



IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

Lessons

Community and Family History

Overview/Description

Through this activity, students will be able to show their place in history by studying their family tree. This lesson plan explores families and communities in terms of their ethnic origins. Students will create their own primary source document—a family tree chart.

Grade Level

High School

Academic Standards for the Social Studies

- Indiana Standards (as of Jan. 2010):
 - High School, U. S. History, Standard 9, Historical Thinking (USH.9.2 and USH.9.5)
 - High School, Sociology, Standard 2, Culture (S.2.6); Sociology, Standard 5, Social Institutions (S.5.1); Sociology, Standard 6, Social Change (S.6.2)
- 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; and V Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

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. In addition, they will develop an understanding of how the local community was established and the identity of its founders.

Time Required

Two class periods: one for an introduction and one for reporting

- The teacher will establish a time line for completion of this project.
- Work outside the classroom is required.

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

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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 selections 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:
 - when and where they were born
 - when and where their parents were born
 - who are their grandparents and great-grandparents
 - an appropriate story that defines their family
 - how many family members were born in the area
 - if they are from somewhere else, ask about that place and how the family came to this place
 - where do their parents and grandparents consider “home”

- notable people 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 copies of Student Handout: Family Historian Project and the Student Handout: Family Tree Chart.
- Students will interview family members to learn about their family heritage.
- Then, students will complete their family tree chart, a family time line, and a written report that includes at least two 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

- Complete the Family Tree chart.
- Prepare a time line of events in the student's family history. Format may vary (written, poster, or digital format).
- Write a report using information from the interviews and other research materials.
 - Include at least two 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 accurate. Consider how they want future generations to remember their family.
- If permission is given, 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.

ACTIVITY 2

Approach community members to see if they are willing to come to the classroom to be interviewed and photographed for a class project. Ask students for their ideas of others who might be willing to be interviewed.

Step 1: Prepare for the interviews

- Assign student roles such as interviewer, recorder, cameraperson, and writers.
- Assist students in compiling a list of questions to be asked.
- Make contact with community members and set up interview times.

- Ask students to develop a final list of interview questions. Consider asking:
 - when local landmarks were established
 - local businesses: who started them, how long have they been in business
 - 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, what they did for the community
- Before beginning an interview, make sure the students ask permission to record, video, and/or photograph the interviewees.

Step 2: Create a Community Timeline

- Develop a time line of your community's cultural history after the interviews have been completed. Include photos of your community on the time lines, if possible.
- If the interviewees give their permission, consider sharing the final report, recordings and photographs with a local public library, historical society, or genealogy society.

Evaluation and Assessment

Consider using a rubric or checklist for evaluating student work.

Additional Resources

Refer to "Resources" section of the Indiana Historical Society's the "IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage" Web site for additional 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?

