

Historica Canada Education Portal

Creating Autonomous Historians

Overview

Based on the concept of Literature Circles, the lesson will introduce students to History Circles, where small groups investigate a historical topic by each completing an individual task, sharing their work with their group, and planning as a group how to present their topic to the class or wider audience.

Aims

To introduce students to different aspects of the study of history, and allow them to approach a topic from a wide variety of learning styles.

In the introductory lesson, students will:

- demonstrate an understanding of some of the different jobs in the field of history;
- contribute collaboratively in group situations by asking questions and building on the ideas of others;
- formulate questions to facilitate gathering and clarifying information.

In the History Circle process, students will:

- communicate the results of inquiries for specific purposes and

audiences, using media works, oral presentations, written notes and reports, drawings, maps, models, tables, charts, and graphs;

- use constructive strategies to work with members of their group to establish clear purposes and procedures for solving problems and completing projects;
- analyse, synthesize, and evaluate historical information.

Background

A guide to the entire process of using History Circles in the classroom is [attached](#).

Activities

Time Allowance: 45-60 min

Mental Set (15 min)

Each group will be given a brainstorming sheet that has the title of one history-based job (curator, historian, documentary film-maker, interpreter, lexicographer, or archivist) printed in the centre. Groups will be given up to 5 minutes to brainstorm words, phrases and ideas that the job title brings to mind. Groups will then be asked to compose a short definition of the job and write it on the top third of a piece of chart paper.

The class will then come back into the whole group, and they will share

their definitions. The teacher will help guide, clarify and correct each definition, revising the written definitions on the chart paper as needed.

Body of Lesson (15-25 min)

The teacher will tell the students that they will have the opportunity to learn about these roles. Each group will be researching a topic (person, event, or place) relevant to the history being studied in class. Before choosing the topic, though, students will be introduced to the various roles in more detail.

Each task will be examined in turn. For each, ask for suggestions about what a student could do that would be similar to what a person who really does that job would do. These suggestions may be recorded on the lower portion of the chart paper for each job. The teacher will use the task sheet to guide the students to an understanding of the basic expectations for each task.

When all the tasks have been explained, the teacher will distribute the Job Application Sheets ([attached as the Worksheet below](#)). Each student will be asked to write down three of the jobs that they are interested in, along with a sentence or two explaining what they think the job entails and why they feel that they would be a good candidate for the job. Teachers may wish to collect this at the end of the lesson, or allow students to take it home to work on. The teacher may wish to use these sheets to assign roles within each group.

Closure (15-20 min)

The class will be asked to offer one example of a possible person, place or event that would be an appropriate topic given the class's particular course of study. Students will then receive the Topic Suggestion Sheets

(attached as the Worksheet below) to complete as an at-home extension of the learning, to be used to help their group pick a topic in the next class.

Evaluation:

At this point in the History Circles process, there will be no formal evaluation, but rather the Job Application Sheets will be used as a diagnostic assessment tool to ensure students have a basic understanding of the tasks.

Required Materials:

- A set of task sheets for each group
- Chart Paper
- Job Application Sheets (attached)
- Topic Suggestion Sheets (attached)

For the History Circles

- Various resources pertaining to the topics students have chosen

Resources

[The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)