



IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

Lessons

Family Tree

Overview/Description

Through this activity, students will be able to show their place in history as they learn about their family tree. This lesson plan explores the life story of families in terms of their ethnic origins. Students will create their own primary source document.

Grade Level

Elementary (grades 2, 3 and 4)

Academic Standards for the Social Studies

- Indiana Standards (as of Jan. 2010):
 - Grade 2, History, Standard 1, Historical Knowledge (2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and 2.1.4); Chronological Thinking, Historical Comprehension, Research (2.1.5, 2.1.6 and 2.1.7); Civics and Government, Standard 2, Roles of Citizens (2.2.4 and 2.2.5); and Geography, Standards 3, Human Systems (2.3.5)
 - Grade 3, History, Standard 1, Historical Knowledge (3.1.2, 3.1.3 and 3.1.4) and Chronological Thinking, Historical Comprehension, Research (3.1.5 and 3.1.6)

- Grade 4, History, Standard 1, Historical Knowledge, Growth and Development: 1900 to 1950 (4.1.11 and 4.1.12); Contemporary Indiana: 1950–Present (4.1.13); and Chronological Thinking, Historical Comprehension, Research (4.1.15)

- National Standards (National Council for the Social Studies): I Culture; II Time, Continuity, and Change; III People, Places, and Environments; IV Individual Development and Identity

Social Studies/Historical Concepts

Family history and ethnic heritage

Learning/Instructional Objectives

By interviewing parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, students will develop an understanding of where they came from and the history of their families.

Time Required

Two class periods: one for the introduction and one for class reports. The teacher will establish a time line for completion of this project. Work outside the classroom is required.

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Materials Required

- Pencil and paper
- Digital camera (if available)
- Digital audio and video recorders (if available)
- Student Handout: Family Historian Project
- Student Handout: Family Tree Chart

Background/Historical Context

Refer to the “INTRODUCTION: Ethnic History in America and Indiana” essay by John Bodnar from *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996). The “Introduction” section of the Indiana Historical Society’s “IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage” Web site provides a free download of this essay in PDF format.

Teacher’s Instructional Plan

Introduction

- As an introduction to this lesson on immigration consider using a book talk to introduce student choice reading or read a selection as a class read-aloud. Refer to the “Resources” section of the Indiana Historical Society’s “IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage Web site for sample “Student Choice Reading Lists.” Check with your school or local library for other selection options.
- Lead a class discussion about families and where they originated. Ask students to tell stories they know about these topics:
 - when and where they were born
 - when and where their parents were born
 - who their grandparents are, great-grandparents are, etc.
 - an appropriate story that defines their family
 - how many family members were born in the area
- if the student came here from another place, ask about that place and how the family moved to this place
- where their parents and grandparents consider “home”
- anyone notable in their family’s history
- Share with students your family’s story.

ACTIVITY 1

Each student will become a family historian and interview members of his/her family in order to construct a family tree and a family time line. Hand out a copy of the family tree.

Then, students will create a family time line and a family tree along with the written stories that were told to them during their interviews.

Step 1: Conduct interviews

- Students will make a list of questions to ask.
- Some sample questions are:
 - Who are your aunts and uncles, grandparents, and their siblings?
 - When they were born and how long did they live?
 - Where did they live and what did they do for a living?
 - Who did they marry and what were the names of their children?
- Leave spaces to write the answers to the questions.
- If possible, record the interviews. Students must ask permission before they record these conversations.
- Record the answers to the questions and any stories in written form on notepaper. Remind students to be patient during their interviews. It may take time for people to remember family stories.
- Students should save any pictures they have collected during the interviews.

Step 2: Create a final document

- The final report may take the form of a booklet, a scrapbook, or a poster.
 - Include a time line that traces the student's family history.
 - Include a family tree.
 - Include at least two interesting family stories. Examples: how the student's family came to this area, a story of an interesting ancestor, how family members were named, etc.
 - If photographs are available of the student's family and relatives, create a visual family tree.
 - Ask students to be creative and to consider how they want future generations to remember their family.
 - Consider giving a copy of your students' work to the local library or historical society. These stories are an essential part of your community's history.
- construction of important buildings, schools, community buildings
 - construction of bridges, railroads, main roads, parks and recreation areas, and when they were built
 - who important places in the community were named for and why
 - when and why the town was founded
 - how did the town get its name
 - community organizations: who started them, and what do they do for the community
- Assign each student a role such as interviewer, recorder, cameraperson, or writer.
 - Before the interview begins, make sure the students ask permission to make an audio or video recording and/or take photographs of the interviewees.
 - Develop a time line of your community's cultural history after the interviews have been completed. Include photos of your community on the time line, if possible.
 - Consider sharing the final report, tapes, and photographs with a local public library, historical society, or genealogy society.

ACTIVITY 2

This activity is appropriate for a class project and is particularly appropriate for third grade. It will require some advanced work on the part of the teacher or a parent volunteer.

- Approach community members to see if they are willing to come to the classroom to be interviewed and photographed.
- Make contact with community members to set up interview times.
- Assist students in compiling a list of questions to be asked.
- Ask students to develop a list of interview questions. Consider asking:
 - when local landmarks were established
 - local businesses: who started them, how long have they been in business

Evaluation and Assessment

Consider using a rubric or checklist for evaluating student work.

Additional Resources

Refer to the "Resources" section of the Indiana Historical Society's "IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage" Web site for lists of educator and student resources on immigration and ethnic history.

Student Handout: Family Historian Project

Your Task

Become a “family historian” and interview members of your family about their family heritage.

Construct a family tree and a family time line from the information you gather from family members.

Write at least two family stories from information collected during your interviews.

Step 1: Conduct interviews

Make a list of questions to ask.

- Some sample questions are:
 - Who are your aunts and uncles, grandparents and their siblings?
 - When they were born and how long did they live?
 - Where did they live and what did they do for a living?
 - Who did they marry and what were the names of their children?
- Leave spaces to write the answers to the questions.
- If possible, record the interviews.
 - You must ask permission BEFORE you record these conversations.
- Record the answers to the questions and any stories you hear in written form on notepaper.
 - Be patient. It may take time for people to remember family stories.
- Save any pictures you have collected during your interviews.

Step 2: Create a final document

- Your final report may take the form of a booklet, a scrapbook, or a poster.
 - Include a time line that traces your family history.
 - Include a family tree chart.
 - Include at least two interesting family stories. Examples: how your family came to this area, a story of an interesting ancestor, how your family members were named, etc.
 - If photographs are available of your family and relatives, create a visual family tree.
- Be creative. How do you want future generations to remember you and your family?

Student Handout: Family Tree Chart

