

The Media and World War II-Read All About It
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Overview

This curriculum unit *The Media and World War II- Read All About It* is designed for middle school students. The specific target audience is sixth grade English Language Arts students. I intend to teach my curriculum unit by using events that occurred during World War II. Since the major medium of that time was the newspaper, I will incorporate the events of World War II into the classroom production of a newspaper. The emphasis of this unit will give students the opportunity to learn about the history of their country while incorporating this knowledge into a newspaper publication.

Rationale

The rationale behind the development of this unit is two-fold. First, this unit will enable me, as a teacher, to have students meet many of the requirements needed for completion of their standards based portfolios. The unit also meets many of the Communication Standards used in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Developing this unit will also help both the students and myself gain new knowledge and insight into one of the most historic time periods in our country's history.

The seminar that I participated in, which led to the development of the unit, was entitled *Media Revolutions*. Its focus was on major 20th century news events. Certainly one of the truly major events of the century was World War II. Personally, the majority of my knowledge in this area comes from secondary sources. This is not to say that first hand sources were not available to me, which is one reason I chose this particular topic.

My earliest knowledge of World War II came at a very young age. My father, Richard Connelly, served in the war from 1943-1946. Getting any information from him back in my younger days was difficult, if not impossible. Apparently, his tour of duty, as I soon discovered, was not something he wanted to share with anyone. The little information I was able to gain however was very interesting and to this day has kept my interest in World War II quite high.

Apparently, my father graduated from high school and immediately enlisted. This, I understand, was not an unusual occurrence. If Uncle Sam called, many young men answered. My dad, however, decided that he would enlist before his eighteenth birthday. Patriotism was high in those days and young men felt as though it was their duty to join. Dad decided to enlist in the Navy and began his tour of duty. From the few details he was willing to give me all those years ago, he sailed to many ports of call including both Pearl Harbor and Japan. Although not present on that fateful day, December 7, 1941, Dad was around for the aftermath. The destruction left after the bombings is something he never spoke of. I suppose that the air of secrecy surrounding this period of his life is one of the reasons I've always been curious about the war. Even my mother, Patricia Connelly, was never given much information about this period in her husband's life. According to Mom, the only information she got were little snippets overheard when the neighborhood men would sit on the back porch and occasionally reminisce about their war days. That curiosity is one of the main reasons I chose World War II as the focus of my curriculum unit.

Another reason I chose World War II as the news event to focus my unit on is because it lends itself to the English Language Arts curriculum I am presently teaching. As part of the portfolio requirements in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, students must read twenty-five books over the course of the school year. My sixth grade students read several required books that deal with events that have World War II as a backdrop and there are also stories in the students' Language Arts book that deal with the subject. Thus, choosing World War II as a curriculum unit directly correlates with what my students are already learning. What better way to delve deeper into the books and stories we are reading in class than to create a unit that helps to clarify and illuminate the subject of World War II?

Objectives

As part of our Standards Based Portfolios, students are required to write for a variety of purposes. Among these are writing to inform, narrate, and persuade. Students are also required to complete a section in their portfolio that deals with a speaking, listening, and viewing component. Sharing their research and writings with the entire class through oral presentations would be an excellent way to fulfill this portfolio requirement. In order to meet the requirements and standards established by the Pittsburgh Public Schools, children are also given rubrics that enable them to better meet the expected criteria. Within the framework of this curriculum unit, students will meet and hopefully exceed the expected criteria. My objectives for students as they progress through the unit will be:

1. The student will be able to do independent research using the computer and the library.

2. The student will conduct an interview with a World War II veteran.
3. The student will write either a report of information, a narrative piece, or a persuasive piece.
4. The student will formulate a list of questions for their oral interview.
5. The student will listen to radio broadcasts of World War II and discuss the effects of media.
6. The student will read newspaper articles from World War II to gain background and a feel for newspaper writing.
7. The student will develop a newspaper.
8. The student will publish a newspaper.
9. The student will give an oral presentation of their published piece.

Strategies

Throughout the development of this unit, I will employ a number of strategies in order to achieve the objectives I outlined and to assist students in reaching the standards.

In order to give students an understanding of the material they will be expected to research, I will first give them an overview of World War II. This will be done in several different ways in order to keep the student's interest level high. First, I will have them listen to radio broadcasts of World War II. Broadcasts from radio reporter Edward R. Murrow will help students to understand what was transpiring in Europe while at the same time helping them get a feel for the role the media played in the war.

