



TALES FROM THE CRYPT: Learning about Geography and History from Your Local Cemetery

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Grade Level 6-12
Duration 5 class periods

National Council for the Social Studies Thematic Strands

Strand 1: Culture
Strand 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
Strand 3: People, Places, and Environment

Arizona Social Studies Standard

Grade 6

Strand 4 Geography

Concept 1 The World in Spatial Terms

PO 3 Interpret maps, charts, and geographic databases using geographic information.

Concept 2 Places and Regions

PO 4 Explain why places and regions serve as cultural symbols.

Concept 4: Human Systems

PO2 Describe the environmental, economic, cultural, and political effects of human migrations and cultural diffusion on places and regions.
PO5 Identify cultural norms that influence different social, political and economic activities of men and women.

Grade 7

Strand 4 Geography

Concept 1 The World in Spatial Terms

PO 3 Interpret maps, charts, and geographic databases using geographic information.

Concept 2 Places and Regions

PO 1 Describe the human and physical characteristics of places and regions.

Concept 4 Human Systems

PO1 Discuss the implications of the demographic structure of places and regions.

PO 6 Describe the distributions and patterns of cultural characteristics over time.

PO9 Identify cultural aspects based on social and political factors.

Other Arizona Standards

WRITING STANDARD

Grade 6, 7, and 8

Strand 1 Writing Process

Concept 1 Prewriting

PO 1 Generate ideas through a variety of activities(e.g. prior knowledge, discussion with others, printed material or other sources)

PO 3 Determine the intended audience of a writing piece

Concept 5 Publishing

PO 1 Prepare writing in a format (e.g. oral presentation, manuscript, multimedia) appropriate to audience and purpose

Strand 2 Writing Applications

Concept 3 Functional

PO 1 Write a variety of functional texts (e.g. directions, recipes, procedures, rubrics, labels, poster, graphs/tables)

Strand 3 Writing Elements

Concept 1 ideas and Content

PO 1 Use clear, focused ideas and details to support the topic.

PO 2 Provide content and selected details that are well-suited to audience and purpose.

PO 3 Develop a sufficient explanation or exploration of the topic.

PO 4 Include ideas and details that show original perspective.

High School

Strand 1 Writing Process

PO 1 Generate ideas through a variety of activities (brainstorming, notes and logs, graphic organizers, discussion , printed material or other sources)

PO 3 Determine the intended audience of a writing piece

Concept 5 Publishing

PO 1 Prepare writing that follows a format appropriate for the purpose (e.g.for display, sharing with others, or submitting to a publication) .

Strand 3 Writing Elements

Concept 1 ideas and Content

PO 1 Maintain a clear, narrow focus to support the topic.

PO 2Write with an identifiable purpose and for a specific audience.

PO3 Provide sufficient, relevant and carefully selected details for support.

PO 4 Develop a thorough, balanced explanation of the

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Grade 8

Strand 4 Geography

Concept 1 The World in Spatial Terms

PO 3 Interpret maps, charts, and geographic databases using geographic information.

Concept 2 Places and Regions

PO 1 Identify common characteristics of contemporary and historical regions on the basis of climate, landforms, ecosystems, and culture.

Concept 4 Human Systems

PO 3 Describe the characteristics and locations of various cultures throughout the world.

PO 6 Describe cultural aspects related to beliefs and understandings that influence the economic, social and political activities of men and women.

High School

Strand 4 Geography

Concept 4 Human Systems

PO 1 Interpret population growth and demographics.

PO 3 Analyze push/pull factors that contribute to human migration.

PO 8 Explain how ideas, customs, and innovations are spread through cultural diffusion.

topic.

PO 5 Include ideas and details that show original perspective and insights.

Overview

This activity involves students performing tasks and analyzing information that adheres to the National Geographic Standards. This learning adventure incorporates an innovative teaching strategy, and contains elements that are gender and culturally sensitive.

Purpose

Cemeteries are unique resources for studying the peoples of an area. In this activity, students will gather and evaluate information about cultural symbols, nationalities, lifespans, and gender issues in a specialized landscape, the cemetery.

Materials

- Cemetery map

- Student worksheets--Calculating Lifespans, Lifespans in Children, Common Symbols in Cemeteries, Epitaphs, A Short History of Names, Resource Sheet for Determining Nationalities, and Demographics of the Cemetery
- Clipboards
- Books on local geography and history
- Pencils
- White construction paper
- Markers or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Calculators

The Mesa worksheets--Tombstone Tour, Look at the Mesa Cemetery: Walking Tour Guide, Mesa Residents are included in this handout; however, these worksheets serve as examples. They need to be adapted to fit your local cemetery.

OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

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- Charcoal
- Large sheets of smooth newsprint
- Handi-wipes
- Slides or powerpoint of cemetery examples

Objectives

- ✓ The student will be able to:
- ✓ apply geographic skills of observation to real spaces.
- ✓ research local geography and history by using maps and books.
- ✓ recognize the different groups of people who have settled the locale
- ✓ recognize how men and women have been represented differently in a cemetery
- ✓ work in cooperative groups to answer questions.
- ✓ learn for whom local place names are dedicated
- ✓ recognize the private and public spaces of a cemetery
- ✓ learn how symbols and epitaphs reflect culture
- ✓ recognize patterns in lifespans between men and women

Procedures

BACKGROUND: Observation is a tool of geography. Noted geographer, Kit Salter advocates O,SAE (Observation, Speculation, Analysis, and Evaluation) as a simple technique for having students read the landscape as a primary document. And according to geographer, Janice Monk, landscapes can be a reflection of cultural values. Gender issues can be seen in reading such landscapes.

