

Pittsburgh Scavenger Hunt for High School Students

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Overview

This unit is designed for my English 3 CAS classes as a way to connect them to the cultural, historic, and geographic landmarks that abound in the city of Pittsburgh and the greater Pittsburgh area. The unit will require my students to work cooperatively in small groups to, first, create a set of clues leading to various landmarks around the region, and then, secondly, to solve a set of clues for similar landmarks of importance. The unit will take approximately four to five weeks from beginning to end including both in-class work and independent group work outside the classroom. In addition, this unit will involve one field trip to the Heinz History Center and several class periods in the library and computer lab. Students will also be involved in out-of-class trips to both prepare clues and solve them. Parental permission slips will be required releasing students to travel individually or in groups to complete their assignments. Every effort will be made to ensure that each group has a driver or that transportation can be secured.

Each group will be required to arrange, wherever and whenever possible, a contact person who will be willing to meet with both the group creating the clue and the group solving the clue. It is hoped that this contact person will be able and willing to spend a brief period of time (15 -30 minutes) talking with each group, explaining the significance of the particular landmark involved, giving out a trinket or artifact about the landmark, and taking a photograph with the group.

The end product for this unit will be a narrative journal describing in detail the process each student has gone through throughout the unit. The journal should chronicle the difficulties involved in the group process as well as the problem solving techniques each group uses to create their clues and establish their contacts. It will also feature artifacts such as photographs, business cards, etchings, rubbings, and other memorabilia associated with the various landmarks each group will visit. In addition, each group will also be required to make a

Power Point Presentation highlighting their efforts to solve the clues for the various Pittsburgh landmarks they've been assigned.

The cooperative group work, research, community contact, journal, and Power Point presentations will address a multitude of District and State standards. More importantly, the students will learn a great deal about their community while enjoying their time together.

Rationale

Having grown up in Ohio where hills don't begin with the word, "Mt." and rivers are few and far between, I have always been awed by Pittsburgh's unique geography and its sense of history and place. I've also been amazed at how little my students typically know about Pittsburgh, its history, and its landmarks. Other than sports highlights, most kids tend to know little and care less about the city they live in beyond their own neighborhood. A recent conversation I had with one of my students highlights this perfectly. This young man was discussing his previous weekend's activities at the Waterfront. When I mentioned the smokestacks that remain from the Homestead Steel Mill, he looked at me blankly. I asked him if he knew what existed on the Waterfront site 25 years ago or 50 years ago and he had no idea. He had no idea of the history that had occurred on that piece of land over 100 years ago or that people had died as a result of that history. When I asked him why he thought those smokestacks were there or what he thought the huge piece of machinery that remains—the Gantry—was, he admitted that he had never thought about it at all. He was intrigued when I explained my limited historical account of the Homestead Steelworkers Strike and even wrote down the name to look it up on the internet.

Similarly, another discussion in one of my classes concerned Primanti Brothers' Restaurant. I explained to my students that the original restaurant is located in the Strip District and that is where the idea to put french fries and cole slaw in each sandwich originated. When I asked if anyone had any idea why Primanti Brothers did that, not only did no one have a clue, very few had ever bothered to consider it. I then explained that Primanti Brothers in the Strip District used to cater almost exclusively to the truckers who would make late night deliveries to the produce and meat and fish distributors in the Strip District. Legend has it that the idea to put everything together between two slices of bread was done as a convenience to allow the drivers to eat their entire meal with one hand as they drove their rigs. The Primanti Brothers' website states it was a necessity born of a lack of silverware. Either story offers a glimpse into a cultural icon in Pittsburgh that few students have ever investigated.