Another effective way to give students an overview of the war is by having them read newspapers written during that time period. This will serve two purposes. First, students will gain knowledge of the important events of the period. They will also be able to see the types of articles that were written during that time, which will be helpful for when they develop their own newspaper. This will be done by giving students Xeroxed copies of newspapers published during that time.

Finally, I will give students an overview of the events and chronology of World War II from my own knowledge and research. By using all of these strategies, I feel students will then be ready to move on to the next phase of the unit.

After students have a history of World War II, the next step in the process of developing my unit is to have students begin some preliminary research. I will supply students with a list of possible research topics. This list may include one of the topics listed below or can be chosen by the student.

The list might include:

Pearl Harbor

U.S.S. Missouri

Adolph Hitler

Emperor Hirohito

Hiroshima

Nagasaki

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Axis Sally

Harry S. Truman

Blitzkrieg

Rosie the Riveter

Normandy

Food Rationing

Neville Chamberlain (British Prime Minister)

Rubber Shortage

Erwin Rommel ("The Desert Fox")

Munich Agreement (signed by Chamberlain)

D-Day

Luftwaffe

Concentration Camps

Edward R. Murrow

Internment Camps (U.S.)

Dunkirk Evacuation

VJ-Day (9-2-45)

Gestapo

Anne Frank

Midway Islands

Enola Gay

Kamikaze Pilots

Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands)

Allied Powers

Axis Powers

Winston Churchill

Douglas MacArthur

J. Robert Oppenheimer

Manhattan Project

Holocaust

Mussolini

Josef Stalin

PT boats

Battle of the Bulge

Iwo Jima

Bataan Death March

U- Boats

Der Fuehrer

Lt. Gen. Bernard Montgomery

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Third Reich

G.I.

Barrage Balloons

Air Raid shelters

General Charles de Gaulle

Eva Braun

K-rations

Reichstag

Auschwitz

Panzer

Students will then use the school library and computer lab to research topics that interest them. Using the Internet and Encarta, each student will conduct research and choose a topic that is of particular interest to them. This topic will serve as the basis for each student's individual newspaper article.

As students continue to research their topic, it is important for them to use primary sources of information if possible. This will be accomplished by having students interview a World War II veteran or a civilian who lived through the period. The first step will be to have students generate a list of possible questions. As a class, we will generate questions and compile a list (see appendix). Students will not be limited to this list. It is only meant to serve as a guide. Next, the students will interview their subjects. The interview will serve a few very important purposes. First, it will help students to get a better feel for the events of World War II. A second purpose of the interview is that it will help students corroborate the facts they have researched. Finally, a personal interview will help to bring the event to life. It does not seem as remote when you are actually speaking with someone who has lived through the time period.

The next strategy I will employ in order to help students meet the objectives outlined in my unit is having students develop a newspaper. The development of the newspaper will be done in a number of stages.

By having students view newspapers from World War II, I have already begun the process. Students are already somewhat familiar with the layout and design of a paper. In order to fully understand the workings of a newspaper, I will have the children take a tour of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette.

As a way to help children understand the five W's of writing I will invite a newspaper writer in to speak with the class. This will help to clarify the job of a reporter and I'm sure spark the interest of the students.

Finally, using the Publisher application found on the school computers, students will develop a classroom newspaper with the articles they wrote. We will then publish the paper and distribute it school wide. Students will have the opportunity to read their individual articles to fellow classmates.

As students work through the objectives outlined in the unit, they will be meeting the district standards outlined by the state and the Pittsburgh Board of Education.

Classroom Activities

What follows is a detailed description of the activities I intend to use in order to bring this unit to fruition.

Activity 1- Introduction

Before actually beginning this or any other unit, it is important to check students' prior knowledge. I will do this by having students brainstorm and then make a class list of what words or events come to mind when they think about World War II. After discussing the various events students were able to recall, I will give them an overview of World War II.

Activity 2- Audiotapes/Newspapers/Chronology

In order to capture student interest in the unit, I will have students listen to audiotapes and read newspapers from World War II. I will also give an oral synopsis of the war.

