

“Dear Future Historian” Lesson Plan

Grade: Upper Elementary and Middle School (4 – 8)

Topics: Primary Sources, Genealogy

Duration: 30 – 50 minutes

Lesson Overview

Students will write a letter to a future historian and create a family tree to engage with their own family history and identify significance in one’s own life.

Learning Objective

- Students will explain the ways in which historians make conclusions about historical families including what types of sources can be used for genealogical research.

Vocabulary

- **Genealogy:** the study of families, family history, and the tracing of their lineages.
- **Primary Source:** Original documents and objects that were created at the time an event or topic took place. Includes but not limited to artifacts, documents, manuscripts, diaries, recordings, and photographs.
- **Secondary Source:** An article, report, or other source of information created later by someone who did not experience the event or topic first-hand and often includes analysis.

Lesson Steps

- I. Introduction (5-10 minutes)
 - a. Review definition and examples of primary sources
 - i. Difference between primary and secondary sources
 - ii. Examples of primary sources: objects, official documents, personal letters and diaries, photographs, audio and video recordings, newspaper articles, etc.
 - b. Warm up prompt: What sources would a historian look for to discover your life story?
- II. Letter for Future Historian and Family Tree (20-30 minutes)
 - a. Pass out worksheet to each student
 - b. On page one ask students to pretend a historian has stumbled upon a letter the student wrote about their life. What information would you want a historian to know about you?
 - c. On page two create your own family tree
 - i. Be creative. You can draw an actual tree or make a chart.
 - ii. Remind students that families can look different from one another so the structure might not be the same as their classmates. Family doesn’t always mean blood-related so let them decide who makes up their family
- III. Share with Class (5-10 minutes)
 - a. Each student can share one or two interesting facts from their letter or family tree

Name: _____

Date: _____

DESIGN YOUR FAMILY TREE

Every family is unique. Who makes up your family story?



Name: _____

Date: _____

LETTER TO FUTURE HISTORIAN



A future historian is studying the 21st century and wants to discover your story. They uncovered a letter written by you that tells them about your life. What does it say?