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.

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<th>Mississippi Department of Education Curricular Connections</th>
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<td><strong>Common Core Language Arts</strong></td>
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| 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 |

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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
- First person narratives of the American South, www.memory.loc.gov
- Documenting the American South, www.docsouth.unc.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.eyewitnesshistory.com
- Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org
- Mississippi Department of Archives and History, http://www.mda.ms.gov/new/
- 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? __________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________
Do you have any hobbies or other interests? ______________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Significant events in life: _____________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Describe typical activities of your character’s daily life: ____________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
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:_____________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
Character Writing Worksheet 1 – Creating Your Character’s Voice

Create an outline for your character narration using the information below.

Name of Character/Person: ____________________________________________________________

Time period you have chosen to portray/Character’s age: ________________________________

Place your character is speaking from: ________________________________________________

Information that the audience should know about your character:

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________
Some fun or interesting things you have learned about your character:
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

List five topics that your character would discuss with visitors:
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Examples of Topics:

Politics
Railroad/Transportation
Medical care
Crime
Your Boss (employees, servants, etc.)
Price of Food/Goods
Availability of Foods/Goods

Gambling
Women's Suffrage
Theater/Entertainment (for, against, latest acts)
Environment/Weather (floods, fires, etc.)
Civil War/Other Wars
Human Rights

Development of Jackson or Local City/Town (buildings, etc.)
Slavery
Price of Land
Women's Rights
Women's Domestic Responsibilities
Technology/Inventions
Special Visitors to City/Town
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

Directions and Notes 4 3 2 1
Curricular Connections 4 3 2 1
Student Worksheets 4 3 2 1
Interactive Activities 4 3 2 1
Historic Images 4 3 2 1
References and Resources 4 3 2 1
Activity One 4 3 2 1
Activity Two 4 3 2 1
Extension Activities 4 3 2 1
Overall Unit 4 3 2 1

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