The activities in this lesson are designed to help student get a better feel for the events that took place during the war. Students will listen to audiotapes of Edward R. Murrow as he reports from Europe during the fighting. This will make students more aware of the style that was used to report news during this particular time in history. It is easy to forget that our students have grown up with the television and the Internet as their primary means of gaining information. They only listen to the radio in the car when they want to hear music. Exposing them to radio broadcasts as a way to gain vital news will help them as they gather information throughout the unit.

We will also look at actual newspapers that were published during the war to get a feel for events and media perceptions. Many students never read the newspaper and have not been exposed to it

in any formal manner. Again, they are used to getting their information from MTV, the Internet, and by Instant Messenger. Being exposed to the newspaper will certainly be beneficial when the students begin to create their own paper.

As the teacher, I will also give students information and a summary of the major events of the war. The format for this might take one of several forms. For example, I might conduct a question and answer session with the students so they can ask the questions that are most important to them. Another option might be to use one of the stories in the English Language Arts book as a way to generate a discussion of World War II. There are countless stories that can be shared. Focusing on a particular battle that took place or on a famous person are also options. The method I use to disseminate the information will depend on the student's prior knowledge of the topic and what seems to hold the most interest for them.

As a culminating activity and as a way to have students begin to narrow the choice of their own topic down, students will complete one of the activities suggested below.

- 1) Make a time line of the chronology of World War II.
- 2) Choose a newsworthy event and report it to the class as a radio broadcast.
- 3) Write a newspaper headline and article for the paper from an event that took place during World War II.

Activity 3- Research/Interviews/Audiotapes

Research

Once students have narrowed down their topic, they will begin the research phase of the unit. Using the library and the computer lab, students will research World War II. A list of suggested topics will be available for students if they choose to use them (see the list previously mentioned above). Students are in no way limited to these topics. They only serve as a guide.

Research on the students' chosen topic will be done using the library, Encarta, and the Internet. Students will take notes on their topic and these notes will be used to develop the newspaper article that each student will write. Each student will use a minimum of three sources when gathering research for their article.

Interviews

The interview phase of this activity serves several purposes. First, it is used as an extension of the research phase of the unit. What better way to obtain information for a newspaper article on World War II than to interview someone who lived through the experience?

As a class, students will complete a list of possible interview questions. These questions might include some of the ones listed below.

1. What branch of the service did you serve in during World War II?
2. Did you enlist or were you drafted?
3. How old were you when you began your tour of duty?
4. How long did you serve?
5. Did you see action? Where? Can you provide details?
6. What rank were you when you began?
7. What was the highest rank you achieved? How did this occur?
8. How did your service affect the family you left back home?
9. Did you lose anyone close to you as a result of the war?
10. Was there a feeling of patriotism in the United States? How did it affect you and your feelings about the war?

A more complete list of questions can be found in the appendix. Students are in no way limited to the questions found in the appendix. Each student will tailor his or her own list of questions to coordinate with the person he or she interviews. For example, if a World War II veteran were interviewed, the list of questions would be somewhat different than the questions asked to a person who had been back home during the war.

Another purpose of the interview is to give students experience with the speaking and listening components of the standards based curriculum. Students will certainly be required to listen carefully to the answers to their questions and to speak clearly when asking those questions.

Having the experience of meeting and speaking with a veteran of a major war and getting a first-hand account of the experience will be invaluable to the students. It will definitely be an experience they will not soon forget.

Audiotapes

I have found from my past experiences in teaching that the use of audiotapes can be very powerful. Students seem to pay closer attention when audiotapes are presented. It also helps to open up discussion and leads to deeper, higher level thinking skills.

If possible, I will have students record their interviews. Having students tape the interview will bring more meaning to the piece, especially when presenting the interview to fellow classmates. It is also a way to capture the thoughts and ideas of a generation that is quickly disappearing. Having this firsthand source is invaluable when trying to preserve the memories of a past generation.

The culminating activity to this phase of the unit will be having students present their interviews in class. This will lead to discussion of the war and help all students gain more knowledge and understanding.

Activity 4- Field Trip to the Newspaper

After completing the research, interview, and audiotapes phase of the unit, students will begin the next stage, which is the development of their own newspaper. In order to help students get the best possible understanding of the inner workings of the making of a paper, a field trip will be taken.

Students will take a teacher-directed field trip to the Pittsburgh Post Gazette. Here students will have the opportunity to get a first hand look at how a newspaper is made. This approach will cover all phases of newspaper production and lead the students to a deeper understanding of their own role in the production of a classroom newspaper.

