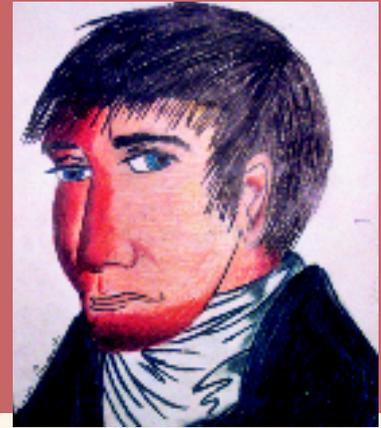




Lewis and Clark Expedition

An Interdisciplinary Unit



Gloria Schelling

For several years the eighth-grade students at Tredyffrin-Easttown Middle School in Berwyn, Pennsylvania, have participated in a three-week interdisciplinary unit on the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804–1806. Teachers of core subjects and special areas collaborate to provide several activities for the unit.

Students in math classes create original word problems using research information from the expedition showing routes, cities, and state lines of current times. Some students create posters with information about the mathematical applications from the early nineteenth century.

In science, students compile nature journals describing plants, animals, and geographical features encountered on the expedition. Students also grow salt crystals to simulate the expedition's extraction of salt from the Pacific Ocean.

In American history class, students simulate of the journey, creating maps and writing mini-research paragraphs on various topics related to the expedition.

In English classes, students read a biography of Sacagawea. They

write an essay evaluating her role on the expedition after consulting several conflicting biographical sources, and create posters of her life and accomplishments.

In family and consumer science, the classes are instructed in the preparation of bison meatballs and buckwheat biscuits. The ground bison is purchased from a buffalo ranch in Pennsylvania.

Classes in physical education play Prison Base; a game played between the Native Americans and members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Latin students decipher the scientific names of newly discovered plants and animals.

In art classes, students design historical paintings of Native American portraits inspired by George Catlin and Edward Curtis.

After watching a demonstration on creating a portrait and identifying the necessary steps needed to create a historical painting, students began their research. The images of the many tribes that George Catlin painted and Edward Curtis photographed were narrowed down to only the tribes that were encountered by Lewis and Clark.

Students represented and portrayed a fascinating sample of more than forty-eight tribes. They also analyzed the ways in which dress and adornment can be defined in terms of symbolic meaning and cultural exchanges.

Two-hundred years after Meriwether Lewis and William Clark set out on their transcontinental journey of exploration, artists are still inspired by their encounters. My eighth-grade students realized the importance of accurately documenting historical art. We celebrated their completed portraits with an exhibit of their work at an open house for the community. The exhibit showcased their various skills in a combination of live interpretations and performances, narration, and authentic portraits and projects.

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks.

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