

**Lesson and Unit Titles:** The Middle Ages, European History

**Dates Taught:** Tuesday, January 26, 2010 and Wednesday, January 27, 2010

**Teacher:** Ann Magid-Beale

**Subject and Grade:** 10<sup>th</sup> Grade World History

**Content (Essential Understanding):** Understand major historical components of the European Middle Ages as well as analyze the political and cultural implications of the various topics learned.

**Length of Lesson:** Two class periods, 72 minutes each.

**Special Note:** This lesson was specifically designed to not only address the historical content but also to improve the students' computer and presentation skills. Creating and presenting PowerPoint presentations are important skills to learn, and students learn by practicing these skills frequently.

## **PLANNING**

### **I. Rationale:**

European history and culture has had an effect on many of the other regions studied throughout this class. Understanding the historical, cultural and political climate of Europe during the Middle Ages will help students gain a fuller understanding of not only Europe, but also other places during and after the time of the Middle Ages.

### **II. Assumptions about the lesson, content or students:**

This lesson comes early in a unit on European history, thus the assumption is that much of the material is new to the students. A further assumption is that students may have been exposed through the popular media to several topics within this unit, such as the Bubonic Plague, knights and the Crusades. This may have resulted in misconceptions about these topics. Thus the lesson must work through any misconceptions to discover the historical basis beneath. This lesson also assumes that most students have basic computer skills.

### **III. Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify and understand impact of the Crusades, the Plague, the Commercial Revolution, feudalism and religion on the culture of Europe during the Middle Ages
2. Become an expert on a specific cultural and/or political aspect of the European Middle Ages
3. Research topics to identify and paraphrase significant information

4. Compose a PowerPoint lesson on their topics and present to classmates

#### **IV. Alignment with Standards:**

##### **Michigan High School Content Expectations:**

- **K1.7** Understand social problems, social structures, institutions, class, groups, and interactions.
- **P1.4** Communicate clearly and coherently in writing, speaking, and visually expressing ideas pertaining to social science topics, acknowledging audience and purpose.
- **P2.3** Know how to find and organize information from a variety of sources; analyze, interpret, support interpretations with evidence, critically evaluate, and present information orally and in writing; report investigation results effectively.
- **WHG 4.3.5** Western Europe to 1500—Explain the workings of feudalism, manorialism, and the growth of centralized monarchies and city-states in Europe including
  - the role and political impact of the Roman Catholic Church in European medieval society
  - how agricultural innovation and increasing trade led to the growth of towns and cities
  - the role of the Crusades, 100 Years War, and the Bubonic Plague in the early development of centralized nation-states

#### **V. Specific Classroom Design:**

The students will begin in the classroom for the introduction to this activity, including the assignment into groups; the assignment of topics to each group and the self-organization of each group according to the guidelines provided by the teacher. The students will then proceed to the school's computer lab, where they will research their topics and prepare PowerPoint presentations. Once the PowerPoint presentations are completed, students will come back to our regular classroom, which can be set up as normal for the presentations, using the SmartBoard.

#### **VI. Materials needed:**

The textbook, URLs to useful websites, notebook, writing utensil, computers, and SmartBoard.

### **SPECIFIC LESSON DESIGN**

#### **I. Anticipatory Set/Opening Activity**

Our opening activity will be in two parts. Prior to class I will have a vocabulary word from our unit written on the board, and when the bell rings, students know to take out their notebooks, look up and write down the definition of the word, use it in a sentence, and draw a picture that exemplifies the word. When they are finished, a few students will share their definitions, sentences and pictures with the rest of the class.

Next, I will pose this question to the students: "What do you think of when you hear the term 'Middle Ages?'" They will have about three minutes to think and jot down some thoughts in their notebooks. I will ask several to share, and will connect their thoughts to the activity for the day, which is centered on the Middle Ages.

## **II. Lesson Procedure (Day 1)**

- The students will be divided into 5 groups, and each group will be given a topic related to the Middle Ages. These topics are: the Crusades, the Plague, religion during the Middle Ages, the Commercial Revolution and feudalism.
- Students will find the topic in their textbooks and read the information provided. When each student finishes, he or she will jot down some notes about their topics, sorting relevant information and important or difficult terms.
- When all students are complete, our class will go to the computer lab. Students will have about 20 minutes to find any extra information on useful websites about their topics.
- For the remainder of class, the groups will begin to put together their PowerPoint presentations. I will have handed them a rubric asking them to include major information/facts, vocabulary terms, as well as pictures and any interesting information they might have found during their research.
- As the end of the class period approaches, I will ask the students to save what they have made, and if they are finished, to email their presentations to me. I will remind them that they will have some time at the beginning of class to finish, but that all presentations will be tomorrow.