A cemetery is a specialized landscape found in almost all communities, and yet, how many students pay attention to what is found in this private and public space? In a cemetery, a student can observe symbols of our culture, read epitaphs that convey information about the deceased, calculate lifespans, look for patterns, analyze nationalities represented in the locale, analyze how men and women are treated differently in our culture, and recognize how place names originated.

SEVERAL WEEKS IN ADVANCE OF THE

LEARNING ACTIVITY: Call the local cemetery and inform them of your plans. Visit the cemetery on your own. Ask for help in locating names of historically significant people. Try for an even number of men and women, a balanced number of ethnicities, and representatives from various time periods. Look for names that can be researched easily with school resources. Look for names that have resulted in local place names. Ask about the regions of a cemetery (veteran's plots, pauper graves, mausoleums, babyland, fraternal organizations?

plots, sacred grounds for various religions, and old and new areas. Obtain a brochure of the cemetery and a map.

Request permission from principal to take field trip, order buses, and secure parent permission. You'll need at least four chaperones, one for each group.

Copy the worksheets. A smart thing to do is use four colors of paper for the four different worksheets. This makes it much easier to sort and hand out clipboards.

INTRODUCING THE LEARNING ACTIVITY:

Day 1 (1-2 Periods)

Introduce the students to the activity by explaining how your locale was first settled.

Then explain the geographic concept of O,SAE.

Observation: What do you see?

Speculation: What is the pattern that you see?

Analyze: What else do you need to know in order to confirm the pattern?

Evaluation: What value judgments do you attach to these findings?

Tell them that this field research experience will have them practice OSAE as well as learn about the geography and history of their community.

Share some anecdotes from your experiences in visiting cemeteries. Share some slides or a powerpoint of cemeteries. Have them become familiar with the regions of a cemetery.

Assign names of persons that are found in the local cemetery to students (1 name per student). Make sure that plenty of local geography and history books are available for the students to use on Day 3 when they will research information about this deceased resident.

Remind students of respect for funerals and gravesites. Remind students to dress comfortably and to bring water and a pencil.

Check back with the cemetery to see if funerals are scheduled in an area where students may be visiting. Gather materials to be used and attach the worksheets to each clipboard.

EXECUTING THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Day 2 (1-2 hours)

Upon arriving at cemetery, hand out the worksheets and assign students to complete **ONE section**

1. Calculating Lifespans and Lifespans of Children
2. Epitaphs, Size and Shapes, Symbols
3. Demographics of the Cemetery; or
4. Tombstone Tour

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There is too much here for one group to do all four unless this is a much longer field research activity. Assign a chaperone to each group.

Remind the students to stay together and work as a group. Emphasize that they have a group task as well as an individual task (to find the grave of the person they will be researching and then record the information on the worksheet).

Optional: When students have finished the assigned tasks and still have more time, have them complete another section of the worksheets or allow them to do a charcoal rubbing of a tombstone that interests them.

Collect the papers and materials. They will be used during the next class period.

DAYS AFTER THE TRIP

Day 3

Have the students who received the same worksheet assignments work together. The group will make a report to the class on their findings on the following day.

Each student must also compose at least one paragraph on the deceased citizen that he/she researched. Using the large sized white construction paper, he/she must also create a tombstone with birth-death dates and an epitaph that reflects something that was learned about the person.

CONCLUDING THE LEARNING ACTIVITY:

Day 4 and 5

Each group will report their findings to the class. Discuss the patterns that were seen as information is shared and have the students take notes of the findings.

When the four groups are finished, students will create a tombstone time line (based on birth dates) that will go around the room. Each student will add their tombstone in order and explain what this person did to be famous.

Assign a reaction paper: How did you feel about cemeteries before we went? How do you feel about cemeteries now?

Assessment

Writing: The paragraph can be graded for voice and ideas. Is this an appropriate classroom assignment reflecting research. Are the ideas organized and clearly stated. Mastery will be considered a “4” on the six traits rubric.

The epitaph on the tombstone can be graded for voice and ideas. Is the epitaph appropriate for the person (ideas).

Is the epitaph appropriate in voice for a tombstone? Mastery will be considered a “4” on the six traits rubric.

The reaction paper can be graded for organization, ideas, and voice. Mastery will be considered a “4” on the six traits rubric.

Geography: Points can be given for: completion of the cemetery worksheets (10 pts), oral summary of the group findings (10 pts), research and creation of a tombstone (20 pts), and working well with the group (10 pts). Mastery will be considered 40 points or higher.

Extensions

Students can use local phone books and city maps to search for additional place names or company names that may be based on the deceased citizen’s name.

If a field research activity cannot be done, use newspaper obituaries to complete some of the activities.

Great math links can be made by having the groups analyze their data and create charts or graphs illustrating their observations. For example the student studying symbols or nationalities in the cemetery could make a tally chart of the symbols/nationalities they found and then do a pie graph based on percentages. The group looking at lifespans would come up with an average for men and women while they could also create a box and whisker chart of the same information.

Sources

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