

## **Pittsburgh Memories**

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### **To Guide Entry**

This unit plan is written for 10<sup>th</sup> grade Pittsburgh Scholars English students.

The culminating activity for students is for them to produce a play based on a person or event that was part of the history of Pittsburgh. The unit provides a variety of activities and many opportunities to integrate reading, writing and speaking. Many of the activities will be conducted in cooperative groups. The series of activities that will lead to the culminating activity could be adapted to many grade levels. Sections of the unit could be separated and be adapted to provide students an opportunity to reach different standards. Students will write a report based on research that they must complete in the library and the Heinz History Center. Each student will give a presentation based on the report. The students will form groups and use their information from their report to write a play. The play may require more research and will require research into geography in order for the students to create more accurate settings. The play will be produced and presented before the class.

### **Objectives**

As I have been learning about the city I live in, buildings have more meaning; the tree covered hills look different, because now I know that they rise up forming the sides of a gorge. I was reminded of the French influence in our area. Duquesne University and Duquesne Light serve as examples for remembering that time period. Street names such as Bouquet, DeVilliers, and Lafayette exist as references to that time period, as well. It has been thrilling to learn so much about the city and daunting to realize that we have only begun to scratch the surface of what there is to know about this wonderful city of Pittsburgh. I have several objectives that I hope to accomplish with this unit plan. The first objective is to arouse the students' curiosity about the geography and history of Pittsburgh through reading literature about Pittsburgh. Through this unit, I hope that they can experience the thrill of learning and the effect of experiencing a different point of view after learning more about their home. The second objective is to create a need for the students to learn how to research and then, use the information gleaned from their research in a meaningful manner. The students will conduct this research in the Langley High School Library, on the Internet, and at the Heinz History Museum. The purpose

of the research will be to gather information so that the students can write a report and then use the information to write and produce a play. The third objective is to provide students with an opportunity to work cooperatively in groups and to collaborate with each other to learn and to solve problems. The fourth objective is to create activities that will help students meet the criteria of the standards as required by the Pittsburgh Public Schools' Board of Education.

At the present time, the Pittsburgh Public Schools' curriculum is a standards based curriculum. There are two sets of standards: *The Core Curriculum Standards (CCS)*, and *New Standards Performance Standards (NSP)*. An example of a CCS in communications is: "All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems." To fulfill the requirements of the CCS in communications and literature, Langley High School has adopted New Standards (NS) English Language Arts (ELA) Standards. For example, the NSP Standard that is related to that CCS in communications is NS ELA Standard E1c. It states, "The student reads and comprehends informational materials to develop understanding and expertise and produces written or oral work that: restates or summarizes information; relates new information to prior knowledge and experience; extends ideas; [and] makes connections to related topics or information." The NSP Standards articulate more specifically the criteria that will assist students in reaching the standards of the CCS. As a result, NSP standards will be referred to in the remainder of this unit.

This unit will enable my students to endeavor to meet many New Standard (NS) Standards. They can be found in the Appendix.

### Strategies

As we began studying the geography of Pittsburgh in the Seminar, Interdisciplinary Study of Pittsburgh, I realized that my initial suspicion that geography influenced Pittsburgh's economic fortunes was correct. For example, stores of natural gas provided the means for people in the region to produce glass. Coking coal from Connellsville was used to manufacture steel. Oil from nearby Titusville and Oil City fueled manufacturing and lit up homes. The geography provided the basis of Pittsburgh's economy in colonial times, as well as provided the basis of Pittsburgh's future and modern day economy.

I would like 10<sup>th</sup> grade PSP English students to research these topics and learn this information for themselves. I think it is important for my students to research and investigate a topic that is interesting to them. I would hope that their own city would qualify. I think the study of our city is relevant and vital. There is an anthology that has been part of the tenth grade curriculum entitled *Pittsburgh Memoranda*. It contains stories of interesting people or events related to the city of Pittsburgh. For example, the story of Mrs. Sofel is in it. There is a movie based on this story starring Diane Keaton as Mrs. Sofel.

