



Salem Witch Trials Writer's Workshop Activity for 8th grade students

Background Information – Students have been reading “The Crucible” play aloud. Along the way we have discussed the play and the history of that time period. The class is about done with their research project which is addressed below and as a Writer’s Workshop, we will write a friendly letter based upon what we have been reading and studying. This is for an 8th class of students who struggle with reading. There are three ELL students and five students who have reading learning disabilities. There are also four other students who struggle with reading in the class. There are twelve students total and this class is an enrichment reading class which is in addition to their English and Reading class.

Research Project - Students will research 2 characters from the Salem Witch Trials and write about their findings including:

Research Project for the Salem Witch Trials:

- Pick 2 characters from history that were a part of the Salem Witch Trials.
- Use 2 resources minimum.
- Type at 12 pt. font and minimum of 500 words (250 per character) information found regarding your character. Include: their Birth and Death; Job; Family information; the part they played in the Salem Witch Trials and other important information about your character.
- What evidence was there for or against your character?
- What have you learned about your character and the Salem Witch Trials?
- What was life like for the Puritans and in Salem, MA?
- Write a paragraph about the history of that time.
- This paper has to be in your own words, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure count.
- Compare and Contrast the information that you found regarding facts to the play “The Crucible” Make a compare and contrast chart.
- Finally put this information on paper and into a presentation (power point,.....) to share with the class.

Writer's Workshop

Read Aloud: I will read a short excerpt from the “Discoveryeducation.com” website about the Salem Witch Trials. Then show this media clip which is part of the common core standards: <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schooladventures/salemwitchtrials/story/> We have read “The Crucible” by Arthur Miller, and are researching characters from that time. The students will listen to the background and history of that time from the short dialogue on the website. We will pause at certain points to discuss the history and what life was like during that time.

Mini Lesson: *You have been accused of being a witch and are in jail awaiting trial. Write a letter to a family member of your experiences, how you were accused. What is your life like during that time period, what the prison may be like, and include your emotions. Take into account what we have read in "The Crucible" what you heard in the history of the time and your research of your characters. We will review by open discussion what we have learned so far regarding that time period and the history. Students will have an opportunity to ask questions about what we have read and heard this far.*

We will then review letter writing and how to write a friendly letter. I will model and demonstrate a friendly letter, show the date, the greeting and closing. I will show an example on the smart board. I will show examples of a friendly letter that I have from my grandfather that were written in 1906. Students will have an opportunity to look at the letters to visualize what a letter should look like.

Students will then be given time to write their letter. They will write this letter to a family member of the character that they choose and share information about what is happening in prison and to them at that time. I will remind them to include facts as well as they will add their own information.

Conference: *As students are writing, I will circulate around the room and talk with them about what they are writing, discuss and answer any questions they may have. This will lead to impromptu conferences. When they are done students will meet with me to share their letter where we can read it and they can let me know what needs to be improved upon. I will share positives about their letter and let them know if there should be any changes.*

Celebration: *We will read our letters to the class as part of the final presentation of their research projects and students will have time to share what they appreciated about their peer's writing. Students will have an opportunity to share their writing and what they have learned.*

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