

Voices of History: Relating Historic Events to Current Events



Grades 4–6

Using AIT Products

- *Assignment: The World*, any weekly program
- *Tracks: Impressions of America*, Programs 3–8

Overview

Each week, *Assignment: The World* presents a review of current events and challenges students to explore the news from different perspectives. In this lesson, students will chose to represent the perspective of an historic figure as they react to the recent news events.

Objectives

- Relate today’s global events to the events of an earlier time in American history.
- Present the perspectives of an historic figure in a different context.
- Explain how events and circumstances today are similar and different from the past.

Vocabulary

biography
characteristic
concept map
current events
historic figure

Preparation

Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 students each. Provide a space in class to retrieve resources for the project. Pre-select historic figures or groups of names for each group so that every group is representing a different person.

Materials Needed

- AIT video series: Record the current week’s program of *Assignment: The World*, either off-air from your local public TV station, or from www.atwonline.org.
- Gather resources that provide biographical information about a variety of historic figures. *Tracks* programs 3–8 feature actors in the roles of famous Americans from history. You may choose other videos, books, or Web sites for reference. You need not limit your list of famous persons to Americans only.
- Index cards for each student group.
- Images of each famous person.

Planning Notes

- If your class participates in SSR (Silent Sustained Reading), encourage students to read biographical materials on the famous person their group is representing.
- Choose stories from *Assignment: The World* that also delve into science (a frequent topic featured in ATW) and relate the science story to class science activities.

Time

This project will take about 15 minutes of viewing time and 30 minutes of group work time during the first week (in two 15-minute sessions), in addition to homework and independent research time. Following that, the lesson can be completed in 15 minutes viewing time, plus 15 minutes of group work and reporting time.

Procedure—Day 1

Introduce Topic

Ask students to think of the positive characteristics that make people more likely to impact history. Create a concept map on the board and for each characteristic, ask students if they know of a person who is a good example of that characteristic. Guide the discussion to focus on historic figures, adding those names to the concept map. Honesty, for instance, links to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Creative or inventive links to Ben Franklin, Thomas Edison, and George Washington Carver.

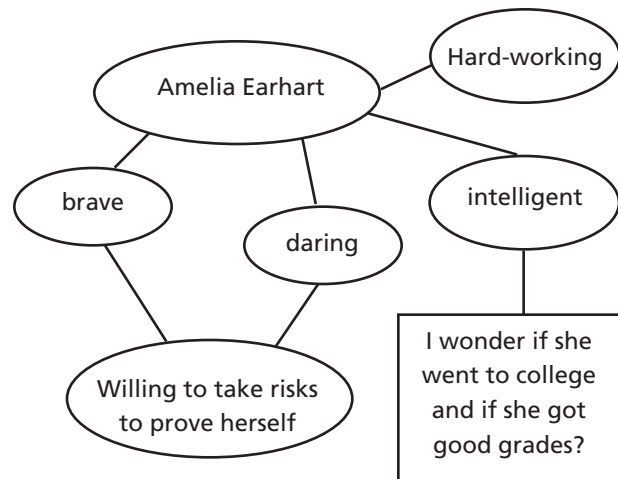
Pre-Viewing Activity

Explain that in this lesson, each student group will assume the personality of an historic figure and as the group learns about that person, it will be the job of the group to consider current events and to comment on events as they think the historic person would.

Group Work

Select or assign one historic figure for each group. Allow students 15 minutes with their group to collect resource materials and brainstorm to record

what they already know about that person. Have each student keep a concept map from the brainstorming session and encourage them to add to the map as they continue their research on that person. They should each make a list of questions to research and learn more about this person, as in this example:



Viewing

Practice together by selecting a well-known figure—George Washington—and reviewing a story from *Assignment: The World*. As a class, discuss how the First U.S. President might respond to the event that is happening today. What characteristics of President Washington would he put to work in responding to this event? Ask students to keep these questions in mind as they view the segment, and invite them to take notes as they view. At the end of the short segment, discuss how Washington would respond. How would he respond as President of the United States? How would he respond as the leader of the Continental Army? How would he respond as a farmer and husband?

Homework

Finally, have the student groups decide on one question for each student in the group to research, so that they all can learn more about their historic person.

Procedure—Day 2

Review/Reflection

Provide 15 minutes for groups to share the results of their research and to expand their concept maps or to create new questions for further research. Invite students to keep journal notes of what they learn from their own research as well as the research of their peers.

Introduce New Topic: Voices of History

Explain that from now on, each group will be responsible for assuming the personality of the group's historic figure and for responding to current events as the historic figure would.

Pre-Viewing Activity

Ask students to keep their concept map of their historic figure handy as they view the segment, and to take notes on how they think their historic figure would respond to the events of today.

Video

Cue to a news or science story in *Assignment: The World*. Pause or rewind the video to allow time for comprehension or to engage in class discussion.

Group Work

Provide at least 5 minutes for groups to confer following the viewing of each segment. Have a different person from the group report on how their historic figure would react.

Homework

Assist students in finding additional resources and encourage them to continue their research on the historic figure.

Procedure—Day 3 and Beyond

Repeat Day 2 procedure as often as you like. Assign new historic figures to groups after several weeks have passed.

Assessment

Individual Assessment

Student's individual concept maps and journal notes are a great indicator of student performance. Have students submit their journals for review, grades, and comments once after Day Two and periodically thereafter.

Group Assessment

Have each group create a comic strip, story board, or video to display how their historic figure would react to a current event. Give 75 points for accuracy, verifiability, and completeness of information presented; and 25 points for creativity.

Extension Activity: Science

Select a science story on *Assignment: The World* and have the historic figure react to that. Or, select historic scientists during part of the school year and have students research their personalities and then react to current events as they think the historic persons would.

Resources

www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/

A long list of historic figures from around the globe with brief biographies and images. From the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

www.pbs.org/history/history_biographies.html

PBS site with links to biographical resources from several PBS series. Some of this material is a bit advanced for Grades 4–6, but students can be encouraged to review videos with their parents or caregivers in order to glean relevant information about the characteristics of their historic person.

pbskids.org/wayback/prez/secrets/index.html

This PBS site just for kids offers a whimsical secret about each former U.S. President.