

Pittsburgh -- A Place Of Many Faces

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Introduction

The Costume Department of Rogers Performing Arts School works very closely with other departments in designing and presenting workable curricula for our students. This particular piece can use the teaching skills of Language Arts, Creative Writing, Drama, Stagecraft, and Costume to teach Pittsburgh history.

The interdisciplinary piece of this project will necessitate researching history to complete the final production. Producing a skit or monologue will require the students to exercise their creativity in more than one direction.

The interest I have in Pittsburgh History is both personal and professional. Personally it affords me an opportunity and time to explore more fully the migration of people of color from the South to the northern regions of this country. Professionally I can study the specific clothing patterns of the people who resided here.

All stories begin with the dawn of recorded history, on the banks of rivers, the tops of mountains, in valleys, on the plains of Africa, in European countries, and in what had been uncharted new worlds.

The history of Pittsburgh is more far reaching than I had previously imagined. It has presented me with a kaleidoscope of ever changing and growing images. Few cities play out American history as well as Pittsburgh does. If you look at the original Indian inhabitants, focus on the battle at the Point between the British and French, study the push to settle the west, examine its place in the slave trade, consider the quest for unskilled immigration labor, review the evolution of industrialization, and more, you have a microcosm of how our country developed.

The area that became known as the 'Hill District' was chosen as the focus of this project on Pittsburgh history because it was the first stopping place for most of the ethnic groups that came to the city. This spot remained for many, many years a place of cultural diversity.

When one studies Pittsburgh history, one must study the story of those persons who made millions from the sweat of former slaves and immigrant masses. Their stories are much too closely aligned to be ignored. But the interest in these magnates is confined to the affect they had on the lives of the persons who worked for them.

The one unchangeable fact that I insist my students learn in costume is that "We must know how people lived in order to understand the clothing choices available to them" They need to understand that many factors dictate what will be worn and by whom.

Wars, strikes, availability of goods, along with, transportation costs and personal resources all had an effect on the quality of life the common people had. What you can't purchase can't be used. The religious climate of a community also gives a certain look to the community. Industrial progress cash flow, education, career choices, and family size all play an important role in how we dressed at any given time.

Targeted Group

The students for whom this is written are the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students of Rogers Performing Arts School. Nevertheless I feel it can easily be altered to fit into the curriculum of any school and any grade level. Students at either end of the intellectual spectrum can be accommodated, as the work is adaptable. This also fits the varieties of learning styles we must cater to as teachers.

Teachers of History, Social Studies, Drama, and Creative Writing might find this a useful tool in teaching their subjects from a different perspective. The project will be finalized during the second semester as part of their portfolio presentations. This will give each department involved the time necessary to teach prerequisites needed to complete the final piece.

Objectives

The objectives listed here are End-Level Tasks. They will be referred to as TSWBAT [the student will be able to].

- Have a clear understanding of the group(s) being studied
- Own an appreciation of the struggles these people endured
- Use effective communication skills
- Work in small groups cooperatively
- Learn to use research tools to their educational benefit
- Use information gleaned from their research to write, produce and present a skit, puppet show or monologue to a small audience
- Provide costumes for characters appropriate to the setting of the production

Pittsburgh District Standards

These standards are divided into nine areas. Listed here are those that will be dealt with in these lessons.

- Communication

1. All students use effective research and information management skills.
4. All students write for a variety of reasons, including narrating, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding, and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communication.

- Home Economics
 1. All students demonstrate their knowledge of principles of consumer behavior as a foundation for managing resources available to provide for personal and family needs.

- Arts and Humanities

4. All students produce, perform, or exhibit their work in the visual or performing arts, and describe the meaning their work has for them.

- Citizenship

1. All students demonstrate an understanding of major events, Cultures, groups, and individuals in the development of Pennsylvania.

4. All students examine and evaluate problems facing citizens of Their communities, by incorporating methods of inquiry of the various social sciences.

9. All students will understand the history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing communities, the United States, and other nations.

