

Headstone Activity

Objective:

Students will recognize the cemetery as a unique repository of a community's history. Students will also identify the types of information found in cemeteries and how these can change over time. Students will identify historical names found and research the contributions or significance of the name.

TEKS§113.6. Social Studies, Grade 4

3) History. The student understands the causes and effects of the Texas Revolution, the Republic of Texas, and the annexation of Texas to the United States. The student is expected to:

(B) describe the successes and problems of the Republic of Texas;

(E) identify leaders important to the founding of Texas as a republic and state, including, but not exclusively, Sam Houston, Mirabeau Lamar, and Anson Jones.

22) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

(A) differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources such as computer software; interviews; biographies; oral, print, and visual material; and artifacts to acquire information about the United States and Texas;

(B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;

(C) organize and interpret information in outlines, reports, databases, and visuals including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps;

(D) identify different points of view about an issue or topic;

(E) identify the elements of frame of reference that influenced the participants in an event

23) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:

- (A) use social studies terminology correctly;
- (B) incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communication;
- (C) express ideas orally based on research and experiences;
- (D) create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies; and
- (E) use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

§110.6. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 4.

(2) Listening/speaking/critical listening. The student listens critically to analyze and evaluate a speaker's message(s). The student is expected to:

- (B) identify and analyze a speaker's persuasive techniques such as promises, dares, and flattery ;
- (C) distinguish between the speaker's opinion and verifiable fact ; and
- (D) monitor his/her own understanding of the spoken message and seek clarification as needed .

(3) Listening/speaking/appreciation. The student listens to enjoy and appreciate spoken language. The student is expected to:

- (C) assess how language choice and delivery affect the tone of the message .

(4) Listening/speaking/culture. The student listens and speaks both to gain and share knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures. The student is expected to:

- (B) compare oral traditions across regions and cultures ; and
- (C) identify how language use such as labels and sayings reflects regions and cultures .

(5) Listening/speaking/audiences. The student speaks clearly and appropriately to different audiences for different purposes and occasions. The student is expected to:

(C) present dramatic interpretations of experiences, stories, poems, or plays to communicate ;

(13) Reading/inquiry/research. The student inquires and conducts research using a variety of sources. The student is expected to:

(A) form and revise questions for investigations, including questions arising from interests and units of study ;

(B) use text organizers, including headings, graphic features, and tables of contents, to locate and organize information ;

(C) use multiple sources, including electronic texts, experts, and print resources, to locate information relevant to research questions ;

(D) interpret and use graphic sources of information such as maps, graphs, timelines, tables, and diagrams to address research questions ;

(E) summarize and organize information from multiple sources by taking notes, outlining ideas, or making charts ;

(F) produce research projects and reports in effective formats using visuals to support meaning, as appropriate ;

(G) draw conclusions from information gathered from multiple sources ;

(15) Writing/purposes. The student writes for a variety of audiences and purposes, and in a variety of forms. The student is expected to:

(A) write to express, discover, record, develop, reflect on ideas, and to problem solve ;

(B) write to influence such as to persuade, argue, and request ;

(C) write to inform such as to explain, describe, report, and narrate ;

(D) write to entertain such as to compose humorous poems or short stories ;

(E) exhibit an identifiable voice in personal narratives and in stories

(19) Writing/writing processes. The student selects and uses writing processes for self-initiated and assigned writing. The student is expected to:

(F) use available technology to support aspects of creating, revising, editing, and publishing texts ;

(I) select and use reference materials and resources as needed for writing, revising, and editing final drafts .

(21) Writing/inquiry/research. The student uses writing as a tool for learning and research. The student is expected to:

(A) frame questions to direct research ;

(B) organize prior knowledge about a topic in a variety of ways such as by producing a graphic organizer ;

(C) take notes from relevant and authoritative sources such as guest speakers, periodicals, and on-line searches ;

(D) summarize and organize ideas gained from multiple sources in useful ways such as outlines, conceptual maps, learning logs, and timelines ;

(E) present information in various forms using available technology ; and

(F) evaluate his/her own research and raise new questions for further investigation .

