Exploring a Place in History

Subject Area: Social Studies

Grade Levels: 6 – 12 (ages 11-18)

Time: At least two 45-minute class periods; time outside of class as necessary.

Lesson Objective:
Students will research a place in history and create diagrams to help them better organize and retain the information.

Common Core State Standards¹:
- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading:
  - Standard 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing:
  - Standard 1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
  - Standard 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Overview:
Make the process of studying a period in history more manageable with the integration of visual learning. This lesson uses the Place in History template (Webspiration Classroom™ Starter>Starter Docs>Social Studies>Place in History) to help students research and organize the information about a place and time in areas such as daily life, commerce, events, people and politics. If possible, local places can be used to make the assignment especially engaging for students and provide them with more opportunities to conduct original research within their communities.

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Preparation:
• This lesson requires Internet access and the Webspiration Classroom software application published by Inspiration® Software, Inc. It can be accessed by visiting <http://www.webspirationclassroom.com>.
• Access to library resources would also be helpful for student research.

Lesson:
1. Tell students that they will research a place in history and use Webspiration Classroom to help organize their notes and thinking. For example, if you are studying the colonial period in U.S. history, you could have students choose one of the original settlements or colonies to research. Open the Place in History template and talk students through it so they understand the assignment; using the template will help students organize and better understand what they learn about the place and time being examined.

2. Open the example file (Webspiration Classroom Starter>Examples>Social Studies>Place in History Example) and talk the students through it, as well, so they know what is expected.

3. Explain that students will be adding visual Symbols, as well as text, to their diagrams. Adding symbols will help them and their readers better understand and remember the content. Optional: Additional graphics can be inserted into diagrams via the Edit menu.
4. Be sure to point out how additional information was added in Notes. This information can be shown quickly at the same time in Outline View.

5. Organize students into groups of 2-3 to complete the project. Groups will then choose a place in history to research. You may want to provide a list of acceptable topics, or you may have groups choose a place and then submit their proposals for review.

6. Student groups can collaborate on their diagram and obtain feedback from the teacher using the collaboration tools. Documents can be shared with others using the Collaborate tab. The Comment tab can be used to comment on the document, or the Chat tab can be used, if it is turned on at your school, to discuss ideas in real time.

7. Encourage students to add Hyperlinks to their sources of information, including any multimedia files available on the Internet.

8. Inform students they can use Notes to add additional information as they complete the project. They can go to Outline View to finish organizing the information.
Adaptations / Extensions:

• Have students make presentations to the class about the place in history they researched. A data projector or interactive whiteboard can be used, if one is available, to display diagrams as visual aids during the presentations.
  • Notes can be turned on and off by clicking the Note Quick Control in the upper-right corner of the icon with the note.
  • Subtopics can be hidden or viewed using the Subtopic Quick Controls to allow focused discussion on each topic during the presentation.
• If presentations are given, have students take notes during their classmates' presentations. Separate Place in History Webspiration Classroom templates could be used to record notes or a paper chart could be provided with categories such as daily life, commerce, events, people and politics to make this task easier.
• Students can download their project to Inspiration® or a word processor, or transfer it to a Google Doc to complete a written report about their place in history. Students might limit the scope of a written paper by developing a thesis statement. For example, they could develop a thesis related to the similarities and differences between the place in history and their own place and time.
• Modify the assignment by changing the topics to be researched on the template. The template can also be simplified by removing some of the areas or adding more areas to be researched. Modified templates can be shared with some or all members of the class using the collaboration tools.
• Webspiration Classroom may be used to create timelines of important developments in the history of the place. The Chronology template is useful for this extension: Webspiration Classroom Starter>Starter Docs>Social Studies>Chronology. There is also an example: Webspiration Classroom Starter>Examples>Social Studies>Chronology Example.

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