

Using Literature to Explore Great Lakes Folklore, Fables and Features

Debra L. Zolynsky/Kennedy Middle School
Target Audience: 6-8 students, Language Arts

Lesson Overview: Folklore and fables are a great way to bring the past to life. “The Great Lakes Mariners” tabloid about the Great Lakes region is filled with stories written by sea captains, and reprints of previous articles written by families about the Great Lakes’ past. Students will read articles in “The Great Lakes Mariners” and choose one on which to report. They will summarize the article and read their report to the class.

Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Interpret written narratives about the Great Lakes
2. Write a well-organized synopsis of their chosen article
3. Compare and contrast their lives to the Great Lake author chosen
4. Properly use a dictionary to locate unfamiliar terms

Materials needed:

One classroom set of stories from “The Great Lakes Mariner.” (<http://www.greatlakespilotpreview.com>)
One classroom set of dictionaries.

New vocabulary: new vocabulary will be found throughout the articles chosen by students. Dictionaries should be provided.

Background information

The Great Lakes Mariner offers many anecdotes about the Great Lakes, shipping, ghost towns, and other stories told in the tone of an old-timer spinning a yarn. The fables and folklore in this site lends a feeling different from modern tales. It is a good text to compare with other genres.

Focus question: Imagine you are a sailor in the merchant marine. What do you think life is like for you? What kind of clothes do you wear? What kind of food do you eat? Is it lonely on the ship? What do you do for fun? How long are you at sea?

Attention getter: The teacher will read an article from the website that will pique their interest.

Activity: students will receive a copy of the stories to find an article of interest. They should take notes on their choice in order to write a summary later. After 15 minutes, students will begin their oral synopsis. For the rest of the hour, students should begin writing a summary of what they have read using their notes.

Assessment: two-to-three-paragraph written summary of article comparing his or her own lives with that of the author.

Extensions/enhancements

Students could:

- Write a play and perform it for the class
- Create a diorama of the setting in the article
- Research the town of Fayette
- Find the location of their story on a map
- Draw accurate diagrams of an actual ship, including the inside. Label the different parts.

State of Michigan Middle School Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

I.1.MS.1

Use reading for multiple purposes, such as enjoyment, clarifying information, and learning complex procedures.

I.1.MS.2

Read with developing fluency a variety of texts, such as short stories, novels, poetry, plays, textbooks, manuals, and periodicals.

I.1.MS.3

Employ multiple strategies to construct meaning, such as generating questions, studying vocabulary, analyzing mood and tone, recognizing how authors use information, generalizing ideas, matching form to content, and developing reference skills.

I.1.MS.4

Employ multiple strategies to recognize words as they construct meaning, including the use of context clues, word roots and affixes, and syntax.

I.1.MS.5

Respond to a variety of oral, visual, written, and electronic texts by making connections to their personal lives and the lives of others.

I.2.MS.2

Recognize and use authors' techniques that convey meaning and build empathy with readers when composing their own texts. Examples include appeals to reason and emotion, use of figurative language, and grammatical conventions, which assist audience comprehension.

I.2.MS.3

Plan and draft texts, and revise and edit their own writing, and help others revise and edit their texts in such areas as content, perspective, and effect.

I.3.MS.5

Select appropriate strategies to construct meaning while reading, listening to, viewing, or creating texts. Examples include generating relevant questions, studying vocabulary, analyzing mood and tone, recognizing how authors and speakers use information and matching form to content.

I.3.MS.6

Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts in oral, visual, and written texts by using a variety of resources, such as semantic and structural features, prior knowledge, reference materials, and electronic sources.

I.3.MS.7

Recognize and use varied techniques to construct text, convey meaning, and express feelings to influence an audience. Examples include identification with characters and multiple points of view.

I.3.MS.8

Express their responses and make connections between oral, visual, written, and electronic texts and their own lives.

I.4.MS.1

Compare and contrast spoken, written, visual, and nonverbal patterns in language as used in a variety of daily experiences.

I.4.MS.2

Investigate the origins of language patterns and vocabularies and their impact on meaning in informal situations. An example is comparing language in a business letter and a friendly letter.

VI.8.MS.1

Select and use mechanics that enhance and clarify understanding. Examples include paragraphing, organizational patterns, variety in sentence structure, appropriate punctuation, grammatical constructions, conventional spelling, and the use of connective devices, such as previews and reviews.

VI.8.MS.3

Describe and use characteristics of various informational genre (e.g., biographies, newspapers, brochures, and persuasive arguments and essays) and elements of expository text structure (e.g. multiple patterns of organization, relational links and central purposes) to convey ideas.

VIII.10.MS.1

Analyze themes and central ideas in literature and other texts in relation to issues in their own lives.

VIII.10.MS.2

Perform the daily functions of a literate individual. Examples include acquiring information from multiple sources and then evaluating, organizing, and communicating it in various contexts.

State of Michigan Middle School Science Benchmarks

II.1.MS.1

Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of claims, arguments, or data.

II.1.MS.6

Recognize the contributions made in science by cultures and individuals of diverse backgrounds.

Resources

www.greatlakespilotpreview.com