I have always wanted to use this text because I think it would be of great value to learn the history of our city using these stories as a basis for that kind of study. Also, it would be interesting to have the students use the pieces as the basis for research into the particular historical aspects of the piece and write reports that would answer some of the questions that the stories raise.

Prior to this time I have not considered using this book because I felt that I had too much of a gap in my knowledge of Pittsburgh. I believe my students can benefit from learning more about our home, and this is one of the vehicles that I plan to use to accomplish this. The students and I will read and discuss several of the stories. Then, each of them will pick one that they think that they would like to read and use as the basis for further research into the history and geography related to the piece. They will read and write reading responses or take notes as they read.

In addition to the text *Pittsburgh Memoranda*, I would like the students to read excerpts from the booklets, *Underground Railroad* and *The American Indian as Hunter*. Adding these two pieces will expand the

historical aspect of the project so that the students can include the early American history of Pittsburgh, and the history of African Americans in Pittsburgh as part of their choices to study as the basis for their reports and plays.

Next, they will research the person or event from the story or booklets more thoroughly. I will require a minimum of three sources. The report will require a "Works Cited" page. The purpose of this research will be two-fold. The students will write a report that will provide them with the background information to the story in *Pittsburgh Memoranda*, *The American Indian as Hunter*, or *Underground Railroad* and also provide them with enough background information that will enable them to begin to write a play based on the story. The students will be required to use the Writing Process to complete their report. This process requires students to provide evidence of their prewriting, drafts and revision, editing, and then once the final draft is written, evidence of their own evaluation of their work. (Forms for each of the steps in the process are in Appendix II.)

Each class member will present a synopsis of his/her report. Next, the students will be assigned groups or they will form groups based on which time period or person in Pittsburgh history they wish to write the play about. The students will conduct research before and during the writing of the play. I suspect this is where we may need to research the geography of Pittsburgh, in preparation to create settings for the plays. My intention is for there to be a variety of time periods so that the students can learn from each other about the various historical periods of Pittsburgh.

I have discovered that creating a need to learn is important and my experience has been that when students write a play, the need for historical accuracy prompts them to complete research more thoroughly. Another aspect of the activity is that students enjoy drama, and as a result, studying or writing it stimulates learning. Marrying these two activities has been successful in the past. I am hoping for similar results as we study the history of our city. I look forward to the students' efforts in relationship to their study of their Pittsburgh heritage.

The interdisciplinary aspects of this project include research in history and using that information to require the writing of at least two different genres. Producing a play will encourage the students to exercise their creativity in areas of literature, drama and fine arts. This part of the project is a catalyst for students to learn characterization by creating characters. Developmentally, students have difficulty with the emotional aspects of understanding and portraying the emotions of the characters, as well. This activity with the accompanying exercises in drama guides them in clarifying and dealing with the emotional aspects of characters in literature and drama. They will be able to use what they have learned in art class to build a set. (This may only be the suggestion of a set.) It will, also, create a need to learn to solve problems of costuming and create a need to practice speaking skills related to acting. I will use video taping equipment to film the final product and also as an aid for the students to critique their own performances before the final taping.

To create a link for the students between their report and the play, I plan to begin the unit with excerpts from two movies based on historical events in Pittsburgh. I will show excerpts from *Allegheny Uprising*, which deals with the whiskey rebellion, and *Mrs. Sofel*, which deals with a warden's wife who helps a prisoner and his brother escape from prison because she fell in love with one of them. The students will be creating historical fiction. It will be important for them to experience seeing other works that are similar. These two movies will provide adequate models.

## **Activities**

Week 1

During this week students will be introduced to the ideas of this unit. To begin we will watch excerpts from the movies, *Allegheny Uprising* starring John Wayne, and *Mrs. Sofel* starring Diane Keaton. The students will take notes about things that are known and unknown during the movies.

## Week 2

We will read and discuss a story from the text, *Pittsburgh Memoranda*, written by Haniel Long. The students will choose a story to read individually from the book. The students will keep learning logs or journals during and after reading. We will also read excerpts from *Underground Railroad* and *The American Indian as Hunter*. They can also choose to read further into either of these booklets. I will inform the students that the text that they choose will form the basis of their research. The students will be required to research the person, or the time period, and the setting of the story.