I feel strongly that there is a wonderful opportunity to expand the typical Pittsburgh teenager's awareness of their hometown and surrounding areas. Most of my students recognize the cultural landmarks by name, but have only a passing acquaintance with the real contributions or significance of these icons. Many can list the achievements of the Steelers, Pirates, and Penguins and most number themselves as fans, but few know much about their history as institutions in this city. Even more ironic is the fact that many students sit in school buildings named for people who achieved some claim to fame here in Pittsburgh and yet they haven't the foggiest idea, nor, sadly, the least bit of interest in who these people were. Students shop at Kaufmann's department store and never question the name; they play sports in Schenley Park and Frick Park and never consider who these people were and how these great parks came to be created. They live in a city renowned for its rivers and bridges and hills, yet never stop to consider the impact these features have on their lives and cultures. They never bother to admire the architecture of many of the bridges they cross regularly. They take their out-of-town relatives to ride the Mon Incline without ever imagining its significance to the history and development of the city in general and Mt. Washington specifically. They eat Isaly's chipped ham, chili dogs from the O, Primanti Brothers' sandwiches, and smiley-faced cookies from Eat 'n Park without a thought to the uniqueness of each of these experiences. This unit will provide an opportunity for discovery within their own backyard so to speak.

The intent of this unit is to take the students beyond the superficial understanding of the cultural, historic, and geographic landmarks that populate Pittsburgh. Since it will be conducted within an 11th grade CAS class, the expectations are high. I will work closely with each group to see that the clues they create reflect a depth of understanding of the significance of each landmark. Simple clues that reflect a simple answer won't be acceptable. The clues created must reflect both the research necessary to create them as well as the research required to solve them. Students will be required to demonstrate a varied and sophisticated set of skills in order to complete this unit.

Students will need to be able to work cooperatively in a small group, both in creating and solving the clues. This task will require them to decide first how to divide the workload fairly and then how to go about achieving the group objectives. This is always a balancing act in terms of fairness and responsibility. Small group dynamics require skill at negotiation and diplomacy. The inevitable disagreements concerning strategy will require the students to problem solve a solution in order to move the group effort forward. Cooperation problems presented to the teacher will be referred back to the group with the edict to work it out.

Problem solving skills will be of the utmost importance to each student. Students will be introduced to some specific resources via the field trip to the Heinz History Center and its library; but one of the main goals of the unit will be to emphasize to students how to discover and make use of the resources available to them. Students are highly skilled at doing internet searches via *Google* and similar search engines and those skills will certainly come into play. They will be required to determine where and how to look for information when given a detailed but possibly cryptic clue to solve. Individual and group problem solving skills will be paramount to success with this unit.

Strong interpersonal skills will also be necessary for success with this unit. Each group will be required to line up a minimum number of contact people for their clues. These people will be asked to respond to the group who ultimately solves the clue associated with their particular landmark. Therefore, the group creating the clue will need to know how to go about contacting and establishing this connection and the group solving the clue will need the same skills. A mini lesson in professional and personal correspondences will be given during the unit, but it will be incumbent upon each group to successfully make these personal connections.

Strong writing skills will be an absolute necessity for this project. While a narrative journal is an informal mode of writing; students will be turning in a final copy only. Without the benefit of structured feedback, each student will be responsible for editing and revising their own work. Students will be encouraged to seek feedback from one another or an outside source during the writing process, but, ultimately are on their own for revising their drafts as needed.

While there will be a format for the narrative journal, there will be a great deal of latitude in terms of individual creativity. Students will design their individual journals making sure that the required elements are included. Thus each journal will be an individual reflection of a particular student's experience. Students will not be graded on artistic ability, but creativity will be a necessary skill. Additionally, strong organizational skills will be integral in order for students to first gather their information, and then, secondly, to organize it in a coherent, logical, and creativity arrangement.

By the time most CAS students reach English 3, they have at least a passing familiarity with Power Point software. A mini lesson along with a detailed handout will be given during this unit. Computer lab time will be made available for students to work on their Power Point presentations and copies of the software will be made available for home use. Prior experience with Power Point will be beneficial, but not essential for the successful completion of the slide presentation. However, only a basic mini course will be possible within the

framework of this unit. Additional help will require the student to seek the assistance of the teacher or a tutor outside of class time.

