Of Mice and Men

WebQuest Description: This webquest provides background info for the study of the novella of Mice and Men. It is geared for individual use but could be modified for groups.

Grade Level: 9-12
Curriculum: English / Language Arts
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Introduction

Students are forever asking, "Why do we have to read this?" The answer isn't "Because I'm the teacher, and I said so," although that may be partly true. The real answer lies in the power of literature. We read literature to tell us about what it means to be human. That's pretty much it—literature shows readers the incredible variation in the human condition. Literature tells us about friends, enemies, lovers and, well for a lack of a better word, haters. Literature shows us courage, cowardice, cleverness and cruelty. Literature makes us laugh (sometimes so hard we snort milk out of our nose), and it makes us cry (just read a book where a dog dies—try not to cry). We can also time travel through literature. Although we can feel the same emotions the characters in books and plays feel, sometimes we don't know enough about the time in which the story takes place. The setting can affect how we understand the characters and the story as well. Knowing the story's background is a lot like finding out about someone before a first date by asking his or her best friend questions. Think of this webquest as your "pre-date" questioning time--

Tasks

Your task is to find out about the world in which George and Lenny (the main characters of the book you're about to read) live. Once you've uncovered enough info, you will analyze and connect that info to our current world. Finally, you'll share your insights and analysis with your classmates.

Process

Step 1: Below are 6 different topics that will give you the inside scoop on Of Mice and Men that you are about to read. Scroll down the list—right now before reading Step 2.

Step 2: Which topics look interesting? None? Too bad—you've got to read/explore at least one (that's 1) link under each topic. Now—go explore before moving on to the next step.

Step 3: That wasn't so bad, was it? Out of those 6 topics, choose 3 you want to dig into more deeply. Do that right now—got 'em picked out?

Step 4: Here's another choice you get to make. If you like to take notes on paper, grab three (3) note sheets from your teacher. Put your name and the topic on the top of each one. If you like to take notes on the computer, download the notesheet below this box—you'll need to either download it 3 times or copy it once you've downloaded it. Type your name and the topic on the top of each one and save it where you can get back to it. (If you choose this option, make sure you have access to a printer outside of school because you'll need to bring in a printed copy for the final step.)

Step 5: Only 3 steps left... Taking one topic at a time, explore at least 2 more links. Do some thinking. What did you learn? Does the info seem like anything that's going on today? What's your reaction to finding out this "stuff"?

(Remember, this is that finding out info about a potential date before the date thingie.)

Step 6: Bring your note sheets to class. Pick the 2 topics you want to talk about the most. When you're teacher tells you, you'll post them on the wall.

Step 7: Depending on which group you're in, you'll either stand by your notes and talk to your classmates as you come around—you'll want to share the new stuff you found out and your reactions. If you're not talking in the first round, you'll listen to your classmates and ask questions as you move around the classroom.

Evaluation

Your grade on this project will be based on 3 things: How well did I stay on task during class work time? How well did I complete the notesheets (even though I'm only turning in one, I'm responsible for completing 3)? How well did I talk about my new info with my classmates, and how well did I listen to them when they were talking? The most important thing about the process is that you learn some stuff (you know, going back to that pre-date questioning thingie) so you understand how your date (Of Mice and Men) is going to act (what the novella is all about).
Okay, so it's corny, but you're now ready for your date book (get it????)...You'll be receiving Of Mice and Men shortly... Don't you feel like you might know what the book is all about already? Can't wait to talk with you about it!

This webquest is really not a webquest in the traditional sense. We're using the format to give the kids some freedom and to break up a block schedule. Additionally, we teach Of Mice and Men using a non-traditional "book-in-a-bag" format, so frontloading the info this way just seems appropriate. For more info on the book in a bag, see "Reading Fiction Whole" at http://www.edweek.org/tsb/articles/2012/02/29/02sacks.h05.html?tkn=STCF%2FYeVI3jIH.

Standards

Credits

Other