

A School Yard Journal

Background Information

Lewis and Clark kept very explicit journals of all they saw and experienced on their expedition. These journals provided information about the many new plants and animals that were discovered. The landscape and weather conditions were also noted. Their journals were the first written records of the land west of the Mississippi River.

Overview of Activity

Students will visit the school yard and look upon it in a new way. Students will note some specific things they see-plants, trees, landscape, equipment, etc. These “discoveries” will be noted in a hand made journal.

Purpose

Students will observe things that are seen and note specific details to describe them. Students will learn to write in detail about what they see. Students will make their own journal.

Materials Needed

For observation:

- notebook paper
- pencil
- clipboard

For handmade journal:

- small brown paper sacks
- blank white paper-2 sheets per student
- yarn
- hole punch

Advance Preparations

1. Find a time when the school yard will be empty so that your students will be able to explore without distraction.
2. Cut paper bags apart so that they will lay flat in a rectangular shape.
3. Read some of Lewis and Clark’s journal entries to the class. Samples may be found at http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/archive/idx_jou.html

Implementation

1. Discuss entire activity with students. Begin by telling students they will be explorers of the school yard. They are to pretend no one has ever seen the school yard before, so they will want to describe what they see in complete detail. A

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picture may even be drawn. Each student should find three things to describe. Students will use notebook paper to make a rough draft of what they see. The rough draft will then be used to make the journal entry. After the exploring activity, each student will construct his or her own journal out of brown paper sacks. Final copy journal entries will then be put into the journal.

2. Take the students on their exploration of the school yard. Each child should look for three different things they see and write down as many details as possible. A sketch may also be drawn. This will be the student's rough draft of the journal entry.
3. After returning to the classroom, distribute brown paper sacks, two white pieces of paper, and a 20" piece of yarn to each child. Have the child lay the bag down with the white paper on top. Fold the bag in half to form a book cover with white pages in the middle. Hole punch the folded side twice and lace the yarn through. Tie in a bow to secure.
4. On the front cover, the student should write their name and School Yard Journal. Example: Sara's School Yard Journal.
5. On the pages inside the journal, students should make final copies of the three observations they recorded from the school yard. Drawings may be included.

Follow-Up Activity

1. Students may share their completed journals with classmates by reading their selections aloud.
2. Journals may be displayed for other classes to view.
3. Grades may be taken on finished journals.