## **Lesson Procedure (Day 2)**

- Students will begin class in the computer labs. As soon as class begins, they will be asked to spend about 15 minutes finishing up their PowerPoint if they need to, as well as determine how they will present their information to the class. For those who are already finished, they will be asked to begin their homework assignment for tonight (a reading selection).

- Once students have completed their PowerPoint and emailed them to me, we will return to class. Groups will take turns presenting their PowerPoint to their classmates on the SmartBoard.
- While groups are presenting, the audience will be taking notes. Groups are expected to be able to answer any clarifying questions the audience might have at the end of each of their presentations.

### **III. Closure:**

The closing activity for this lesson will be a full-class debriefing session. We will reexamine the 5 topics presented and students will have the opportunity to ask any further clarifying questions, as well as connect what the students learned to broader topics related to European history. I will also remind students of the prior day's opening activity, and ask them to think about and discuss their understanding of the Middle Ages before and after the lesson. In what ways did their ideas shift or change? In what ways were the media portrayals of the Middle Ages similar to what they learned about over the course of the past two days?

If the lesson does not need as much time as I have allotted, this discussion will go more in depth than I have already planned. They would also have the opportunity to begin their homework reading for the night.

### **IV. Assignment Description:**

Once the students are in their groups, each group will get a description of the expectations for each student, as follows:

Your first decision as a group is to designate one of the following roles to each member. The roles are:

- Leader/Rubric Checker/Researcher
  - Your job is to make sure everyone else stays on task. You are also in charge of making sure your group's PowerPoint has all the information required. You are also a researcher!
- PowerPoint Maker/Researcher
  - Your job is to make the PowerPoint presentation. You are also a researcher!
- Handout Maker/Researcher
  - Your job is to make a handout for each of your classmates that corresponds to your PowerPoint. It should have all the relevant information your group puts into the PowerPoint. You are also a researcher!
- Primary Researcher
  - Your job is to guide your group-mates in researching the topic.

### **V. Reflection**

After every lesson, it is important that I as a teacher assess what went on during the lesson, and consider how the students felt about it, how I feel about it, and what I could do to improve the experience the next time I teach it. Below are my thoughts following this lesson.

1. Did the students understand my directions? What were the indications?

Through regular circulation among groups I found that, overall, students did understand my directions. Most student questions were based on content rather than clarification of what they were supposed to be doing. Students got to work immediately both days, and on Day 2 I did not have to repeat very much to remind students of the expectations for the assignment.

2. Was there any differentiation or accommodation? If so, what?

There was no differentiation or accommodation within the assigned topics themselves. While I did have students on caseloads in this class, the lesson was such that differentiation and accommodation came from the group assignment. I made sure to pair struggling students with stronger ones, in order to create groups of varying skill level. Another level of that differentiation came from my rubric, included at the end of this lesson. I asked students to divide the tasks in order to help everyone contribute, if in different but united ways.

3. Would the students be able to identify the objective of the lesson?

The students' presentations exemplified their understanding of the main objective of the lesson, which was to become experts in a specific topic within the Middle Ages through the process of researching and creating a PowerPoint, and to teach their classmates. While I made this objective clear in my instructions, students also recognized that the activities themselves all centered on that expectation.

4. How was student participation? Was the cooperative learning effective?

Students actively participated throughout the lesson. Occasionally I would have to gently remind students to stay on task, but because the assignment called for full and active participation from every member of the group, students held each other accountable for the work produced. In that respect the cooperative learning was effective. The students actively participated with each other to create a teachable product for their classmates.

5. Did the lesson go as expected?

Overall the lesson went as expected. Most students produced work I was satisfied with, although a few students in several groups dominated the conversations and assignment work.

6. What was most beneficial and least beneficial? What might you add or change?

The most beneficial aspect of this lesson was the level of peer interaction. I am a strong believer in collaboration in the classroom, and this was a great activity to get students working together. One difficulty with a lesson such as this is that when you pair high-level achievers with struggling students, you run the risk of the group being dominated by a stronger, more knowledgeable personality. When I teach a lesson such as this one again, I will add more emphasis to the aspect of group collaboration. I want the quieter students to be equally active participants. I would likely adjust my "group roles" to include more of an emphasis on total collaboration in order to lessen the disparity within some groups in terms of participation.

Least beneficial to this lesson was asking one student to make a handout for their classmates. In several cases, the student who was assigned that task did not do much research, and rather waited for the other students in the group to provide him or her with the information to type up. Most students in the audience took notes during the presentations, and thus the handout was not a significant factor to the lesson.

7. Did the students complete what you expected in the time frame expected?

The lesson took a bit longer than I had anticipated. Many students' unfamiliarity with PowerPoint, as well as technological difficulties with the computer lab itself slowed those parts of the lesson. The next time I teach a lesson such as this one, I will include a brief tutorial on how to use PowerPoint as well, to minimize time spent by students trying to figure out the program itself.