Each group will make a Power Point presentation to the class detailing their experience during the Scavenger Hunt. All members of the group will be expected to participate in the presentation and will be graded on their effectiveness as a presenter. Thus, oral presentation skills are vital to the successful completion of this project. Each student will be assessed using an Oral Presentation rubric.

The English 3 curriculum focuses on American Literature; most juniors take U.S. History as well. A unit that focuses on Pittsburgh and its cultural, historic, and geographic landmarks seems extremely appropriate for this class as it will tie into the concept of cultural and societal development within an American city. Additionally, this unit will fulfill several of the student requirements as outlined in the Pittsburgh Public School's Grade 11 Course Syllabus.

Objectives

This unit will require students to analyze a great deal of information presented in a variety of resources such as print, photographs, on-line, and physical. Students will need to locate, comprehend, evaluate, analyze, and explain information.

Students will write a narrative journal for the purpose of detailing their experiences during the unit. This journal will be an excellent exhibit of proficiency of advanced skills in their Literacy Portfolio.

Working in small groups will require a great deal of small group discussion while the mini lessons presented within the unit as well as the introductory discussions and presentations at the end of the unit will require proficient or advanced participation.

The narrative journal and Power Point presentations will provide students with the opportunity to respond orally and in writing to materials presented in class, independent readings and group and independent research.

Obviously, the amount of research required will necessitate students utilizing library resources as well as emerging technologies to successfully complete the unit

Strategies

This unit will require a great deal of close supervision on the part of the teacher. Once the whole group introductory lessons have been completed and students have been broken into their small groups, students will be provided with several days (2-3) in the school library to begin researching landmarks, followed by a field trip to the Heinz History Center and an afternoon in the Center library. I will meet with each group daily to discuss and facilitate their efforts. I will give each group some broad categories for the clues they are to create and will guide them to focus on worthwhile and significant landmarks. I will also work covertly to avoid duplication of landmarks between groups.

Following the library time and the field trip, students will be given several days (2-3) in class to continue working on their clues and to begin making contacts within the community. A mini lesson will be conducted at this point to discuss how to get in touch with potential contacts. There will be no more than four groups (4-5 students per group) in any given class so each group will have access to a classroom computer to utilize for research and word processing. After initial contacts have been made via post or email, a phone will be made available to groups—in turn—to make follow-up calls confirming the contact person's participation.

The last 5-10 minutes of each class period will be dedicated to writing journal entries detailing the groups' efforts, problems, solutions, thoughts, etc. There will be periodic checks to see that all students are keeping their journals updated and that entries are sufficient in detail.

A mini lesson in examining, analyzing, and creating riddles and clues will be given when each group is near to completing and confirming their list of landmarks. The goal for each group is to create clues that are challenging, fun, but not impossible to solve. I will monitor this ongoing process daily.

After the initial in class time, groups will have to finalize their contacts and clues out of class. They will have approximately one week from the mini lesson on clue creation to complete their clues and turn them in. Each group will be responsible for turning in enough copies for the largest group (in case of uneven group populations) and a copy for me. The teacher's copy must have the clues, answers, and any contact people involved. I will take a few days to review all the clues and allow for modifications and revisions where needed. Once all clues are deemed satisfactory, I will distribute the clues to the different groups for the second phase of the Scavenger Hunt.

At this midpoint, students will turn in their journals for a grade and feedback. While the journal is a working draft at this point, it should detail completely the group's efforts throughout the clue creation process. Journals will be returned with feedback on what needs to be revised.

