

Best Practices of Technology Integration

Title: *Medieval Madness*

Subject(s): Language Arts

Intended Grade Level(s): 6-8

Description:

This lesson is based on the reading of *The Midwife's Apprentice*, the 1996 Newberry Award winning novel by Karen Cushman. While reading the novel, students will be journaling in response to the character's transformation from a homeless child to an educated, caring teenager. The students will also create castles, access medieval Internet sites and participate in a medieval electronic field trip.

Narrative:

This lesson is designed and utilized in a middle school building that is far from being technologically advanced. The challenge is to keep technologically involved, and so many of the resources used provide the technology. The concept statement for the unit is: All humans have the three same basic needs: food, shelter and love. Food is a physical need; but are shelter and love negotiable? The focus questions are:

- Can the type of shelter required be varied for different people?
- What defines love?
- Do we have to have loved to live?
- What are forces that can affect our basic needs?
- Has time changed our basic needs?

What makes this a best practice for my classroom? I believe this is a best practice for giving a variety of sources for information for the students. The students will do some individual (or group) exploration of web sites for information they're curious about. The castle building is creative; students make their own castle for the character of Alyce to live in. The field trip is something that financially we otherwise probably wouldn't be able to do. As the students read, write, and gather information, a self-reflection will develop—seeing that all humans have needs; time hasn't changed emotion.

It can be difficult to utilize technology and advance, but the activities can be individual or whole group; interactions between students are key just as they are key to the teenagers in the story.

Curriculum Benchmarks:**ML.ELA.5.MS.1**

Select, read, listen to, view and respond thoughtfully to both classic and contemporary texts recognized for quality and literary merit.

ML.ELA.3.MS.6

Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts in oral, visual, and written texts by using a variety of resources, such as semantic and structural features, prior knowledge, reference materials, and electronic sources.

ML.ELA.10.MS.1

Analyze themes and central ideas in literature and other texts in relation to issues in their own lives.

Detailed Timeline:

This lesson will take approximately seventeen 46-minute class periods. It will of course vary according to the accessibility to technology (computer lab vs. multiple computers in room vs. one computer in room) as well as level and ability of students.

Materials/Hardware/Software:

- *The Midwife's Apprentice* by Karen Cushman
- Journals
- Computer with CD ROM
- Video Conference abilities
- Internet Access
- Community Construction Kit (Tom Snyder Productions)

Teacher preparation:

- Read book (before starting)
- Schedule lab and materials (before starting)
- Schedule field trip (before starting)
- Design journaling activities (before and during unit)
- Gathering materials for castles (before and during unit)
- **Literature Is For Thinking guide from Sundance is an excellent resource to assist with plans

Prerequisite Student Skills:

- KWL medieval knowledge
- Read book (max. 10 days)
- Journaling (as required)

Activities/Procedures:

Day 1—KWL what students know about the Middle Ages. Then introduce more information, such as: living conditions (infant mortality, disease, life span averaging 30 years), levels in society (lord, peasant, servant), lord's ownership of land, chivalry, traveling only ten miles in a lifetime, etc. Have students identify things that they couldn't live without. (goal: shelter, food, love) Discuss with students some of the vocabulary terms from the book so they have an understanding of the reading, such as: midwife, apprentice, and bailiff.

Day 2—Read Chapter One aloud, discussing the living conditions for Brat, significance of her name. Assign Chapters Two and Three for reading.

Day 3—During class, have students discuss more about what a midwife is and that we have them today. Read aloud Author's note on medicines and herbs; have students journal about how this is alike or different from their experiences with medicines.

Day 4—Read Chapter Four; discuss when it is OK to keep secrets and when it's not; this could continue as a journaling exercise. Students should start viewing Internet sites. Have the students use a search engine, such as Yahoo!igans, to locate medieval web sites. A few are: <http://www.castles.org> and <http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/n/x/nsd10.castles.htm>. Instruct students to take notes as they come across interesting information, and bookmark sites they might want to go back to in the future.

Day 5—Read Chapters Five & Six (independently or group). Continue with site visitations.

Day 6—Read Chapter Seven, discuss the superstitions that are a part of the Middle Ages. Assign Chapter Eight, possible journal assignment.

Day 7—Read Chapters Nine and Ten together. Explain the castle construction. Students are to each design their own personal castle for Alyce using the Tom Snyder software. On the CD is a set of styles students may choose from for the castle; it is basically a creative exercise for students, as well giving them hands-on experience working with the architectural designs of the day.

Day 8—Read Chapters Eleven and Twelve. Discussion: Does running away from problems help? Why or why not? How has this affected Alyce? Students can continue this with reflection in their journals; continue working on castles and site visits.

Day 9—Read Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen in groups, then continue site visits and castle building.

Day 10—Journaling exercise: Predict what will happen to Alyce as the story begins resolution. Continue site visitation.

Day 11—Read aloud Chapters Fifteen, Sixteen and Seventeen. Discuss if love has influenced Alyce’s life. Are Edward’s needs being met? (shelter, food, love) How do you feel about her decision? Will her returning to the midwife bring happiness to her own life?

Day 12—Have students share sites they’ve found with interesting information, graphics, etc. Last time for students to do site visits.

Day 13—Writing activity (could be completed on computers, if available). Throughout the reading of the novel, we have seen the transformation of a homeless girl seeking to meet her basic needs in life: shelter, food and love. In what ways has she been successful or unsuccessful? How do you feel Alyce will live the rest of her life? Will these needs be met easily? With regret? How do you foresee yourself meeting your basic needs in your life? Begin by allowing students to view journal entries and pre-write for the essay. Students can begin first draft when ready. (MEAP style)

Day 14—Writing continued. Students may continue first draft, then conference last ten minutes of class period.

Day 15—Final revisions and draft of paper. When all have been received, have students share more of the information found on web sites. They should also finish the castle so it can be displayed in the classroom.

Day 16—Electronic field trip. There are two that have been highly recommended:

Program Title: Days of Knights

Field Trip Site Name:

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Program Description:

Investigate the history, use, and aesthetics of armor via a live demonstration of armor pieces.

Contact Information:

Candace LeClaire

215-284-7584 or 215-684-7333 choose #3

<http://www.philamuseum.org/education/distance.shtml>

Cost: \$100/program

Program Title:

Stuck in the Middle: Were the Dark Ages Really Dark?

Field Trip Site Name:

Indianapolis Museum of Art

Program Description:

The Middle Ages were considered by later generations to be “dark,” or lacking in knowledge. Decide where you stand on the issue after you have had a chance to look at art and ideas from this time.

Contact Information:

Wendy Wilkerson

317-923-1331 x218

<http://www.ima-art.org/education/schoolprograms/distance.html>

Cost: \$55/program

Day 17—This day is for open discussion of the electronic field trip; things that were introduced that were new or previously discussed. This should serve as a closing to the Medieval literature unit.

Assessments/Evaluation:

Students will be assessed on the quality and responsiveness of journal entries, as well as the self-reflection and gathered information (from class discussions and internet sites) included in the essay. The essay should replace a formal test; it is reflective with information students learned and thought through, as opposed to rote memorization.

Follow-up Activities:

- Students could hold a Medieval Festival, designed with the knowledge gained during the unit.
- Students could write a code of honor for their families, and design a shield to represent it.
- 3D exhibits could be designed showing the different aspects of medieval life, including things designed during the period that are used today.
- Students could do a Power Point presentation focusing on an aspect of the medieval life, and how we are not so different in our needs as humans.
- An expert in medieval studies could be brought in; even a person that participates in Medieval Festivals as a hobby would be of great interest.

Submitted By:

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