

Title of lesson: Underground Railroad Unit

Author: Leslie Read

Grade level: 4

Core subject areas: Social Studies, Reading, Writing

Length of unit: 6 weeks

Targeted IT Performance Assessment Task:

This unit integrates task 1 from grade four (word processing, email, and electronic research), but the students create a response to literature and an essay cover instead of a newsletter. The email component of task 1 is not included in this unit. Part of task 2 (graphing, spreadsheets, and multimedia) is also included in this unit, since several students will create a multimedia presentation. The graphing and spreadsheet components are not included in this unit.

Prerequisite Technology Skills:

To be successful at the integrated technology tasks students should have background knowledge in the following skills prior to the unit or should be shown the following skills during the unit:

- Creating h-drive folders
- Text blocks
- Word processing skills: font, style, size, color
- Drawing/Painting skills: various tools
- Familiarity with Hyperstudio or I-movie
- Experience with judging reliability of a website

Internet research skills: using a search engine, navigating the web

Unit Summary:

This unit was created for a fourth grade classroom. This six week, integrated unit incorporates social studies, reading, and writing. Throughout this unit students will research, reflect, and create projects around slavery and the slaves' quests for freedom by way of the Underground Railroad. By the end of the unit students will be able to identify factors involving the movement of slaves in the Underground Railroad. They will research and form their own concept of why democratic values of equality and freedom were something slaves wanted for themselves. Students will also develop and understanding of the effects of prejudice and the need for respect in our world today.

Students will be reading books about the Underground Railroad in small, differentiated reading groups. Based on these books they will write a response to literature essay. Prior to beginning the unit the students will also take a pre-assessment, which is given again at the end of the unit to help determine growth. During this unit students will choose one of several projects, based on Multiple Intelligences, to show their learning. Each project has different research questions. Students will create an offline search prior to conducting their internet research. They will research using search engines, a mini-homepage I created, CDs, and online encyclopedias. Once they have gathered all of the necessary information, they will analyze their findings, and create their projects for presentation.

Non-technology Vermont Content/Vital Result Standards:

- Movement and Settlements 6.8
- Historical Connections 6.4
- Effects of Prejudice 4.4
- Writing Conventions 1.6
- Writing Dimensions 1.5
- Response to Literature 1.7
- Research 1.19

Activities:

1. Preassessment- Students take a two page, short answer preassessment based on the essential questions described above.
2. Reading groups begin- Students in four differentiated groups read one of the following book: Freedom Crossing, The Last Safe House, If You Traveled On the Underground Railroad, and Civil War on Sunday.
3. Technology whole group lesson- As a group we review how to determine the validity of websites. We also practice this using several websites. At this time I also introduce the offline search paper (see appendix). We practice creating keywords for searches, finding synonyms if our keywords don't work, and recording citation information from a site. We do this as a whole group, using a transparency copy of the offline search tool.
4. When the students are able to discuss why websites are reliable and can create search keywords from sample searches, I then introduce the project choices. The students can select from the following projects:
 - a. Underground Railroad Play
 - b. A Timeline
 - c. Venn Diagrams
 - d. Drinking Gourd Song Project
 - e. Still Image I-movie Project
 - f. Freedom Maps
 - g. Quilts
 - h. Crossword Puzzles
 - i. Hyperstudio Slideshow
 - j. Narrative

Each project presents students with different questions, although all of the questions revolve around the unit objectives described in the introduction. Students research everything from the words of the Drinking Gourd song to plantation life, ways to escape north, and prejudice. Students also examine famous people and events.

5. Once each child has selected their project, they then begin planning their offline search. They create search words and synonyms. As they search they use both search engines, such as yahoo, and a pre-created Underground Railroad resource website, that I made.

6. I use a stations approach during this unit. During research I split the students into small groups and they rotate through three research stations. One station involves internet research and the online encyclopedia. I have five computers in my classroom which students use at this station. A second group goes to the library and uses the CD-ROM encyclopedia, Encarta for research. The third group of students using book resources in the classroom. Prior to the unit I check out library books to create an in-class Underground Railroad resource library for my students to research with. Each group spends two days at each station. While students research on the internet they are also expected to cite internet resources that they collected information from. They record this information on the offline search paper. They also label each site with an “R” if they found it to be reliable.
7. Prior to beginning the stations I review how to make network folders on our h-drive. The students have learned this skill earlier in the year, but I assess it during this unit and review the process before the students begin researching. To assess this skill I observe them during their rotation through the internet research station. I have a checklist of skills I am looking for and I ask each student to make an h-drive folder entitled “Underground Railroad”. They also have to save some of the internet articles that they used to this folder and cite each article. I am also able to look at their h-drive folders on my own time to see if children were able to create one. Although, by observing it directly, I can ensure that each child did it independently.
8. After the students have collected all of their information from all three station settings, I begin to meet with small groups. I meet with each group to go over the information analysis process, since it looks differently for each group. Several groups have templates to create before they begin their projects; other groups are able to create rough drafts on drawing paper. For example, when I meet with the Hyperstudio group I discuss how to plan their project and provide them with a template. Since my class has already created two other Hyperstudio projects earlier in the year I do not need to give direct instruction. I will assess this group on their multimedia presentation. During our small group meeting I answer any questions that the students have, but most of the work is done independently since I plan to assess them on their ability. On the other hand, the students who are creating the still image I-movie have very little experience with the software. They are able to use digital cameras and already know how to import internet pictures into a document. When I meet with this group I do a mini-lesson on importing images into the software and then have the students collect and import their images. Once the students have completed that step of the process I meet with the small group again to teach them how to create the movie, insert transitions, and use text. Then I let them try it with their own movies. My time with this group is very different than with the Hyperstudio group. The I-movie group receives a lot more support since they are just learning the software. I won’t assess their technology multimedia skills at this time. I will assess them at a later time when they create another movie. I follow one of the two process describe above, when I

