

Out of History

Purpose

Students will learn to write creative narratives with a biographical focus.

Materials

For the students: copies of Black Line Master (BLM) *Out of History*, pens or pencils

Activity

A. Pre-Activity Discussion

1. Discuss with students the genre of *historical fiction*. Ask students for examples of stories that feature real historical figures.
2. Have students imagine that a person they know from history has been transported in a time machine to modern times. Have students name several possible historical figures for this trip, and discuss some things that each figure might do if he/she found himself/herself pulled into the present.
3. Explain that students will be writing stories that start with this situation and continue from it.

B. Pick a Character; Write a Story

1. Ask students to consult encyclopedias and biographies in the school library before making their final choice on whom to write about. Have them do background reading to find out more about their historical figure.
2. Introduce the BLM *Out of History*. Have students use the BLM to guide their planning, beginning by identifying the personal qualities and attitudes they will show in their historical figure. Ask students to consider what they have read about this person and to think about whether the character is likely to be proud or humble, cheerful or serious, kind or ruthless.
3. Have students choose a modern setting or activity that this character might find challenging or interesting, such as a setting they know (e.g., a school, a mall) or one that they have read or heard about (e.g., the White House, Hollywood). Ask students to consider how their historical figure might react to the settings they have chosen.

(continued)

connecting across the curriculum



Social Studies

To link with the Grade 7 social studies Standards, encourage students to focus the activity on historical figures from Africa, Asia, and the Southwest Pacific, such as Tutankhamen, Confucius, or Gandhi.

MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS



Have students who would enjoy a challenge write short plays or produce videos based on their stories.

Standards Link 7.4.2

Activity (continued)

4. Have students continue following the BLM directions, sketching details of the modern setting, and have them plan problems, events, dialogue, and resolution of the story.
5. Have students write a 500- to 700-word story using the details they have noted in the BLM. Remind them to have fun with the assignment and to be creative in depicting the historical figure in modern circumstances.

C. Close the Activity

1. Have students read their completed stories to the class. Ask them to introduce the story by explaining who their historical figure is and the character qualities they are trying to show.
2. Discuss whether historical figures seem real to us today. Ask in what ways people in the past were like us and in what ways they may have been different.

Classroom Assessment

Basic Concepts and Processes

When students have completed their stories, assess their knowledge by asking the following questions:



What is *historical fiction*?



What elements must be considered in planning and writing a story?



How can you organize story elements to make a story flow well?

Name: _____

OUT OF HISTORY

Directions: Imagine that a figure from the past has been transported to the present. Use this planning guide sheet to help you think through the details that you will use in your story about what happens to this historical figure.

Who will be the main character?

What will this character be like? List several character traits.

Where will the story take place? Describe the setting.

What problems or challenges could the main character encounter?

How could the main character respond or react to these challenges?

What other characters could the main character meet? What might they talk about?

How will the story end? How will the challenges or problems be resolved?

OUT OF HISTORY

Teacher Directions

Distribute copies of the BLM *Out of History* to students. Help them plan their story writing by going through the essential elements of the BLM with them. After students fill out the name of the historical figure they have chosen to write about, have them list at least three traits or qualities that this character will display in the story. Tell students they should be ready to explain how these traits reflect their background reading on the figure.

Tell students next to choose a modern setting in which to place the character, such as a setting they know (e.g., a mall, a school) or one that they have read or heard about (e.g., the White House, Hollywood). Have students write a short description of the setting they have chosen.

Have students identify two to three problems or challenges the historical figure may encounter in the modern setting. This could range from simple problems like having no modern money to more unusual challenges like responding to a national emergency.

Ask students to imagine how their historical figure will respond to the challenges or problems. Remind them that these responses should be consistent with the character traits they described earlier.

Have students consider other characters they might include in their story and the kinds of conversations they would be likely to have. Then, ask students to consider the way the story will end and how the problems or challenges will be overcome.

Tell students they can now use the details from the BLM to guide them in writing a story.

Answer Key

Answers will vary.