The second phase of the Scavenger Hunt is the most enjoyable phase and will mirror the creation process in format. An initial day in class to process the clues to be solved and plan initial strategies will be followed by a day or two in the library to allow students some research time. Again, I will carefully monitor each group's efforts to ensure that all are on task and not completely stumped by a given clue. I will offer hints only on how or where to begin the search for a given answer, not to the specific answer to a clue. Groups can only approach me to confirm an answer and I will only verify whether an answer is correct or not. If a group's answer is correct, I will let them know if there is a contact person and supply them with that information. It will then be up to the group to make the initial contact.

I will provide each group with a disposable camera (24 pictures) to record their experiences as they make their trips to the various landmarks they are to visit. I hope to arrange a field trip day that will allow each group to spend a day outside of school visiting their respective landmarks, collecting artifacts, taking photographs, making etchings, and meeting with contacts. I will attempt to place a driver in each group, but it may be necessary for liability reasons to arrange for a parent chaperone for each group as they travel around the city and surrounding areas. Whatever is required to make this day possible will be done.

After the designated field trip day, students will have one week to tie up their loose ends, develop their pictures, and complete their narrative journals. This work will be done outside of the classroom and will allow in class time to begin a mini lesson on Power Point and computer lab time to begin creating their presentations. I will be available each day to confer with groups or individuals concerning any problems they may be having finishing the journal or preparing their presentations. The Power Point presentations will be scheduled one week after the submission of the narrative journals. The presentations will be made in the classroom utilizing the teacher's computer and a projector.

Classroom Activities

The Scavenger Hunt unit will be conducted in October after the reading of *The Scarlet Letter*. It will begin with a lesson involving reading and discussing an excerpt from Annie Dillard's book, *An American Childhood*. The excerpt details an episode during Annie Dillard's youth and references several Pittsburgh streets, neighborhoods, and landmarks. I will slowly lead the discussion to an

examination of what students reflect fondly about their own neighborhoods and then broaden the topic to Pittsburgh and its surrounding areas. We will discuss what makes a place memorable or significant to them. At this point I will introduce a quote from *The Scarlet Letter*:

“The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison.”

(Hawthorne, page 55)

I will ask the students to consider the quote and its historic and cultural significance in terms of the development of a community. Are these two institutions necessary to the formation of a new community? Are these institutions thus historic and cultural landmarks? I will lead the discussion around to Pittsburgh specifically and to the identification of cemeteries and prisons and jails within Pittsburgh and the Allegheny County area. Once we've identified some of these landmarks the students are familiar with, we'll begin to discuss their physical layout. What do they know about the design and architectural construction of cemeteries and prisons? At this point, I will expand the topic to include historic and geographic landmarks that shape a region and its people. I'll begin to discuss the amazing amount of history and place that surrounds us, of which the average Pittsburgher, let alone teenage Pittsburgher, has no sense. I will give them a few, hopefully tantalizing, examples of historic, geographic, and cultural landmarks of which they might be ignorant. I'll make veiled references to a destination they have all been to that once hosted a bloody battle between steelworkers and Pinkerton guards (Homestead Steelworkers Strike, 1892). I'll make another veiled reference to a huge parcel of land within the city limits that can trace its existence back to the scandalous affair and elopement between a teenage heiress and her 40-something lover (Schenley Park). At this point I will close the day's lesson leaving them curious and intrigued.

The second lesson will consist of my following up on the previous day's discussion by reiterating the amount of history and culture we overlook in our day to day travails. I'll remind them that landmarks abound in any community and that there are countless examples of historic, geographic, and cultural landmarks of which they are ignorant. I'll then hand out the Scavenger Hunt assignment sheet and tell them that they are about to undertake an exciting journey of discovery in their own backyard. We'll spend the majority of the class period discussing the specifics of the unit—group makeup, time frame, requirements, end product, etc. I will break them into their groups for the Scavenger Hunt and give them some specific instructions regarding the clues they are to create. I will stress the need for discretion in their conversations with members of other groups

and remind them that the fun will come in watching another group attempt to solve their clues while they are racing to solve the clues given to them.

