

# **SOCIAL STUDIES**

## **HISTORY'S RELATIONSHIP TO ONE'S LIFE**

**GRADES: 5-12**

Many students think "history" is political and military events that happened long ago and has little relationship to their own lives. This activity shows that everyone has a personal history that is affected by the times in which they live.

### **MATERIALS:**

- paper

### **METHOD:**

1. Have students draw a horizontal line on a piece of paper starting with their birth year and ending with the present year.
2. Have them write or draw five important events that have happened in their lives next to the year it happened.
3. The teacher draws a horizontal line on the board starting with the year of birth of the oldest student to the present. Ask students to identify important events that have occurred within their lifetimes, be sure to include social and cultural events as well as political, economical and military .
4. In groups or a classroom discussion consider the ways in which they are affected by the times they live in.
5. For homework have students ask their parents or any older person to list some historical events that have

happened in their lifetime. The next day list the responses along a timeline on the board.

6. Conclude the lesson by repeating the message that everyone has a personal history that affects or is affected by the times in which they live.

***submitted by***

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## **COMMUNITY BUILDING IN YOUR CLASSROOM: STRAW ACTIVITY**

**GRADES: 3-8**

This FUN activity will allow the students to automatically develop the basic attitudes that you would like to be foremost in your class.

### **MATERIALS:**

- 1 bundle of approximately 40 drinking straws per group
- roll of masking tape

### **METHOD:**

1. Divide the class into groups of 4 (3 if necessary, but preferably not 5)
2. Hand out a bundle of 40 straws to each group.
3. Give each group about a meter (yard) of masking tape.

#### 4. Instructions to the class:

- You are going to construct the tallest, FREESTANDING structure that you can, using only the straws and the tape that you have been given.
- You will get no more tape, so use it carefully.
- You may not anchor your structure to a desk, or the floor with the tape.
- BUT you must work in complete silence during the entire process.
- If you do talk, a straw will be taken from your group each time you do speak. (Note for you only: Taking a straw from the 40 provided, will not really make a difference, as few use them all, but be extremely strict and have a couple of “sacrificial lambs”, and the silence rule will be effective.)
- Say that there will be absolutely no talking from this point onwards. (Remove straws quickly if they do speak.)
- Suggest that group keeps an eye on the time. (They may begin to gesture at this point.)
- The “silence” rule will cause some consternation, but just say that there are various ways of communicating, only one of which is speech.
- Assign a space in your room for each group.
- Set a time limit; say 15 mins.
- Walk around the room taking straws if necessary and give a 5 & then a 2-minute warning. Observe how productive groups work & make a mental note of any actions, both positive & negative to comment on later.
- When the time is up, go to the various groups with a couple of metre (yard) sticks and measure each one.
- Congratulate the winners, & commiserate with the rest of the class. Always stress the process rather than the results. I.e. Did you enjoy the

task/challenge? If you did, then you won. Students usually enjoy this task; they find it a different type of challenge.

- Now is the time for discussion. Ask if they learned anything by doing this. (You'll be awed by the answers.) Ask the most successful group, what made them successful and what didn't work. Ask the other groups what worked for them and what didn't.
- Ask how they managed to communicate without talking & emphasize that communication of all types, is vital if we are to succeed in anything.
- You should end up being able to elicit the following responses from your students; some will need guided questions, others will come up naturally.
- As you get the required responses, make a chart of the basic ideas. The bracketed notes are FYI only.
  - Communicate: find a way, somehow to let others know what you mean. (Vital in the current climate of learning. Students not only have to know what they are doing, they have to be able to explain it to others.)
  - You need a strong foundation on which to build anything. (This applies to learning and practicing basic skills.)
  - Respect everyone in your group by including them. (This should come from discussion about people who were made to feel left out; who weren't allowed to contribute, and how they felt.)
  - Respect other people's ideas and efforts. (Whose idea helped the group? Maybe an idea wasn't used, but it could spark another idea. Everyone can contribute in one way or another.)

