"Cold Case - Criminal Minds" - "The Tell-Tale Heart"

WebQuest Description: After reading an adapted version of the Edgar Allan Poe short story "The Tell-Tale Heart," students will complete the web quest which encourages them to discover biographical information about the author.

Grade Level: 6-8
Curriculum: English / Language Arts
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Introduction

As the new Investigative Forensic Psychologist for the LMPD (Local Metro Police Department), you have been called to a crime scene that seems strangely familiar to you. During building demolition, human skeletal remains have been found under the floor boards of an upstairs room in a row house in one of the oldest sections of the city. The house was once the home of an elderly uncle of the famous author Edgar Allan Poe. Could the short story, "The Tell-Tale Heart" actually be more than just a story? The victim was dressed in a well worn suit of clothing common to the early to mid-19th century. Robbery apparently was not the motive because a gold pocket watch was found in the left pocket of the vest that had a single script "R" engraved on the back of its case. There were two pennies found in the right pocket of the pants. One was dated 1829 and the other 1841. The only other item found was an unusual bronze lapel pin with the initials "GAR" surrounded by laurel branches on either side. The only marking on any clothing was a small handwritten tag on the back collar of the shirt that said "Stevens." There was only one other thing of note; the victim was missing his left arm from the elbow down. The left sleeve of his jacket had been neatly folded over once and was fastened at the side of the jacket with a common safety pin. Your job is to research as much biographical information on the author, Edgar Allan Poe, and as a psychologist you are to determine if anything in his background could account for violent behavior that would indicate the possibility that he was responsible for this crime. Because of the busy caseload, the captain is only giving you three days to complete your research, fill out the standard department Criminal Profile Form LM66-3Y and write a summary of the biographical information that you find. This report needs to focus on any tragic or life changing circumstances that might have lead to a violent nature. If you have any additional time you should assist the detectives on the case by trying to pin down any information on the physical evidence found at the scene. Anything that you can find that might clear Edgar Allan Poe of the crime would be of great help also.

Process

Use the web sites listed below to gather biographical information on the life and death of author Edgar Allan Poe. http://www.online-literature.com/poe http://www.poestories.com http://www.poedecoder.com/Qrisse/ You may need to make your own timeline of the events in the life of Mr. Poe... with all of his moves, jobs, relationships, etc. before you start the other assignments. Print out and fill in the "Timeline" form Attachment #2 below... if needed. Print out and fill in the "LM66-3Y" Form of Biographical Information Attachment #1 below... Make notes of any unusual or tragic Life Events. If you have more time: Use google to research any items of physical evidence that were found with the victim. Compile your information into a report of 250 - 350 words on the life and death of Edgar Allan Poe, concentrating on the tragic events that influenced him in his writing and perhaps in this "crime." Conclude your report with your opinion on the possible guilt or innocence of Mr. Poe in this matter. Your opinion should be based on your biographical information and the additional research you may have turned up from the items of physical evidence. You may want to look ahead at the evaluation part of the Web Quest to see how your work will be evaluated.

Tasks

Research the author, Edgar Allan Poe for biographical information with the resources given and fill out the Police Form. Write a report on the life of Edgar Allan Poe, paying particular attention to anything that motivated him to write the kinds of stories that he is known for. This report is to be 250 to 350 words and should probably be in chronological order. Your report should end with a statement as to your opinion of his guilt or innocence in this "crime" and should give all of the reasons and evidence for your decision. If you have more time you may use "google" to search for anything in the physical evidence that might point a finger at the author or prove his innocence.

Evaluation
In finishing this assignment, you should have a good knowledge of the life of author Edgar Allan Poe and some of the events that may have influenced his writing. You have gained valuable experience researching and organizing the information that you found. At this point you may wish to revisit the website http://www.online-literature.com/poe/ to learn more by reading some additional short stories, plays, essays and poetry by Poe. "In Your Opinion..."*****Some things to think about...*****When doing research, how important is it to be thorough? Do tragic events in someone's life control the way that people think and feel? Can you think of someone who has suffered through adversity and become a better person because of that adversity? If you had more time, is there anything else you would try to find out about Edgar Allan Poe?

Conclusion

Grade Level: 7th grade...during the third marking period, our district uses the "Buckle Down PSSA" books to prepare students for the Pennsylvania state Reading Assessment test. One lesson includes a shortened version of Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart". This web quest was written as a supplement to that lesson. Pa. State Standards: 1.1.8.G...demonstrate understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text...1.2.8.A...Draw inferences based on a variety of information sources...