In terms of the specific instructions I give to each group, these will consist of telling them several categories they must address in their clue creation process. I will do this to make sure that they begin researching landmarks and establishments that are truly significant and not just popular or known. To that end, I will give many of the groups the same categories without their knowing that I'm doing so. For instance, all groups will be given a cemetery within the Allegheny County boundaries that they must create a clue for. The clue might relate to someone buried there, some architectural landmark, or to the history of that particular cemetery or piece of land. Similarly, each group will be given a list of Pittsburgh Public School buildings. They will research the buildings and choose one to create a clue about. Other categories I will require a clue to be created from will include parks, bridges, and institutions. The groups will be required to identify ten landmarks to create clues for and approximately half will be from categories I give them. Of the ten clues, four will require the creation of a contact person of some sort. I will tell the groups that we will discuss that in greater detail later in the unit.

At the end of that session, I will hand out the journal books and ask them to write their first entry discussing their thoughts and feelings about the unit before they begin.

We will take a field trip to the Heinz History Center to help the groups generate ideas for the landmarks they will feature. After a tour of the facilities, we will spend several hours in the History Center library to allow the groups to research within the specialized archives.

The next three days will be given over to library research time in their groups. I will spend my time moving from group to group encouraging, guiding, and facilitating wherever I can.

At this point, I will offer a mini lesson on riddles, clues, and how to create them. We will read sample riddles and clues and discuss what makes good clues or riddles effective. We'll discuss the elements of good clue and riddle writing. It should be a fun day with students doing guided practice in writing riddles and clues. It will be a welcome break from the research-intensive four days they've just had.

I will give students one to two days in class after the library research time to continue their group work, utilizing the in class computers and any references they may have acquired. I will gauge the amount of time allotted depending upon

the progress of each group. As all groups near the completion of the research phase, we'll move to discussing how to make contact with people involved with the various landmarks.

I will give a one day lesson on how to write a correspondence with strangers requesting their help. I will provide sample letters and emails and outline a recommended procedure for making initial contact and then with making follow up calls. We'll discuss letter etiquette as well as email and phone etiquette. Each group will be responsible for determining their target contact people and generating their letters. I will provide school letterhead stationary, envelopes, and postage. I will give students a couple of days to create their letters and mail them. This will be the last in class day dedicated solely to the Scavenger Hunt during the creation phase of the project. I will remind them to make follow up efforts three business days after their letters have been mailed and will monitor their progress in securing their required contacts.

At this point I will give the groups approximately a week to finish up securing their contacts and creating their clues. This work will be done outside of the classroom with my checking at the beginning of each class for progress and problems. The clues will be due to me with a copy for each member of the group who will be solving them and a copy for me with solutions and necessary contact names and numbers. I will be flexible in assigning the actual deadline depending upon the difficulties some groups may encounter contacting people. Each student's narrative journal will also be due for submission at the time the clues are turned in. The journals will be checked as a work in progress, but will be expected to reflect a detailed account of the process the group has gone through in creating their clues.

After allowing one to two days to review all the clues for problems or needed revisions, I will take a class period to begin the second and probably the most enjoyable phase of the Scavenger Hunt: the solving of the clues. I will give each group a set of clues to be solved along with the specific instructions as to how to go about doing so. I will remind them that they are to come to me only with a possible answer and that I will confirm whether their answers are correct, but will not give additional clues unless all other avenues have been exhausted. If a group's answer is correct and there is a contact person involved with that particular sight or landmark, I will give them the name and contact information so that they can jump on the process of making connections and setting up a meeting. I will also hand out disposable cameras to each group to use in recording and confirming their travels to the various landmarks.

The next few days will mirror the first phase with dedicated library time for research and each group working closely together in an effort to solve their set of clues. I too, will continue to move from group to group, assisting and facilitating.

At this point I will give a mini lesson on Power Point presentations. We will spend a day in class walking through the Power Point software and its applications. I will also provide a detailed handout to use as a reference.

