

## **Interdisciplinary Activity: Understanding History Through Different Mediums**

**Type of Teacher Tool:** Whole Class, Small Group, or Individual Student activity

**Targeted Grade Level(s):** K-4, 5-8, 9-12

**Targeted Curriculum Areas:** Social Studies, History, Language Arts, Fine Arts

### **Learning Objectives:**

The learner will:

1. research a specific historic event.
2. demonstrate his/her knowledge of the event from a particular perspective and through a particular medium.
3. reflect on how understanding of history can be changed based on how and by whom it is presented.

### **NATIONAL STANDARDS**

**Featured National Standards (History):**

**Grades 5-12:**

#### **Historical Thinking Standards**

##### 2. Historical Comprehension

C. Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.

F. Appreciate historical perspectives--(a) describing the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts, and the like; (b) considering the historical context in which the event unfolded--the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and (c) avoiding "present-mindedness," judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

##### 4. Historical Research Capabilities

A. Formulate historical questions from encounters with historical documents, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, historical sites, art, architecture, and other records from the past.

B. Obtain historical data from a variety of sources, including: library and museum collections, historic sites, historical photos, journals, diaries, eyewitness accounts, newspapers, and the like; documentary films, oral testimony from living witnesses, censuses, tax records, city directories, statistical compilations, and economic indicators.

### **Resources/Materials Needed:**

Video from Educate.Today website page where this Teacher Tool was found

### **Teacher Instructions:**

In the video associated with this activity, students will hear directly from someone describing their involvement in an historic event or a historian discussing an historic event. For the purpose of this activity, have each student research more about the historic event dealt with in the video through any of the different perspectives below and then create different works about that history through one or more of those perspectives.

1. Explore the historic event as an historian: Have students study the history of the event as an historian would and determine how best an historian could present the information of that history to others. To share what they have learned with their student peers or another audience of your or their choosing, have them

write an historical essay or article describing the event and its implications or create a curatorial speech to present.

2. Explore the historic event as a playwright: Have students study the history of the event and determine how best a playwright could present the information of that history to others. To share what they have learned with the student peers or another audience of your or their choosing, have them write a dramatic scene depicting the event and its implications. Include appropriate characters, dialogue, and scene description as needed.

3. Explore the historic event as short story writer: Have students study the history of the event and determine how best a short story writer could present the information of that history to others. To share what they have learned with the student peers or another audience of your or their choosing, have them write a short story depicting the event and its implications. Include appropriate characters, dialogue, plot development, scenic descriptions, and any other short story elements as needed as needed.

4. Explore the historic event as a newspaper reporter of the time: Have students study the history of the event and determine how best a newspaper reporter of the time of the event could present the information of that story to others. To share what they have learned with the student peers or another audience of you're their choosing, have them write a newspaper article depicting the event and its implications.

5. Explore the historic event as a participant: Have students take the perspective of being an individual involved in the historic event and write a journal entry describing the event and implications in their diary or write a letter they send to a family member or friend. Have them share the journal entry or letter with their student peers or another audience of your or their choosing.

6. Explore the event from another perspective of your or their choosing and then share that perspective with their student peers or another audience of your or their choosing.

### **Extension Assignment Options**

1. Have students respond to each other's writing and discuss any or all of the following questions:

a. Did any of the history change as a result of the medium used to tell the story? Were certain events left out or individuals involved modified in any way to fit the medium?

b. Was each medium able to provide an avenue for an accurate telling of the history? Was one medium more difficult to do that in?

c. How did the different mediums create different responses in people as they read the different works? Did some mediums appeal to you more than others? If so, why?

d. Are there certain advantages or disadvantages to any of the mediums in telling the historic story accurately?

e. Are there certain advantages or disadvantages to any of the mediums in compelling audience interest in the historic story?

f. Did any specific details of the historic event seem to emerge more easily/readily because of the medium chosen? For example, did you have the opportunity to share and learn different information via the journal entry than the newspaper article or the short story?

g. What does this exercise cause you to think about "sources of history" and how they might affect your perception and understanding of an historic event? Should each medium be judged equally appropriate for accurately presenting an audience with an historic story or not? Why?

h. How did this exercise affect your understanding of the historic event you were studying? Do you feel you learned more or less than if you had approached the study simply by reading the textbook description of the event, news stories of the time, or historic articles about the event?

2. Consider having students submit a PDF of their historic essay, short story, dramatic scene, newspaper entry, or journal entry for possible publication on the Educate.Today website. Please be sure that the submission is appropriate for the website's audience. As part of the interactive nature of Educate.Today, we welcome submissions from teachers and students to publish on the website and extend the conversation to more teachers and students as they visit the website. If you are interested in potentially having one of your student PDFs published on the website, contact us at [info@educate.today](mailto:info@educate.today) and put "Publishing Historic Medium Example" in the title line.

3. If it's more appropriate for the product they created for this activity, have students create a short video (no more than six minutes) of their project that would be appropriate for publication on our Educate.Today website. As part of the interactive nature of Educate.Today, we welcome submissions from teachers and students to publish on the website and extend the conversation to more teachers and students as they visit the website. If you are interested in potentially having one of your student videos published on the website, contact us at [info@educate.today](mailto:info@educate.today) and put "Publishing Historic Medium Video" in the title line.

4. If students engage in discussing any of the questions included in "Extension Assignment Option 1" above, have them consider creating a short video (2 minutes maximum) that provides their answer to one or more of those questions and submit it to Educate.Today for possible publication on the website. As part of the interactive nature of Educate.Today, we welcome submissions from teachers and students to publish on the website and extend the conversation to more teachers and students as they visit the website. If you are interested in potentially having one of your student videos published on the website, contact us at [info@educate.today](mailto:info@educate.today) and put "Publishing Historic Medium Extension Question Video" in the title line.

#### **Assessment/Evaluation Options**

1. Evaluation of the student work created both on its effective use of the medium chosen as well as the clarity and (if you choose) the accuracy of its historic information.
2. Individual student reflection and/or class discussion on how the activity affected their understanding of different ways that historic information is presented and how the power and unique features of any particular medium might affect the history that people learn.