- Science and Technology

4. All students explain the relationships among science, technology and, society.

9. All students demonstrate basic computer literacy, including word processing, software applications, and the ability to access the global infrastructure, using current technology.

- Career, Education, and Work

1. All students explore the multiple purposes of work and a range of career options, including entrepreneurship, and relate them to their interests, aptitudes, skills, and values.

Discussion

Prior to the Europeans settling in this region a variety of Indian tribes lived in the area we know as Pittsburgh. The Iroquois, Delaware, and Shawnee all lived at the junction of the three rivers. The abundance of natural resources and close transportation made it an ideal site for settling there.

Several foreign groups forced them out, and made attempts to build forts and settle on this same spot. In 1754, historians say a Virginia based company, tried to establish Fort Prince George. The French moved them out and built Fort Duquesne. The British replaced them, when they captured the fort and renamed it Fort Pitt in honor of their Elder Statesman. These people were aware that whoever controlled this fork of the river had control of the interior of this new continent.

Growth was rapid in the area because this trio of rivers was the gateway to the West.

Because the natural resources in this area were abundant, Pittsburgh became an important source of goods. Because of these goods businesses grew to transport the goods to those who wanted them. We have read about the railroads, trains, and boats that caused a few to become millionaires and many more to work under their yoke of bondage. We want to study the financial giants of that day but we must also learn of the suffering many of them caused.

Because of the ethnic diversity of this place we need to become very familiar with how and why people flocked to this area for work. Slaves were encouraged through the Underground Railroad to flee the south. Many found a way to stay here. Immigrants fled oppression, and starvation in their homelands. Lots of immigrants were enticed here by the promise of prosperity. This was true also of southern African Americans in the early 1900s. As adults we have studied much of this at some time or other. I am hoping the avenue being offered through a curriculum unit will encourage our students to look to their past with interest. It might also assist them in facing their future with confidence

LESSON PLANS

Grade 8

Objectives: Have a clear understanding of the lifestyles of the people studied. Appreciate the struggles the people endured. Communicate effectively. Work in small groups cooperatively. Research knowledgeably. Write and produce a skit, or monologue to present to a selected audience. Provide authentic looking costumes for skit characters.

Time Frame: 6 to 8 weeks 5 periods per week

Procedure: Week one: The teacher and class will discuss the project they will be expected to complete. Discussions will clarify all questions students have on teacher expectations, length of production, who does which job, evaluation process etc. Class will be separated into groups of four (4) minimum. Note: As Rogers is a performing Arts School my classes consist of students majoring in Drama, Dance, Creative Writing, Costume, and Stagecraft. This brings a special flavor to creating this type of project. But this will challenge others to use the creativity, which lies in all of us.

Week two: Students will be shown a series of videos to give them insight into the lives of people in Pittsburgh. They will write a short analysis of the effectiveness of the video seen. Did it tell the story in a focused, interesting way? Who were the people? What was worn? How did they live? Curious tidbits of trivia they learned.

Week three: Students will separate into their groups. They will come to a consensus about the final project they will present. This will entail the selection of an ethnic group, an historical situation, particular part of the city to research for the production. Work will then proceed in the library to gather information.

Week four: Each group will write and polish their piece. All will have a word in this.

Week five: The groups will select a method of presentation for their piece and begin to practice.

Single person monologue

Mime, with others reading the character parts

Characters reading their own parts or memorization of parts

Large hand puppets dressed in the clothing of the day

Week six: The group will decide on the costume for each character portrayed in their production. They will generate a needs list for the teacher, who will purchase within the budget. REMINDER—the costumer also dresses the face so a make-up design is necessary.

Week seven and eight: Rehearsals and construction of costumes continue till dress rehearsal and show time.

Evaluation: All persons involved will do both a personal and peer evaluation of the productions showcased. See appendix for forms.

Grade 7

Objectives: Effective, useful research. Have a clear understanding of the lifestyles of the people who inhabited the city which became known as Pittsburgh. Create a FASHION/HISTORY TIMELINE to pair memorable historical events with clothing worn by the people of that time.

