

Developing a Living History Character

Overview

How did people live in other times and cultures, and what does this say about our lives today? First-person interpretation can be a powerful method of presenting social history, daily life, and controversial issues of the past. By combining history with theater and language arts, students will research and create a script to portray a character from the past.

Objectives

Students will learn how to research and develop a living history character by using primary and secondary sources to collect information about a historical character; creating a living time line of individuals and events related to their character; developing a historical perspective of events relating to their character; and writing and presenting a monologue from a historical character's perspective.

The *Developing a Living History Character* lesson plan is adaptable for grades 4-9.

Mississippi Department of Education Curricular Connections		
Common Core Language Arts	4th Grade	RI 1-10, RF 4abc, W 1-10, SL 2-6, L 1-6
	5th Grade	RI 1-10, RF 4abc, W 1-10, SL 2-6, L 1-6
	6th Grade	RI 1-10, W 1-10, SL 2-6, L 1-6, RH 1-10, WHIST 1-2
	7th Grade	RI 1-10, W 1-10, SL 2-6, L 1-6, RH 1-10, WHIST 1-2
	8th Grade	RI 1-10, W 1-10, SL 2-6, L 1-6, RH 1-10, WHIST 1-2
	9th Grade	RI 1-10, W 1-10, SL 2-6, L 1-6, RH 1-10, WHIST 1-2
Mississippi Social Studies Frameworks	4th Grade	2a, 2c, 2d, 3a, 3c, 4a, 4b, 4c, 6a, 6b, 6c
	5th Grade	1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 3a, 3b, 3c, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, 5c
	6th Grade	2a, 2b,3a,3b,4a,4b, 5a, 5b,6b,6c,6d, 7b, 8b
	7th Grade	3a, 4a, 5b, 7b
	8th Grade	1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f, 3a, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d
	Mississippi Studies	4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 6a, 6b
Mississippi Language Arts Frameworks	4th Grade	1g, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 4a, 4b, 4c
	5th Grade	1g, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 3e, 3f, 4a, 4b, 4c
	6th Grade	1f, 1g, 2b, 2c, 2e, 3a, 3c, 3e, 3f, 4a, 4b, 4c
	7th Grade	1f, 1g, 2b, 2c, 2e, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3e, 3f, 4a, 4b, 4c
	8th Grade	1f, 1g, 2e, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3e, 3f, 4a, 4b, 4c
	9th Grade	1c, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f, 2g, 3a, 3d, 3e, 4a, 4b, 4c

Objectives: Students will learn how to research and develop a living history character by using primary and secondary sources to collect information about a historical character; creating a living time line of individuals and events related to their character; developing a historical perspective of events relating to their character; and writing and presenting a monologue from a historical character’s perspective.

Materials: *Character Development Worksheets 1 and 2; Character Writing Worksheets 1 and 2;* research materials from libraries, archives, and/or digital sources; reproduction clothing and props.

Procedures:

Activity One: Researching a Character

1. Choose a place and time for students to investigate.
2. Once they have completed their research have them decide on the person/character who could best convey the feeling and facts of the time. Point out that it does not have to be a real person, but could be a composite figure, a representation of a person from that time and place.
3. Hand out the *Character Development Worksheets 1 and 2.*
4. Have students use primary and secondary resources to research their character and answer the questions on the worksheets. Thorough research provides a solid basis for characters to present details about their daily lives, trends of the times, and events of the period and place.
5. Create a timeline of events in the life of the person/character.
6. Have students research some facts related to the time and place of their character, i.e. national, state, and local events and leaders, inventions of the time, political issues, slavery, war, modes of transportation, fashion, popular authors, music, and other entertainment of the time, etc.
7. Have students use the information they have gathered to write a narrative from the point of view of the person/character.

Activity Two: Creating a Character

1. Have the students gather the research and narrative they have written.
2. Pass out the *Character Writing Worksheets 1 and 2.*
3. Have students research language and customs of the time period chosen, and answer the questions on the worksheet.
4. Have the students pick an event, place, or other subject in the life of the character to focus on.
5. Write a “script” for the character based on the research of the time period, character, and language.
6. Have the students research the type of costuming/clothing needed for the character.
7. Have the students each present their script as though they are the character they have researched, with accurate facts, manners, language, and costuming.

Extension Activities:

- Have students write a diary for their characters. What was daily life like for them? What issues or events were important to them? Who did they interact with on a daily basis?
- Acting as a newspaper reporter of the character’s time period, have students write about a current issue or event.
- Have students investigate what foods and recipes were popular during their character’s lifetime, and prepare a recipe for the class.
- Have students research music of the period and listen to recordings. How did people find out about new music? Where was it played and heard? How did music relate to events of the time?
- Have students draw a political cartoon about historical events of the period.

