



Biography Lesson Plan

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STANDARDS:

National Standards for United States History

- Standard 1E – Interpret data presented in time lines.
- Standard 4B – Obtain historical data
- Standard 4C – Interrogate historical data

LESSON:

Step 1: Quick Write

Student will choose a person to be the subject of their biography project. The person must have been born between 1850 and 1930 and lived in the United States. Students can choose one of their ancestors, a historical figure, a celebrity or someone important to their community.

Have students record what they know about this person and what they want to learn on a KWL chart. What was their occupation? When and where were they born? Who did they marry? Did they have children? Where did they live? Did they serve in the military? What were they famous for? Generate more questions as a class.

Students will use the chart to fill in what they learn throughout the project.

Step 2: Preliminary Research

Students will gather facts about their chosen person. Students who choose a historical figure will read books and articles published about this person. Those that choose an ancestor will read published family histories or biographies to learn more about their ancestor. If nothing has been published about their ancestor, students may need to interview someone who knew that person.

Students will gather facts including birth date and place, parent's names, residences, spouses' names, marriage dates and places, death date and place, etc. These facts will help them locate the historical documents in the next step.

Step 3: Historical Documents

Students will take what they have learned about their subject and search Ancestry.com to find historical documents about this person. Examples include:

1. Census records
2. Vital records – births, marriages, deaths
3. Newspaper articles – obituaries, marriage notices, birth announcements, awards, etc.
4. Military records – WWI and WWII draft registrations, civil war soldiers and pension indexes,
5. City directories

Using the historical documents, students will evaluate the published sources they used or interviews they conducted for accuracy.

Step 4: Add Historical Facts

Students will add historical events that may have affected their subject's life on a local and national level. Was there a war fought during their lifetime? Was there a natural disaster? Who was president? Students can use online resources as well as published histories.

Step 5: Presentation

Students will create a timeline of their historical person to present to the class or the teacher. The timelines can be created by hand or on computers. Students can also create a written report or give an oral presentation to give more details about the historical person than can be shown on a timeline. Their final project should include copies of the historical documents found and a discussion of any inaccuracies found during their preliminary research.