### Lesson Plan #1.

#### **Standard:**

NS Reading standard E1c – The student reads and comprehends informational materials to develop understanding and expertise and produces written or oral work that restates or summarizes information; relates new information to prior knowledge and experience; extends ideas; or makes connections to related topics or information.

#### **Objectives:**

Students will be able to summarize the information from the text with 80% accuracy.

To increase comprehension, students will be able to define and use new vocabulary words from the text.

#### **Materials, Text, and Resources:**

Paper

Pen or pencil

*Pittsburgh Memoranda* by Haniel Long

"John Brashear" pp. 29-32

#### **Procedure:**

1. First, students will look up the following words in the dictionary:

1. Spectrograph
2. Forges
3. Lenses
4. Integrity
5. Density
6. Hygroscopic
7. Obsequies

They will complete the following exercise for each word:

- Write the word
- Write the definition and part of speech from the dictionary
- Write the word in a sentence as best they can at this point.

2. Students will be asked to write for 10 minutes about what they think life might have been like in Pittsburgh in the year 1894. Include what the streets would look like with what type of transportation; what a house might have looked like. I will ask them to include what clothing would have been worn and whatever they think might be going on during that time of life in our city. After they write, we will share our ideas with each other.

3. I will ask if anyone knows who John Brashear was? Students will discuss what they know. Next, I will ask them if they have ever looked at the stars, and then if they have ever looked at the stars through a telescope? Then, we will proceed to reading the story about John Brashear on p.29.

4. As we read we will take notes of important information. I will ask students to make a graphic organizer in the form of a chart. There will be 5 columns for each of the categories: who, what, when, where, and why.

5. We will go over each of the categories to be sure that we did not overlook anything.

### **Evaluation**

At the end of the story, using the text and their notes, the students will be asked to write a summary of what they have learned, and to write their impressions of John Brashear. They must include at least 4 of the new vocabulary words in their writing.

### **Week 3**

Students will spend time completing research in the Langley High School Library, and visit the Heinz History Museum for research in History Museum's library. In addition to visiting the Museum's library the students will visit the Museum's exhibits to gather more information and to learn more about the settings of their stories and to prepare for the setting of their play.

The English department of Langley High School has established a set of criteria for library skills for the students to accomplish at 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. This was done in order to prepare them for the Senior Project that they must begin working on in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and present in 12<sup>th</sup> in order for them to graduate. In the Langley Library students will be required to keep 3x5 source cards, use at least 3 different sources, and in general demonstrate their ability to use the library and its resources. The following handout will be given to them to assist them in this process:

### **INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR SOURCE CARDS**

One of the best ways to make sure you have the required information when it comes time to complete the "Works Cited" page is to collect the necessary information on a source card, a 3x5 card. The following are lists of information that you need to collect for several different sources. On the left is a list of the items needed. On the right is how this information would look on a "Works Cited" page.

### **MAGAZINE**

1. Author or author's of the magazine article. Jones, Edward. "Time on Our
2. Name of the article. (In quotations.)
3. Title of the magazine. (Underlined) Side" Teen Talk 22 Mar.
4. Volume number of the magazine.
5. Date of the magazine. 1994: 25.
6. Page number of the article.

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BOOK Morrison, Toni. Beloved. New York: Bantum Books, 1985.

1. Author or Authors
2. Name of Book (Underlined)
3. Place of Publication
4. Name of Publisher
5. Year of Publication

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A SINGLE WORK FROM AN ANTHOLOGY

Rich, Adrienne. "Re-Forming the Crystal." Contemporary American Poetry. Edward A. Poulin, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Company. 1980. 78.

1. Name of the author of the work.
2. Name of the work. (In quotations) Crystal."
3. Name of the Anthology.(Underlined)
4. Name or Names of the editor or editors.
5. Place of Publication.
6. Name of Publisher.
7. Date of Publication.
8. Page number of the single work.

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AN ARTICLE IN A REFERENCE BOOK "Costume." Encyclopedia

1. Name of the topic. (In quotations)
2. Name of the reference book (Underlined) Americana. 1985 ed.
3. Date of the publication.