Time Frame: Four to six weeks

Procedure: Week one: The teacher and student will discuss Pittsburgh from an historical perspective. We will touch upon the immigrants, the slavery situation in our city, the labor movement, the power giants like Carnegie, and Frick, railroads, steel mills, etc.

Week two: We will continue with a brief study and discussion of Pgh. history enhanced by videos and short essays selected by the teacher. Students will be prepared.

Week three: The students will spend time in the library doing research on topics discussed, to broaden their understanding of the city they live in. They will record this research in outline for using a teacher prepared format. (See appendix)

Week four: Students will find out about the clothing worn by the subjects studied. They will look into the reasons why certain clothing was worn. They will know the clothing resources that were available. They will know who, what, why, when, and where of clothing in Pittsburgh up until 1945.

Week(s) five and six: All students will create and present to their peers of a timeline of fashion and history. These will be hung in a public place for the school population to enjoy. The timeline will be made as follows:

The student will use large poster board.

Two lines will bisect the board at the upper and lower $\frac{1}{4}$ mark.

Placed above the line will be pictures/sketches of clothing.

Placed below the line will be typed information on a historical event, invention, scientific discovery etc. which took place at a given time. The time will be chronological from 1845- 1945. If pictures of inventions etc. are available they may be placed with the typed information below the line.

Evaluation: We will each do an evaluation of the production, assessing it's educational qualities. Does it meet the benchmark set for this project. Was it entertaining? What would we do differently if given a chance?

Grade 6

Objectives: Cooperative group work. Effective research methods. Understanding of ethnic group and time studied. Present information researched in an entertaining format to an audience of your peers.

Time Frame: 4 to 6 weeks 5 periods per week

Procedure: Week one: The class and teacher will discuss the project, and the expected final project, A PUPPET SHOW. This show will share information learned about the early settlers in the city known as Pittsburgh.

We will concentrate on the Indians, the French, and the British, the slave trade, the Underground Railroad and other early settlers.

Week two: Students will be grouped. The library will be used to gather information about your selected subject. Information should be written in teacher approved format.

Week three: Groups will write a short skit about a situation that occurred in the lives of their targeted group. i.e the war, displaced Indians, runaway slaves, arriving immigrants.

Week four: Every one will learn the lines of their skit. Finger Puppets or shadow puppets for their presentation will be Constructed. The presentation will be no longer than five minutes per group.

Week(s) five and six: If the group wants to present a more detailed piece, or create more polished puppets these last two weeks will allow time for that to be done.

Evaluation: Was this informative? Was this fun? Did everyone learn something new about our city? Would we do it again? Would we do it differently? As a group we would evaluate this project. We would give a group grade. Individually we would rate our participation and give a grade. It goes without saying the teacher has his/her own grading procedure to compliment that of the students.

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Sarah and John

APPENDIX

PEER EVALUATION

Student Name _____ Date _____

Project description:

How would you rate the overall presentation on a scale of 1 – 4

- Interesting
- Informative
- Creative
- Concise
- Fun

Would you have done anything differently? Explain in detail.

Other Comments./Grade

SELF EVALUATION

Name _____ Date _____

Project Description

Explain how you feel about your project. What were its positive points? What if any were its defects? Would you change anything if given the chance? Are you generally or positively satisfied with the total effect on your audience? What grade would you give on your part of this project?

PROJECT INFORMATION OUTLINE

Group Name/Number _____ Date _____

Project description

1. Ethnic group chosen, City Section chosen, historical happening.

2. Class system observed?

3. What was the level of education obtained?

4. What kind(s) of housing did you find?

5. Describe the political atmosphere.

6. What were the predominant religious beliefs?

7. Where and how did they travel?

8. List any major industrial, scientific, medical, and/or technical discoveries.

9. What were the leisure activities of the people studied.

10. Clothing Worn. Look at fabrics available . What types of dyes were used?

11. What dictated the fabrics one was able to get?

12. What had a positive (?) or negative(?) effect on the styles of clothing worn.