Focus Activity:

The teacher will ask the students for a list of places in the community where a person can go to gather information about their community. List these up on the board. The teacher will ask for a few more. Ask the students why the cemetery did, or did not, make the list. Share examples of the type of information that is available in the cemetery. Some types of information are age, relationships, dates, gender, occupation, loves, beliefs, and causes of death to name a few. Explain to students that many cemeteries are still standing even after hundreds of years. Cite examples and show pictures of different cemeteries. Ask the students to try and infer what type of life or position in society some of the names had. Explain to students what an epitaph is and share different ones with them. An epitaph is an inscription on a tombstone in memory of someone who died. At this time, the teacher will show humorous and serious examples. Morbidity is unacceptable from the students. The following website may be accessed for examples: Famous Epitaphs at www.famousquotes.me.uk/epitaphs or Last words at www.geocites.com/Athens/acropolis/6537.

Having heard the examples of the epitaphs, the teacher will create one together. The students will be given a sheet of paper with a tombstone on it and will now create one for them selves. The rules are as follows: 1) Their names must appear on it. 2) There must be the same number of syllables in both lines. 3) The end of the lines must rhyme. Once these are complete, the students can hang the finished ones in the hall. Extra credit points are awarded if the students write epitaphs for other staff members. The teacher now introduces the idea of taking a fieldtrip to a cemetery.

Activity:

Explain to students that they will be going to a local cemetery to discover the plethora of information, which is often ignored by many. The teacher will **show the students photographs (East Texas Research Center) of the Oak Grove Cemetery located in Nacogdoches, the oldest town in Texas** As the students recognize names, tell them to write them down. Let them know that you expect them to find many of marked graves and headstones shown in the photographs. Before going to the cemetery, the students will brainstorm appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Encourage the students to agree to a certain “code of conduct,” which is conducive to a group of researchers. Make sure that the students carry pencil and paper. The teacher should also carry a camera, for those sites that create the greatest reactions. Administer the accompanying activity forms. Students are asked to complete this as they tour the cemetery. Students will also need to complete a headstone rubbing. Of course, this must be demonstrated prior to leaving. The teacher will continuously monitor the students, while on the field trip. Often times, arrangements can be made to have a tour guide or historian available to facilitate the tour. Adult chaperones are recommended as well and should be provided with a map and activity sheets.

Extensions:

Prepare and set up a talking headstone display to share what has been discovered. Allow the students to research a person of interest and deliver an oral history. Costumes and visuals are an option.

Writing: Ask students to write a persuasive paper in which they try to persuade someone that did not go on the trip that this experience was valuable and explain what they learned. Send them to the principal for a written response. Students can write a short story about one of the individuals that you found interesting. They may also use the timeline found on TexasAlmanac.com for reference. As in historical fiction, some of the writing may be fictionalized. It must have the elements of a story.

Math: As findings are revealed, the students can make their own bar graph depicting the data. Display the data so that students may also create their own word problems such as the number of years since a person was buried. Students may also estimate or calculate women’s life spans versus that of men from a particular ten year period. Students can also estimate the size of the largest family plot.

Art: Encourage the students to embrace the beauty of not only this historical cemetery but any cemetery. Students will identify the most common and unusual symbols. Let them research what these mean. (Doves-promise; snakes-eternity; trumpets-victory; flowers-beauty; anchors-hope; butterflies-freedom)

Students can sketch tombstone decorations or create their own. Students will also enjoy returning with gravestone rubbings.

Inform the class that unusual headstones are often difficult to describe because of the beauty of the workmanship. Encourage the students to locate some and use descriptive words to match the sketches.

Resources:

Texas Almanac.com/history/timeline
<http://www.texasalmanac.com/>

East Texas Research Center (Oak Grove Collection)
<http://libweb.sfasu.edu/etrc/collect/oakgrove/index.htm>

Texas Handbook Online
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/>

Famous Quotes
www.famousquotes.me.uk/epitaphs
Famous Last Words

www.geocites.com/Athens/acropolis/6537

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