- meet with each small group. When I'm meeting with a group, the other groups work on the rough draft format of their presentation.
9. Once every group completes their template or rough draft they have to check it with me to ensure that they have included all of their research question findings into their project. Once they have checked with me they then begin their final draft.
 10. After the projects are completed the students practice their presentation and then we spend three days presenting the projects to the class. At this time I assess the students on the social studies standards.

Response to Literature:

About half way through this research process the students begin their response to literature. They begin by brainstorming in their writing groups and collecting examples from their reading group text to support their character analysis. The writing process occurs during literacy time and when the students are ready for their final draft they word process it.

Prior to the final drafts I teach mini-lessons to each writing group. I review old skills such as font, style, color, size of text, cutting and pasting, using spell check, and importing graphics from the Clarisworks library. I also introduce the skill of creating text blocks and I provide practice time for the students. At another time I teach another mini-lesson to each small group about using the paint/draw tools. The students have to create a cover for their essay using these tools. They have to use the line, box, oval, fill, pencil, paintbrush, and spray can tools. Most of these tools are familiar to them since I have introduced the tools earlier in the year for other projects. The marquee (manipulation tool) is new as well as manipulating an object by rotating, moving, scaling, and reshaping it. I provide practice time with both of these new skills.

After the mini-lessons are done, I provide the students with a checklist that outlines each skill I expect them to use. I use the same checklist when I assess them on their task. This allows them to make sure they include each component and allows them to know exactly what I'm assessing them on in the area of technology. Since I have five computers in my class most students are able to work on the final draft as they finish the writing process. I also try to sign out the wireless laptop pod so every student can be working in the classroom on their final draft as they finish the process. I also use stations at writing time. This method allows me to only have 8 or 9 students working on their response to literature at one time.

As the students work on their final drafts I observe them using the checklist and record what they are able to do independently and what I needed to assist them with or what another child helped them with. I also look at their final product to assess any skills I may have missed during their work time. The checklist translates to the rubric so I am able to accurately assess them.

Assessment

Assessment is embedded throughout the unit. I use checklists to assess as I observe students working on the response to literature, their research, or their multimedia tasks. Plenty of practice time needs to be provided before students are assessed on a skill.

Most of the technology skills I assess in this unit have been introduced during a previous unit, so the students are ready to be assessed on those skills during this unit. I do introduce a few new technology skills during this unit, but I provide practice time with the skill before assessing it. It is important to separate instruction from assessment. When I assess I am looking to see what students can do independently. I provide assistance if they need it to complete a task, but I record that help was needed on my checklists.

I find it helpful to assess as much as possible during observation of students completing the skills, however it is not possible to observe every skill with every student. I do rely on the final product to assess skills that I was unable to observe during class. I have often asked a student to demonstrate a skill again, if completion of that skill cannot be determined by examining the final product.

When students have completed the unit I examine the technology rubrics to determine what technology skills were not successfully met so I know what I should incorporate into my next unit. The task rubrics and checklists provide on-going assessment for me. I reteach skills that weren't mastered and continue to assess throughout the next units.

Teaching Hints:

1. Use stations with technology. It makes it easier to observe for assessment purposes and mini-lessons are often more effective with small groups.
2. Checklists are very helpful for breaking down the tasks and for students to self-assess with.
3. Provide plenty of practice, prior to assessing the technology skills.
4. Use on-going assessment with the technology tasks to see true growth over the year.

Under round Railroad Content Rubric

	Beginning	Almost There	Meets the Standard	Exceeds the Standard
Standard 6.8 Movements and Settlements	3 or more factors were missing or incorrect in the student's project.	1 or 2 factors were missing or incorrect in the student's project.	The student's project demonstrates an understanding of all required factors involved in the movement of slaves in the U.R.	The student's project demonstrates an understanding of all required factors involved in the movement of slaves in the U.R. and additional knowledge of factors was demonstrated.
Standard 6.4 Historical Connections Standard 4.4 Effects of Prejudice	The project shows no understanding of freedom or equality.	The project demonstrates an understanding of either equality or freedom, and the role it played in the U.R.	The project demonstrates an understanding of both equality and freedom, and the role each played in the U.R.	