

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT
Lesson Title – A Hartford Soldier’s Experience during WWI
From Asia Boxtton

Grade – 9th

Length of class period – 120 minutes (2 class periods)

Inquiry – What were the daily experiences of soldiers like during World War I?

Objectives

1. Students will be able to understand the daily lives of soldiers fighting in WWI. (Content)
2. Students will be able to analyze the experiences of American soldiers overseas during WWI by reading historical letters. (Skill)
3. Students will be able to create a children’s book that condenses information so that it is easily understood by a younger age group. (Skill)

Materials

1. Poem: “A Soldier’s War Experience” by Don Blanding
2. Two WWI Letters by George Hanford
3. Letter Analysis Worksheet
4. Paper, Writing Utensils, & Art Materials

Activities

1. Teacher will ask students to describe what they believe a “typical” soldier's experience is like during a time of war, using their own background knowledge from outside information and previous lessons. As students answer, teacher will list their answers on the whiteboard. (5 minutes)
2. Teacher will then hand out the poem “A Soldier’s War Experience” to the class. As a class the teacher and students will read and analyze the poem. The teacher will ask questions such as “How do you think war influences soldiers?” and “Do you think this recent poem can relate to soldiers during more historical times?” (15 minutes)
3. The teacher will then place students in groups of 2-3 and hand them two WWI letters written by a Hartford Soldier and a Letter Analysis Worksheet. The groups will work together to understand the experiences of the soldier. (25 minutes)
4. The class will then come together and discuss some of the themes found in the soldier’s letter home. The class will also go over the Letter Analysis Worksheet. (15 minutes)
5. The teacher will then explain that understanding the experiences of soldiers is very important, but complicated especially for younger students. In order to help students understand these experiences each group will create a children’s book that depicts George Hanford’s letters. The book can be in a traditional narrative form or poetry. The book should be designed to be used with 4th or 5th grade students. (60 minutes)

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

1. Students will be informally assessed through classroom discussion and participation.
2. Students will be formally assessed on the group completion of a historical children’s

book.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

- 1.1. Demonstrate an understanding of significant events in United States history.
- 2.2 Interpret information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including electronic media (e.g. maps, charts, graphs, images, artifacts, recordings, and text)
- 2.3 Create various forms of written work (e.g. journal, essay, blog, Web page, brochure) to demonstrate an understanding of history and social studies issues.
- 2.4 Demonstrate an ability to participate in social studies discourse through informed discussion, debate, and effective oral presentation.
- 3.1. Use evidence to identify, analyze, and evaluate historical interpretations.

A Soldier's War Experience

By Don Blanding.

What did you see, soldier? What did you see at the war?

I saw such glory and horror as I've never seen before,
I saw men's hearts burned naked in red crucibles of pain;
I saw such Godlike courage as I'll never see again.

What did you hear, soldier? What did you hear at war?

I heard prayers on lips of men who had never prayed before;
I heard the men utter thoughts they will never think again;
I heard the sacred things they will not speak again.

What did you eat soldier? What did you eat at war?

I ate sour bread of fear, the acrid salt of gore, my lips burned with
wine of hate, the scalding drink of Cain. My tongue has known a
bitter taste I would not taste again.

What did you think, soldier? What did you think at war?

I thought, how strange we have not learned from wars that raged
before, except new ways for killing, new multiples of pain.
Is all the blood that men have shed but blood shed in vain?

What did you learn, soldier? What did you learn at war?

I learned we must learn sometime what was not learned before;
that victories won on battlefields are victories won in vain.
Unless in peace we kill the germs that breed new wars again.

What did you pray, soldier? What did you pray at war?

I prayed that we might do the thing we have not done before;
that we might mobilize for peace- nor mobilize in vain lest Christ
and man be forced to climb stark Calvary again.

