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McMinnville, TN

Unit/Lesson: On the Trail of Tears

Grade Level: 4th and up

Era: 4-Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

Introduction

In this lesson students work with **primary source documents** to recapture the experience of traveling on the Trail of Tears

Lesson Time: Several class periods

Curriculum Standards:

1. To learn about the Cherokee experience on the Trail of Tears
2. To create and evaluate a historical reenactment using **primary source documents**
3. To synthesize historical data through creative writing

Materials

Internet access with at least one computer per group of students

Volunteer Voices referenced:

Blount, William at Treaty Grounds on the Banks of the Holston River near the mouth of the French Broad to Governor Charles Pinckney in South Carolina

URL: <http://idserver.utk.edu/?id=200800000001251>

File name: 0023_000059_000201_0000

Skills

Information gathering and research

Primary source document analysis

Critical thinking historical analysis

Creative writing

Collaboration

Public speaking and presentation

Internet skills

Guiding question:

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO TRAVEL ON THE TRAIL OF TEARS?

1. Begin by asking students to imagine that they are producing a movie on the Trail of Tears. Working in groups, they will write a scene for the movie that is historically accurate and based on the kinds of experiences the Cherokees actually encountered on their way. For background on these experiences, have students do

- a Google search or similar search for the Trail of Tears. There are approximately 2 million results of such a search on www.google.com.
2. Ask students to explain:
 - a. why the Cherokees made the trip
 - b. describe preparations for the journey
 - c. describe the physical risks of the journey
 - d. document the daily routine of trail life
 3. Invite students to comment on this reenactment in their role as imaginary filmmakers. How does it compare to the scene they have in mind? Have each group suggest additional details that would accurately represent the Cherokees historical experience.
 4. Encourage students to make imaginative use of research as they work together in their groups to script a scene depicting an incident that could have occurred on the Trail of Tears. To provide theme with a guide for their collaboration, create a worksheet based on the outline headings below. (For a technical film scripting guide, visit the Cinema exhibit at www.Learner.org.

Location: Describe where your scene takes place.

Casting: Describe the characters that will appear in your scene and the roles they play including extras that will help provide a backdrop for the action

Props: Describe the wagons, costumes, animals, and any other items a filmmaker would need to stage the scene

Action: Describe what happens in your scene, including any special effects and dialogue.

5. Conclude this lesson by having each group present its scene to the class, as at a movie production meeting. This could involve storyboards for the scene's establishing shots and acting out parts of the action. Follow each presentation with a class critique of the scene's historical accuracy focusing both on elements that reflect the real experience of the Cherokees on the Trail of Tears and elements that take liberties with the historical record.

Evaluation

Teacher created rubric

Extending the Lesson

Ask students to compare and contrast the Trail of Tears experience with that of the travels of other groups such as the 49er's who followed the Oregon Trail on their way to the goldfields of California.