

HISTORY ON FILM: CREATING HERITAGE MOMENTS

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INTENDED GRADE/SUBJECT MATTER

Grade 5 Social Studies, Language Arts
(Adaptable for any grade level)

INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES

Students will:

- learn about eleven significant eras in Canadian history, researching one era in depth and creating a videotaped “Heritage Moment” from this era;
- locate information and make notes using a variety of sources about their chosen era and have them create a dramatic scene and narration based on their research;
- be videotaped performing their own and other classmates’ dramatic scenes in appropriate settings and costumes, and will combine these with recorded narration and complementary pictures that they have selected;
- acquire a greater interest in Canadian history by actively portraying significant moments from our past.

RECOMMENDED TIME FRAME

The entire project takes approximately two months, based on three to four one hour class periods per week. Videotaping and editing require additional time.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Our video project uses the CRB Heritage Minutes as a model and it encourages the students to make history come alive in a meaningful and dramatic fashion. During our three video project experiences we have found that it allows the students to become personally involved in an episode from Canadian history and that it is a very exciting and effective way for children to learn about their country’s heritage.

Students acquire many skills during the research, rehearsal and videotaping phases of the project. They have the opportunity to work independently and to make their own choices but also to work cooperatively in small groups of three. To introduce the project, both teachers present a three week overview, including a variety of portfolio activities and unfolding timeline, of the eleven eras of Canadian history that are indicated by our Saskatchewan Social Studies curriculum:

1. First Nations
2. Vikings and other explorers
3. Fur Trade
4. European Settlement (eastern Canada)
5. Underground Railroad
6. North West Mounted Police and Treaties

7. Settlement of the West, CPR
8. World Wars I and II
9. Great Depression
10. Klondike Gold Rush
11. Women's Roles

ACTIVITIES

Following the overview, each student selects an era of particular interest and is grouped according to the era chosen (groups of three to four).

Activity #1 – Each group is given a box of resources to provide further background on the era chosen. A leader is designated for each group to keep the resources intact and to help each group member progress as required. Students begin to read about their era.

Activity #2 – After students have read some background information, they generate a list of sub-topics that interest them.

Activity #3 – Students meet within their groups to compare their lists of sub-topics and each student selects a sub-topic to research in depth and to create a scene around. Students read about their particular sub-topic and refer group members to information found relating to their sub-topics.

Activity #4 – Students record significant information in “jot note” form. (Students have learned this particular skill during previous resource-based units). Students must accumulate approximately 30 items of information about their sub-topic.

Activity #5 – As students near the end of their research, we teach them how to develop and write a script for a video. Students study sample scripts from previous student videos and compare these to the actual video vignettes. They practice writing video scripts for familiar folktales (e.g., *Three Little Pigs*). Students learn and use proper video terminology.

Activity #6 – Using the criteria of appropriateness, feasibility and significance, students identify a particular fact or event from their job notes that will make an interesting and dramatic scene. They discuss their choices with their group members and teachers. Each student writes a script that includes important information, dramatic action, interesting and explanatory dialogue, involves all three group members and lasts no longer than a minute.

Activity #7 – Students write narration to introduce or conclude their scenes and gather pictures, maps, etc. to illustrate their narrations, designating when each is to be used. Students locate sound effects (tapes, CDs) and music to enhance their dramatic scenes and/or narrations.

Activity #8 – Students memorize dialogue for each scene and rehearse with group members. With the teachers, they gather props and costumes and locate appropriate settings for their scenes.

Activity #9 – Teachers need to make arrangements with parents and various sites to take the students for videotaping. Students go on location in their groups, in costume, to dramatize their scenes and be videotaped. (We use a basic camcorder and an external microphone attached to a lengthy cable and transformer. Other possibilities may be to have a local cable channel or video or film students from a high school or college do the actual filming). Other tips include:

- use a tripod for stability;
- charge your battery beforehand, and take an extra one if possible;
- place the microphone as close as possible to the students mouths, camouflaging it in clothing, props, etcetera – poor sound is the worst problem that we have encountered;
- use a small chalkboard to designate scene titles and take numbers (e.g., Vikings – Take 6)
- don't rewind after mistakes, just continue on;
- allow lots of lead in and lead out time to aid editing;
- cue students with a hand signal;
- TAKE A VIDEOTAPE!!!

Activity #10 – Students practice reading their narrations fluently and expressively and then record their narrations on audiotape. (A sound booth provides better sound quality if this is available).

Activity #11 – Students view their takes and select their best ones. We then edit the videos combining dramatic episodes and narrations and adding sound effects and music as well as titles using Avid MCX press software. (If editing is not possible, plan your film in proper sequence and rehearse to perfection prior to videotaping).

Activity #12 – We conclude our unit with a “World Premiere” where the student video is shown on a large screen for the students’ families and other guests and we celebrate with a large cake and autographs. Student’s work is displayed and they are able to order copies of the video for a nominal cost. The students are very excited about the final product, and their parents are always extremely proud of their children’s efforts and accomplishments.

EVALUATION

Students are evaluated on every phase of the unit including:

1. student portfolio activities
2. research and jot notes
3. scripts
4. written narrations and accompanying illustrations
5. rehearsal and preparation
6. performance during videotaping and narrations

7. other (meeting deadlines, contributions, attitude, initiative, helping others, demonstrated curiosity or analysis of information acquired)

MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- For the overview, we use kits, videos and historical materials from the school library including: *We Are Canadians*, *Early Canada*, *Heritage Minutes* videotape, the *Canadiana Scrapbook* series, *Discovery of Canada* and *Opening of the Canadian West*; students need portfolios for activities.
- For student research, resources also come from the school library and include works such as the *Junior Encyclopedia of Canada*, *Canadiana Scrapbooks*, *Early Canada*, the *All Canadians* series, *Great Canadian Lives*, *100 Great Canadians*, as well as books, magazines, videos, and kits relating to the individual topics chosen by the students. Students may locate additional materials at local libraries, museums, etc.
- Camcorder, tripod, external microphone, cable and transformer, videotapes, small chalkboard, brush and chalk, duct tape (unlimited uses!)
- Costumes and props appropriate for scenes (try Value Village, museums, historic societies, and the students' families)

MOMENTS FROM CANADIAN HISTORY

This year's student video included the following vignettes:

Canada's Early Years: Vikings in Canada, Henry Hudson Cast Adrift, Residential Schools

Underground Railway: Harriet Tubman Helps Slaves Escape to Canada, Safe Houses on the Way to Canada, Life in Canada after Slavery

North West Mounted Police: Recruitment, Troubles on the Great Trek West

Canada and The Wars: Trench Warfare During WWI, D-Day, Flying Spitfires

Klondike Goldrush: Preparing to Go to the Klondike, Spending the Money!

The Great Depression: Losing the Farm, Opening of Wascana Lake, The Regina Riot

Women's Roles: Marie de la Tour Loses the Fort, Votes for Women, Women in Factories During the War

About the Educators

Laurie Collins and Suzanne Louttit embody the ideal of teamwork and creativity. They have developed Moments from Canadian History Part I & II, their students' own version of the CRB Foundation's Heritage Minutes. Students research and create vignettes of noteworthy figures in Canadian history. The third part of the project has recently been completed and focuses on eras in Canadian history rather than on heroes. Laurie and Suzanne have presented their student video project at the Giving the Past a Future Conference in Montreal in 1999, and at three Canadian Heritage Summer Institutes. The vignettes have been posted

on the CRB Heritage Project website to help other teachers create Heritage minutes with their students.