Once the clues have all been solved and all the contacts have been made (hopefully no more than a week), I hope to take a “field trip” day which will allow each group an opportunity to spend the day traveling to the various landmarks, meeting with contact people where possible, collecting artifacts, taking photographs, and learning something new about their hometown. I will attempt to place a driver in each group when I create them, but if for liability reasons, a chaperone is required, I will attempt to secure parent volunteers. If that is not feasible or legal, then the students will simply have to make these contacts on their own with parent permission.

The next class session will be devoted to informally sharing the experiences of each group as they traveled around the area finding their various landmarks. Hopefully, this will be an enjoyable day filled with interesting and fun stories to hear and share.

The next three days will be in the computer lab working on the Power Point presentations. Students will be waiting for their pictures to be developed and finishing up their journals on their own. These two projects will be done concurrently with the journal due date established after a reasonable period of days allotted for development of the pictures and the copying or sharing of the groups’ artifacts between the members.

The Power Point presentations will begin the day after the narrative journals are turned in and should take no more than a few days. A final reflective essay on the assignment and its process will be written in class to close the unit.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Teacher's Resources

Bell, Thomas. *Out of this Furnace*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976.

Historical fiction about the steel mills and ethnic immigration set in Braddock, Pennsylvania.

Dillard, Anne. *An American Childhood*. Harper & Row, 1998.
A personal account of growing up in Pittsburgh in the 1950s.

Kidney, Walter. *Allegheny Cemetery: A Romantic Landscape in Pittsburgh*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Historic & Landmark Foundation, 1990.
A guide to Pittsburgh's largest cemetery.

Kidney, Walter. *Pittsburgh's Bridges: Architecture and Engineering*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Historic & Landmark Foundation, 1999.
A guide to Pittsburgh's unique bridges.

Kidney, Walter. *Pittsburgh in Your Pocket: A Guide to Pittsburgh Area Architecture*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Historic & Landmark Foundation, 1994

Kidney, Walter. *Pittsburgh's Landmark Architecture: The Historic Buildings of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Historic & Landmark Foundation, 1997.

Student's Resources

Bell, Thomas. *Out of this Furnace*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976.

Historical fiction about the steel mills and ethnic immigration set in Braddock, Pennsylvania.

Dillard, Anne. *An American Childhood*. Harper & Row, 1998.
A personal account of growing up in Pittsburgh in the 1950s.

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Videos

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Sebak, Rick. "Things That Are Still Here." WQED. Pittsburgh. 1999.

Sebak, Rick. "Things That Aren't There Anymore." WQED. Pittsburgh. 1990.
Nostalgic look at former Pittsburgh cultural landmarks

Sebak, Rick. "Things We've Made." WQED. Pittsburgh. 2003.

Appendix-Content Standards

The Pittsburgh Board of Education has adopted Core Curriculum Frameworks to help the district meet the National Education Standards proposed by the Department of Education. These Core Curriculum Frameworks are in the areas of: Communications, Family and Consumer Sciences, Mathematics, Arts and Humanities, Citizenship, Wellness and Fitness, Science and Technology, Environment and Ecology, and Career Education and Work. Within these core areas are 62 content standards of academic knowledge and skill that students will have to demonstrate to earn a high school diploma in Pennsylvania.

For our purposes, this unit will focus on the Communications Standards listed below. All of the lessons in this unit cover more than one standard.

Communications Standard #1: All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.

Communications Standard #2: All students use effective research and information management skills.

Communications Standard #3: 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.

Communications Standard #4: All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.

Communications Standard #6: All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.

Communications Standard #8: All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform, or describe.

Communications Standard #9: All students communicate appropriately in business, work, and other applied situations.

Citizenship Standard # 1: All students demonstrate their skills in communicating, negotiating, and cooperating with others.

Citizenship Standard #2: All students demonstrate that they can work effectively with others.