- Respect property, both yours and other people's. (If you got mad & wasted tape or straws, you only hurt your group and therefore yourself.)
  - Listen, not only with your ears, but also with your head and your heart. (Sometimes just acknowledging another's ideas makes them feel respected.)
  - Try out new ideas; take good risks. (Some students may say that they thought an idea wouldn't work, but they tried it & were successful.)
  - Take responsibility for your actions. (If you suggest something that doesn't work, admit it, apologize & move on; if you suggest a successful method, don't laud it over everyone else.)
  - Respect other people. (The most important rule; encompasses all the above.)
5. A true story that you can credit to your own child or a nephew etc, and that applies to being left out is something that happened to my son. He was 7 yrs old and came home from school one day looking dejected. I asked him what he had done at school. He replied "I learned how not to make dinosaurs!" I asked what he meant, thinking that he had made a mistake or something. He replied, " My group had to make a dinosaur and I didn't get to help so I guess I learned how NOT to make dinosaurs."!!! I tell my students this story every year & they usually get the point. Any time we have group work, I remind them to make sure that no one learns how NOT to do it!

***submitted by  
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# **BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

## **GRADES: K-3**

In this lesson the learner elaborates on birthday celebrations of own families and the global family.

### **MATERIALS:**

- plain, multi-colored paper
- chart paper
- crayons
- scissors
- glue
- fabric and paper scraps
- picture of cakes, candles, presents
- printed hand outs
- party food
- party hats
- Optional: Computer, Internet service

### **METHOD:**

1. Select a day when a child in class is celebrating a birthday to introduce the lesson. Background: "Today is Niyats birthday. Families believe that a person's birthday is very important and very special. Families have celebrated birthdays for hundreds of years." Teacher asks Niyat how her birthday is to be celebrated and how it was celebrated in her birth country of Ethiopia.

2. Class then discusses the similarities and differences between the two types of celebrations.
3. Teacher writes the similarities and differences on the chart paper.
4. Select a similarity- cake, candles, birthday cards, presents and discuss. For instance: Birthday Symbols: \* Cake- for example the tradition started in Germany \* Candles- used to symbolize "Light of Life" \* Birthday cards- sent by people who couldn't be present on birthday \* Present- given to show that birthdays and the person is special
5. Hand out to each child a calendar on which to mark their birth date (teacher will have to assist as grade one children often do not know the actual date of their birthday)
6. Each child will make a birthday cake out of or on paper. Teacher may provide print-outs of birthday cakes for children to color.
7. Make candles out of paper to go on birthday cake.
8. Sing "Happy Birthday" to the birthday child.
9. Class to go to computer room where teacher goes into Internet to receive the electronic musical birthday card she has e-mailed to the child.
10. Teacher to store the paper cakes, each time a birthday occurs select one to give to the birthday child.
11. Following day: Continue discussion of symbols, and how people in other countries celebrate birthdays. Teacher's knowledge of children's ethnic backgrounds may be used to determine which countries will be discussed.
12. Children will share a birthday tradition from their families.
13. Send home hand out asking parents to explain the traditions of their families.
14. Make birthday books.
15. Read stories, teach songs, and poems.
16. As a Closing Activity: Have birthday party for class. Arrange to have families provide an ethnic dish. Send

party invitations to parents (don't forget the principal). Play games, sing songs, have fun.**Submitted by,**

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## **CURRENT EVENTS: PEACE IS PATRIOTIC**

George Washington knew war and peace, and he outlined a plan,  
He said, "Stay out of foreign wars," stay off of others' land.  
And if Washington said these words today, would he be  
attacked

For criticizing our leaders for getting in Iraq?

And wrong is right and right is wrong and the world is upside  
down,  
And war is right and war is wrong, 'pends on who attacks who's  
town,  
And you can love your country while saying stop all  
battlegrounds,  
For peace is patriotic.

Having peace and prosperity is what our country's for,  
No politician has ever said, "I brought us into war."  
An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, means the punishment  
fits the crime.  
And angry reactions and thousands of lives are connected every  
time.

For wrong is right and right is wrong and the world is upside  
down,



And war is right and war is wrong, 'pends on who attacks who's town,  
And you can love your country while saying stop all battlegrounds,  
And peace is patriotic.

And don't forget the victims, they're on both sides of the fight.

The workers in the towers and the children bombed at night.  
For to the mothers crying, does it matter who's really right....

We all love our country, we all love red white and blue.  
And protecting our freedoms means you can criticize it too.  
For freedom of speech and thought are things America stands for,  
And you can support our soldiers while not supporting a war.

And wrong is right and right is wrong and the world is upside down,  
And war is right and war is wrong, 'pends on who attacks who's town,  
And you can love your country while saying stop all battlegrounds,  
For peace is patriotic.

***This poem has been set to music and recorded by the Pacoima Singers Musical Theatre Group from the Pacoima Middle School Television, Theatre and Performing Arts Magnet. If you would like a free copy of the CD, please e-mail your address to Dr. Scott Mandel.***

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