

I Served in the American Civil War

This lesson increases students' local and regional understanding of the history of the American Civil War as they create a video production about the life of a Civil War soldier.

Project Description

Each student first finds a name and regiment of a Civil War soldier. Resources include local cemeteries with Civil War era soldier plots or websites that list soldiers from both armies. (See "Tools and Resources.") Students use the Internet to find out more about the soldier and the battles in which he participated. Students use this information to write journal entries from the perspective of the soldier regarding a specific aspect of a soldier's life in the Civil War (camp life, battles, marching, emotions, and so on).

Students then work in groups of three or four to create a video project that uses each group member's journal entries as a narrative script for an iMovie project. (The author of the entries for a specific soldier acts as the director of that movie.) They locate images and music to use from the Internet, after a class discussion about relevant copyright rules and fair use. The group completes a storyboard for their project that includes the script, images, video clips, music, and other elements that they will use. The final production will feature as many major scenes as there are journal entries represented in each group. Students film and use each other to act out the scenes, with appropriate props and costumes. Students import the video clips into iMovie and combine the clips with still images, narration of students reading the journal entries, titles, and music from the era. The finished videos should reflect historical facts (including daily life and the challenges soldiers faced), relevant inferences based on research, and empathy for the soldier that they researched. The completed projects can be exported to VHS, to QuickTime (for burning to CD or posting on the Internet), or to iDVD, if a Macintosh with a SuperDrive is available.

Note: Students may want to use the Ken Burns effect for their still images.

Outcomes

After completing this project, students will be able to:

- Have a greater understanding of historical details of the American Civil War, such as important dates, battles and campaigns, soldier duties, and camp life.
- Use multimedia as an effective means to express ideas.
- Work well in groups of peers with varying abilities.
- Understand copyright law and fair use, and how these laws affect the production of their movie.

Technology Skills

After completing this project, students will be able to:

- Use iPhoto, iMovie, and iTunes to produce a movie project.
- Use a digital video camera to capture quality, well-composed video footage.
- Use the Internet to find relevant information and images regarding their soldier and the American Civil War.

Assessment Suggestions

Student movies can be assessed using a teacher-created rubric.

Tools and Resources

Internet

- Civil War Soldier Database: http://www.civilwardata.com/pers_dir.html
- Civil War Rosters: <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Lair/3680/cw/cw.html>
- Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov>
- iLife How-To Guides: <http://www.apple.com/education/ilife/howto/>

Tools

Macintosh computers (computer with CD burner or SuperDrive is optional), digital video camera, external microphone (optional), tripod, Internet connection, iMovie, iPhoto, iTunes, AppleWorks, iDVD (optional), props and costumes

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