Note: Write the author's name first, if there is an author.

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A REFERENCE BOOK ON CD-ROM Software Tool Works Multimedia

1. Name of the software.
2. Identify as Computer software. Encyclopedia . Computer software.
3. Place of publication.
4. Name of software publisher. Novato, CA:Software Tool
5. Date of Publication.
6. State the type of software. (CD-ROM) 1991. CD-ROM.

#### Week 4

This week will be devoted to reading the research materials and writing the report. The activities will be done as both classwork and homework. A Reading/Writing Workshop structure will provide the basis for class activities. The students will read their research material and take notes in preparation to write their reports. Students will use the Writing Process to complete the report. We will review and discuss the NS criteria for a report.

#### Week 5

Students will present their reports to their classmates. There will be a question and answer period after each report is given to give students an opportunity to discuss each paper. Cooperative groups will be formed and asked to choose a time period and a person around which to write a play. Students will work in groups to write a play in preparation to perform their own play. Students will use the Writing Process to complete the writing. As a class we will write criteria for a drama that meets the standard.

#### Week 6

In order to prepare for the acting that will be required, we will engage in several acting exercises. One will be for the students to practice saying one line using several different emotions. They will work in small groups to help each other with expressing different emotions. For example, they will say: "I'm glad you are here." Each time they say the sentence they will stress a different word in order to show happiness, sorrow, anger, sarcasm, and fear.

Another exercise will include an opportunity for students to prepare a pantomime. I will put topics in a paper bag and the students will pair off. Each pair will pick a subject to pantomime. Some of the topics will be as follows:

- Barber and customer
- Customer trying on hats and sales clerk
- Pilot and co-pilot
- Bank teller and robber
- Two cooks making pizza
- Babysitter and child
- Two lumber jacks cutting a tree
- Ape and man at the zoo
- Two gardeners plant a tree
- Two teen-agers riding a roller coaster

Students will prepare the production of each play. They will rehearse and have a dress rehearsal in front of a video camera so that they can critique their own performance.

As a class, we will establish the criteria for a "meets the standard" performance for the presentation of the plays.

### **Lesson Plan # 2**

**Standards:**

NS Speaking Standard E3c- the student prepares and delivers an individual presentation, in which the student engages the audience with appropriate verbal cues and eye contact.

**Objective:**

Students will be able to use inflection, diction, and stress to express emotion appropriate to the portrayal of a character in a play or when giving an oral presentation.

**Materials:**

Chalk and blackboard or overhead with transparency and transparency pen.

**Procedure:**

Question to introduce the lesson.

- What are the skills that speakers and actors must use to express themselves or portray their characters?  
(I will write their answers on the board on an overhead transparency. I expect that they will realize that actors use their voices and their bodies to portray a character. I expect the answers will fall into both of these categories.)

Next, I will explain that today we are going to practice using our voices. We will get into groups and students will be required to practice several sentences showing a variety of emotions. The sentences will be written on the blackboard or overhead and are as follows:

- I am glad you are here.
- When did you buy that jacket?
- I will see you at home.
- How did you get that medal?
- Did you see Joe at the party?
- Be sure to give John a sweater.

After the groups have practiced the sentences, I will ask each group to present one emotion for all of the sentences. So group one would portray fear for each sentence, group 2 would portray love for each sentence, and so on. Students may comment and discuss the nature of the emotions.

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**Lesson Plan #3****Standard:**

NS Speaking Standard E3c- the student prepares and delivers an individual presentation, in which the student engages the audience with appropriate verbal cues and eye contact.

**Objective:**

Students will be able to portray a character in a play and express emotion through physical movement.

**Materials:**

Paper

A brown paper lunch bag

**Procedure:**

Students will be asked to pick a partner. Once they have paired off. I will ask each pair to pick one of the following topics from a brown paper bag. Each will be written on a small, folded piece of paper. The pairs will be asked to prepare a scene in pantomime with the types of characters written on their paper. I will ask each pair to make sure we know who they are, where they are and what is the conflict.

