World: Christianity by Michael Keene

Religions of the World: Judaism by David Self

Religions of the World: Hinduism by Rasamandala Das

Religions of the World: Buddhism by Anita Ganeri

DK Eyewitness Books: Islam by Philip Wilkinson

DK Eyewitness Books: Judaism by Douglas Charing

DK Eyewitness Books: Buddhism by Philip Wilkinson

DK Eyewitness Books: Christianity by Philip Wilkinson

DK Eyewitness Books: Hinduism

Quote from Appendix A: Common Core State Standards for ELA and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, p. 23

Craft Lessons by Ralph Fletcher
Nonfiction Craft Lessons by Ralph Fletcher
6+1 Traits of Writing by Ruth Culham
Elementary CORE Academy 2004, Academy Handbook for Fifth Grade, p. 3:6
Words in Context chart adapted from Janet Allen

Authors

[Melissa Mendenhall](#)

[brooke rauson](#)