Additional Resources:

- Local libraries, school libraries, county libraries, regional college libraries and archives.
- World Cat, universal library catalog, www.worldcat.org
- Digital resources for teaching history, www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/teachers/primary_sources.cfm
- Library of Congress, www.loc.gov
- First person narratives of the American South, www.memory.loc.gov
- Documenting the American South, www.docsouth.unc.edu
- Duke University Libraries, www.library.duke.edu
- Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture, <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/bingham/>
- History through the eyes of those who lived it, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com
- The History of Private Life, www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/private_life.cfm
- Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org
- Mississippi Department of Archives and History, <http://www.mdah.ms.gov/new/>
- Mississippi History Now, <http://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/>
- National Archives, www.nara.gov
- Census finder, <http://censusfinder.com>
- Maps, timelines, documents and photographs about the Civil War, www.americancivilwar.com
- Online videos and other history resources, www.havefunwithhistory.com
- The Association for Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums, www.alhfam.org
- Quality Living History Interpretation Elements for Success, www.makinghistoryconnections.com

Name: _____ Date: _____

Character Development Worksheet 1 - Researching Your Character

Name of Character/Person: _____

Date and place of birth: _____

Date of Death: _____

Early Life

Parents and their occupations: _____

Siblings and ages: _____

Significant events in early life: _____

Education

How and where were you educated? _____

Current Life

Where do you live and what kind of home do you have? How long have you lived there? _____

Are you married? Where, when, and what is your spouse's name and occupation? _____

Do you have children? How many? Living or deceased? _____

Are you and your family healthy? Are there any physical limitations? _____

What is your occupation? How do you earn your money? If you are a woman do you depend on your husband's income? _____

Do you use any special tools or skills for your occupation? _____

Are you poor, middle class, or wealthy? _____

Do you have a special reputation? Do you have unique or unusual talents? _____

Who are your friends/who do you associate with? _____

Have you traveled? If so where? _____

Is your character religious? _____

What are your character's concerns? _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Character Development Worksheet 2 – Researching Your Character’s Surroundings

Name of Character/Person: _____

Time period you have chosen to portray/character’s age: _____

Place your character is speaking from: _____

Local Facts

City or town: _____

Community Leader/Mayor: _____

How big is the city your character lives in? _____

Places in the city you would know about: _____

Other: _____

Territory/State Facts

Is your place a territory or state? What is its name? _____

Governor: _____

How big is the state/territory your character lives in? _____

Places in the state/territory you would know about: _____

How do you travel about? _____

Major events: _____

Major developments: _____

Industries, or other: _____

Political Issues: _____

Other: _____

National Facts

What country do you live in? _____

Leader: _____

How big is the country your character lives in? _____

Places in the nation you would know about: _____

How do you travel about? _____

Major events: _____

Major developments: _____

Industries or other technologies: _____

Political Issues: _____

Other: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Character Writing Worksheet 2 - Details of Character

Use the questions below to bring to life your character and the time period in which they lived using manners, language and dress.

Name of Character/Person: _____

Time period you have chosen to portray/Character's age: _____

Place your character is speaking from: _____

Dress: Acceptable dress for your character depends on the time period and the customs of the day.

Social Status: _____

Time of Day: _____

Outdoors or indoors: _____

Entertaining or working: _____

Mourning: _____

Age: _____

Manners: Acceptable manners for your character depends on the time period, social status, gender, and the customs of the day.

Social Status: _____

Gender: _____

Outdoors or indoors? _____

Entertaining or working? _____

Age: _____

What things would be considered scandalous for your character? _____

Language: Acceptable language for your character depends on the time period and the customs of the day.

Background: _____

Social Status: _____

Education: _____

“No-no” words or phrases: _____

Age: _____

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY LESSON PLANS
TEACHER EVALUATION**

COMPLETE BOTH SIDES AND PLEASE MAIL OR FAX TO THE ADDRESS ON THE NEXT PAGE. THANK YOU!

TEACHER NAME _____

SCHOOL NAME & ADDRESS _____

EMAIL (OPTIONAL) _____

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS _____ GRADE LEVEL _____

LESSON TITLE _____

1. In your opinion, did this unit elicit better than average student response; if so, how?
2. Which segments of the unit exceeded your students' attention span?
3. Will this unit be of assistance to you in developing future classroom activities; if so, how?
4. How did this unit add to your earlier teaching on the same subject?
5. Would this teaching unit be handier to use as a:
___ multi-day unit ___ multi-week unit ___ other
6. Were the activities and lessons appropriate for your students? How?

Please rate the following lesson materials and activities by circling the appropriate number.

4=excellent, 3=good, 2=average, 1=inadequate

<u>Directions and Notes</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Curricular Connections</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Student Worksheets</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Interactive Activities</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Historic Images</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>References and Resources</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>

<u>Activity One</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Activity Two</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Extension Activities</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Overall Unit</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>

We would appreciate any additional comments on this teaching unit and any suggestions for improvement. Comments may be entered in the space below.

Museum Division
Mississippi Department of Archives and History
P.O. Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205
Phone: 601-576-6800 Fax: 601-576-6815
outreachprograms@mdah.ms.gov