- Barber and customer
- Customer trying on hats and sales clerk
- Pilot and co-pilot
- Bank teller and robber
- Two cooks making pizza
- Babysitter and child
- Two lumber jacks cutting a tree
- Ape and man at the zoo
- Two gardeners plant a tree
- Two teen-agers riding a roller coaster

Once the pairs have practiced the pantomime, I will ask each pair to present them in front of the class. We will have to guess what they are doing, who they are, where they are, and to identify the conflict. After each group has presented we will discuss what we have learned about acting and drama from the two exercises using our voices and pantomiming scenes.

Week 7

Students will practice and prepare to present their plays. Rehearsals will be videotaped. Once the taping is complete we will view them and evaluate them according to the criteria we listed for our rubric.

When the students are ready to present their plays, we will begin the presentations, the final taping, and the and the final evaluations.

**Bibliography**

\* Long, Haniel. *Pittsburgh Memoranda*. Pittsburgh: Breton Books, 1939.

A collection of short stories and poetry about a variety of important historical figures of Pittsburgh.

Graham, Laurie. *Singing the City*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1998.

The story of Pittsburgh's steel industry during after its decline.

Toker, Franklin. *Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait*. Penn State University, 1986.

The history and description of the architecture and neighborhoods of Pittsburgh.

Bell, Thomas. *Out of This Furnace: a Novel of Immigrant Labor in America*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1976. Originally published in 1941.

The story of an Eastern European family's immigration to Pittsburgh. The story concerns a variety of travails of a steelworker and his family.

\* Witthoft, John. *The American Indian as Hunter*, PHMC 1967.

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's publication describes the Indians of Pennsylvania and their contributions to Pittsburgh's early history. Each tribe's philosophy is detailed in this informational pamphlet.

*A Legacy in Bricks and Mortar: African American Landmarks in Allegheny County*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, 1995.

Information is given in this publication about African American History in Western Pennsylvania.

\* *Underground Railroad*. Washington D.C: Division of Publications, National Park Service. U.S. Department of the Interior.

The history of the Underground Railroad. The story of the perilous journey from the south to the North.

Muschla, Gary R. *Writing Workshop Survival Kit*. West Nyack: The Center for Applied Research in Education. 1993.

This book is a teacher resource that discusses the writing process and contains reproducibles to facilitate the process.

Novelly, Maria. *Theatre Games for Young Performers*. Colorado Springs: Meriwether Publishing LTD. 1985.

This is a book of activities that teachers can use to assist students with their performing skills in acting.

Museum:

Heinz History Museum in Pittsburgh's Strip District

Movies:

*Allegheny Uprising*

*Mrs. Sofel*

\* Texts the students will use.

## **Appendix I.**

NS Reading Standard E1a – The student reads and comprehends at least twenty- five books or book equivalents each year. Such reading should represent a diverse collection of material from at least three different literary forms and from at least five different writers.

NS Reading Standard E1c- The student reads and comprehends informational materials to develop understanding and expertise and produces written or oral work that restates or summarizes information; relates new information to prior knowledge, extends ideas, and makes connections to related topics or information.

NS Writing Standard E2a – The student produces a report.

NS Writing Standard E2b – The student produces a response to literature.

NS Literature Standard E5b- The student produces work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre.

NS Speaking, Listening, and Viewing Standard E3b – The student participates in group meetings displaying appropriate turn-taking behaviors; responding appropriately to comments and questions; employing appropriate problem solving steps; and dividing labor to achieve overall group goals efficiently.

NS Speaking, Listening, and Viewing Standard E3c – The student prepares and delivers an individual presentation in which the student shapes information to achieve a particular purpose, to appeal to the interests and background knowledge of audience members; the student projects a sense of individuality and personality in selecting and organizing content, and delivery.

NS Speaking, Listening, and Viewing Standard E3d – The student makes informed judgments about television, radio, and film productions; that is, the student judges the extent to which the media are a source of entertainment as well as a source of information.

## **Appendix II.**

1. Writing Project Cover Sheet  
(Student reflection about their writing.)
2. Peer Conference Questions  
(Peer conference questions for the purpose of revision.)
3. Revision Checklist  
(Students' checklist for revision purposes.)
4. Editor's Checklist  
(Students' checklist for corrections of the conventions of English.)