The culminating activity to this phase of the unit will be individual student journal entries outlining what the student felt was the most beneficial part of the trip. These journal entries might be shared as a way to expand students' insights and thought processes.

Activity 5- Guest Speaker

As a teacher I've found that the most difficult job in writing is getting and keeping the student's interest. Maintaining a high level of interest is not an easy task. In order to keep the momentum flowing the next step in developing the curriculum unit is to invite a speaker to class.

Having a newspaper reporter come and speak to the class seems like a logical way to keep students excited and motivated. The purpose of the guest speaker is

two-fold. First, he/she would bring the job of reporter into a new light. Discussing interesting stories they'd written or assignments they had been on would help to motivate students. (If we could find a reporter who had worked during World War II, it would really make the experience come alive for the students).

The second purpose of a guest reporter would be to review with the students the nuts and bolts of writing a story. By this I mean explaining the five 'W's' of writing and discussing what makes a good story. I'm sure the students would find a speaker fascinating and helpful.

Activity 6- The Writing Process

Now that students have gathered all of the necessary research information and have been exposed to the components of the newspaper, they will proceed to the next stage of the unit.

The writing process is the next activity that students will engage in.

First, I will conduct a review of the writing process as a whole group activity. This will be accomplished by using the Elements of Writing book by Kinneavy. Using the same book, we will also review the different types of writing students may use when composing their news article. These include informative, narrative, and persuasive writing.

I will also introduce handouts to students at this time, which will assist them in creating and producing a well-written news article (see Appendix).

Several lessons will be necessary in order for students to complete the different stages of writing. Using all of the research and first hand sources they have accumulated, students will begin drafting their articles.

In order to ensure the articles meet the criteria, I will distribute rubrics representing each type of writing previously mentioned. Students will be able to study the rubrics and use them to guide the writing. We will also use peer editing as a phase of the revision process.

Students will then proceed to the computer lab to begin publishing their individual pieces.

Activity 7- Newspaper Publishing

After students have completed the writing of their newspaper articles, they will produce the paper. This will be accomplished using the Publisher application found on the lab computers. Students are familiar with this application and can use it to produce the replica of a World War II newspaper.

Once the paper has been produced, it will be duplicated and distributed to the other literature classes.

Activity 8- Oral Presentations

This is the final stage of the curriculum unit and is very important as a culminating activity. Students will accomplish several goals in this final phase. First, each student will have produced one article that they can now use to satisfy the speaking component of the Standards Based Portfolio. Students will read their individual articles to their classmates at this time. Students will also have created a written piece that falls under one of the required categories for their

portfolios. This narrative, persuasive, or informative article can also be used as a portfolio entry. A final goal that students will accomplish is the good feeling that comes from hard work and a job well done. There is no better way to get that feeling than to see your work in print and to share with fellow classmates.

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COMMUNICATIONS STANDARDS

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. 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.
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.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.

7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and Identify the purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform, or describe.
9. All students communicate appropriately in business, work, and other applied situations.

Unit of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Appendix A

List of Interview Questions

* These questions would be used for a serviceman.

1. In what branch of the service did you serve in during World War II?
2. Did you enlist or were you drafted?
3. How old were you when you began your tour of duty?
4. How long did you serve?
5. Did you see action? Where? Can you provide details?
6. What rank were you when you began?
7. What was the highest rank you achieved? How did this occur?
8. How did your service affect the family you left back home?
9. Did you lose anyone close to you as a result of the war?
10. Was there a feeling of patriotism in the United States? How did it affect you and your feelings about the war?
11. How informed were you kept as to what was going on in the war?
12. Were you proud to serve your country?
13. Is there anything you would like people to know about you?
14. Did your service in the armed forces shape your adulthood in any way?
15. Considering the great loss of life on all fronts, do you think the war was worth it?

* These questions would be used for a person who was on the home front.

1. What was your day-to-day life like before the war?
2. How did your life change after World War II began?
3. Did your standard of living improve or get worse as a result of the war?
4. Were any members of your family drafted into the war?
5. Was anyone close to you killed fighting in the war?
6. Do you think civilians were kept informed about the activities overseas?
7. How did you receive information from men overseas?
8. Was there a strong sense of patriotism at home? How was it displayed?
9. Explain how life changed again after the war?