

Introduction

The English and Social Studies students in Education 308 had the opportunity to work with a class of forty students at Lafayette High School who were enrolled in a class that combined English Literature and History. The class was created on the basis that students could have a clear understanding of the literary works by also exploring the historical context in which they are written. The project created by the students of Education 308 kept this objective in mind. Our goal was to create a lesson that could help students delve deeper into their novel by truly understanding the issues facing the characters living in a particular time period.

The students were mainly juniors and the class was not limited to a specific ability or academic performance group. There was a wide range of student performance in the class. The class was rather large, with students seated in pairs in the front of the classroom facing the chalkboard and television (which was used quite frequently in lessons), while longer tables were placed in the back of the classroom for larger group study or discussion.

Objectives

*For students to gain a better understanding of the social and political climate of the 1930s (specifically the Great Depression) in the United States in order to better appreciate their study of *Cold Sassafras*, a novel set in the 1930s.

Materials

1-2 literary selections (gathered by W&M students)

1-2 documents (graphs, tables, political cartoons, etc. gathered by W&M students)

Photos (chosen from internet by high school students)

Description

*William and Mary students found excerpts from books, graphs, tables, cartoons, and song lyrics pertaining to the 1930s.

*Class was divided into groups of 5-6 students and a William and Mary student was assigned to each.

*All group members were given identical packets including the literary selections, documents, etc. and asked to read them home and have them analyzed by the next class.

*Students had to find 3 common themes or ideas which linked the items in their packet and then choose 1 that would be the basis of their project (for example, family struggles in the Great Depression).

*Students worked together to create a 10 slide Power Point Presentation including pictures, one non picture slide, narrator (speaking an original voice-over work), and musical selection.

Evaluation

*Their grade on this project was based on three elements: the quality of the group's slide show, individual participation in the group process, and individual written explanation of the choices made by the group. We were specifically looking for how well they identified their main idea and created their slide show to illustrate this idea. For example, did all the pictures used reflect this idea. Was the original text worded and spoken eloquently or clearly? Was the music chosen appropriate for their presentation? Also,

we focused on how well they were able to incorporate all 5 of their documents in the packet to create the main theme based on the 1930s.

Results

The students seemed to really enjoy the project, especially when it was time to search for pictures and choose music. They were comfortable with the project because they had done something similar to it before. The teachers were an instrumental part of the project from the very beginning. They loved the documents we brought in, especially the song lyrics and political cartoons because it was different from the usual literary novels or excerpts students always read in a class like this. We obtained a disc with all of the presentations. All of the presentations I saw were good for the most part. Some stood out better than others. The weaker slide shows didn't seem to have a clear theme or the voice over wasn't well written. The better presentations seemed to have a natural flow from picture to picture, a catching song, and the voice over was well written and could be heard clearly. We looked to see if students had a clear understanding of the 1930s and the Great Depression through what points they made in their slide show.

Lessons Learned

There was a great collection of document for students to choose from. We made sure to choose a wide array of things for them to work with. Also, students were encouraged to go over materials at home, so the discussion was much more productive because they were familiar with text and had taken notes on their reactions to the readings.

The project could have been improved by having students