Of Mice and Men: Creating Comprehension Through Historical Reflection

WebQuest Description: Students are to use internet research methods and peer editing/reviewing to respond to questions related to an upcoming reading of John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men.

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

First, you will research the historical context from which Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men arose. Then you will create media presentations and written reports using primary and secondary data obtained online. Finally, you will present the information in a cohesive report with accompanying visuals, formatting and organization, and content. Your report will provide you with valuable information related to our upcoming reading of Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men. The more thorough your report now, the greater advantage you have going into the reading, taking related tests, and understanding the movement of the story.

Tasks

Task 1: America is in the middle of a recession and climate change. A reflection of the times perhaps, but during the great depression, a series of economic and natural disasters left America reeling. Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck attempts to capture the depth of social and natural hurdles men must overcome in order to survive during the great depression. The novel's characters George and Lennie are based on workers that Steinbeck knew growing up during the "dust bowl" in California. Obviously, before you enter the world of this book and try to make connections with its ideas, you need to know more about its context. Who wrote it and why? Where did it happen? When did it happen? What are the people like? What is the time period like? In other words, before you think about this book's ideas, you must consider its historical, geographical, social, and cultural contexts. This webquest will encourage you to directly reflect on these questions as you create a report that attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the causes and effects of the great depression?
- What was the geography and social climate of Southern California in the time of the Great Depression?
- Who is John Steinbeck the author?

Process

STEP 1: RESEARCH
You will become knowledgeable with content related to your topic question. You will read, look at, and consider all the websites in your area of expertise. You will determine the 10 most important or interesting concepts related to your question, and then you will take notes on those 10 ideas. You need to gather enough information to fill a 5-minute or less presentation. TIP: Click on a website link in the attached powerpoint to enter the site. When you're ready to leave it, click the BACK ARROW. Don't close the site.

STEP 2: CONSULT WITH LIKE CLASSMATES
Join other students who share the same question. Your teacher will assign a GROUP LEADER. If you are the group leader, you will ask each member to CONCISELY and BRIEFLY describe the 10 ideas he or she will be covering in his or her research paper. Remember, you are helping each other to gain a better understanding of the topic question. You may share information with your group members. Look at the INTERVIEW RUBRIC on the evaluation page and make sure you match the source criteria. Begin outlining possible report formats with your group and begin writing the first drafts accordingly.

STEP 3: SHOWTIME!
You will now present your report on your topic question. Your interview order will be determined by your teacher. Use your report. You may read it or refer to it. Make certain you limit yourself to 5 minutes or less. Listen carefully and respectfully to the other reports. During the other reports, you will write down one interesting idea for each report. You are responsible for one idea per report. This will be part of your reading response journal. Your teacher will use the rubric to evaluate your report.

Evaluation

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Description: First, learners will research the historical context from which Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men arose. Then Students will create media presentations and written reports using primary and secondary data obtained online. Finally, the learners will present the information in a cohesive report with accompanying visuals, formatting and organization, and content.

Teacher Introduction

I created this lesson for the following reasons: To establish a self-to-world historical context by which students may better comprehend the setting, plot, and characters within Of Mice and Men. To ready students for a month-long unit on Of Mice and Men. To reinforce related ELA skills as a precursor to later written assignments related to the written work. To provide students an opportunity to synthesize information from multiple web sources and determine effectiveness of content.

Students will respond to one of the following questions for their written reports:

- What are the causes and effects of the great depression?
- What was the geography and social climate of Southern California in the time of the Great Depression?

Standards to be covered are the following:

- **STANDARD 1** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas, discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information. **STANDARD 2** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression. Students will read and listen to oral, written and electronically produced texts and performances, relate texts and performances to their own lives, and develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for self-expression and artistic creation. **STANDARD 3** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information and issues. **STANDARD 4** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

**Conclusion**

Now that you have had an opportunity to reflect on the content and background of John Steinbeck and Depression era California, you’re going to begin reading Of Mice and Men. Based on what you've learned, you'll be able to make more connections with the novel's ideas and more accurately interpret it!