

Journey Records

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Promoting Geographic Knowledge Through Literature Workshop July 7-19, 2002

Preview of the Main Idea:

Modern travelers often communicate using telephones and email. Before such modes of communication existed, however, travelers depended on letters, journals, and diaries to convey the details of their journeys. These writings told of beautiful locations, natural features, and the people who lived in those places. They spoke about the hardships and rewards of the journeys. Using these journey letters as well as travel journals and diaries, we can learn many things about human and physical geography.

Connection to the Curriculum:

This activity may be used with social studies or language arts.

Teaching Level: Grades 3-6

Connection to National Geography Standards:

The World in Spatial Terms- #1 How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process and report information from a spatial perspective.

Places and Regions--#4 The physical and human characteristics of places.

Places and Regions--#6 How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

Human Systems- #10 The characteristics, distribution and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Environment and Society- #14 How human actions modify the physical environment.

Connection to 5 Themes of Geography:

Location, Place, Human Environment Interaction, Movement

Time: 2 class periods

Materials Required: Teacher copy of The Journey by Sarah Stewart

Transparency of first page of above

Student copies of Dear Levi by Elvira Woodruff

Xeroxed copies of selected page of above

Student copies of Our New Life in America by Gare
Thompson

Xeroxed copies of selected page of above

Student copies of Across the Plains by Robert Louis
Stevenson or

The Amateur Emigrant by Robert Louis Stevenson

Xerox copies of selected page of above

Paper and pencil

Atlases, wall map

Overhead projector

Primary Question:

How do travel records increase our understanding of the world?

Secondary Questions:

Who writes travel communications?

What is inference?

How is location inferred from travel journals, letters, etc.?

When and why are travel records kept?

What is contained in those records?

Suggested Procedure:

Shared Reading: Use a transparency of Sunday’s diary entry from The Journey. Teacher reads aloud as students follow along. Ask if anyone can tell what is happening to Hannah in the story. (taking a trip) Ask if anyone can infer what place Hannah is visiting. (Chicago). Ask how one can tell. (“trip”, “higher than Aunt Clara’s porch”; “farther than Yoder’s General Store”; “one of the tallest buildings in the world;” “big city”) Locate Chicago on the map. Teacher reads the remainder of the book aloud and students point out other clues. Class also discusses the reasons people record trip experiences.

Guided Reading: Each group has one page copied from the book the group will be reading during Independent Reading time. When the group meets with the teacher, the page will be distributed, read silently for an inference about location. Once the children have determined the location and the clues used, the location will be found on the map. Review what an inference is and how one is made. The students return to their seats to complete the assigned book.

- Below level: Dear Levi
- On level: Our New Life in America
- Above level: Across the Plains or The Amateur Emigrant

Independent Reading: Students will finish reading their assigned book. They will jot down at least five observations made on the journey that contribute to an understanding of place—landforms, architecture, customs, foods, etc. They will also recall a journey they have taken and write a letter or journal entry to someone about that trip. In the travel record, they must include clues that will allow the reader to infer the location.

Follow Up: Students will pair and share the letters they have written. Partners will infer the location, point out clues that led to that inference. They will then find the location on a map.

Assessment:

Group discussions and inferences.
Partner discussion.
List of observations.
Travel records.

Extensions:

1. Complete a journey questionnaire about your book. (See attached)
2. Create a postcard depicting one scene from your book.
3. Draw the character(s) journey on a map.

Bibliography:

Books:

Murphy, Jim. *Across America on an Emigrant Train*. New York: Clarion Books, 1993.
ISBN: 0395633907

Summary: This story describes Robert Louis Stevenson's 1879 journey from Scotland to California to join the woman he loved. (based on his journal)

Stevenson, Robert L. *Across the Plains*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1892. or

Stevenson, Robert L. *Across the Plains*. Amazon Press, 2000.

ISBN: B000051XD2

Summary: Journals and narratives written by Stevenson recount his 1876 journey from

Scotland to San Francisco to marry Mrs. Fanny Osbourne against his family's wishes.

See The Amateur Emigrant.

Stevenson, Robert L. *The Amateur Emigrant*. Carroll & Graf, 1998.

ISBN: 0786705728

Summary: This is the record of the six-thousand-mile journey that

twenty-five-year-old Stevenson made in pursuit of his future wife, Fanny.
Companion book to *Across the Plains*.

Stewart, Sarah. *The Journey*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2001.

ISBN: 0374339058

Summary: Hannah, an Amish girl, writes to her diary as she describes a
trip to
Chicago.

Thompson, Gare. *Our New Life in America*. National Geographic Society, 2002.

ISBN: 0792287010

Summary: Through letters and diaries written by the Marks family as they
emigrated
from Russia in 1893, the reader learns about the dangers and difficulties of
immigration to the United States.

Woodruff, Elvira.. *Dear Levi: Letters from the Overland Trail*. Random House
Childrens Publications, 1998 (reprint).

ISBN: 0679885587

Summary: From a wagon train, twelve-year-old Austin writes his brother
Levi back in
Pennsylvania as the wagon train travels the Overland Trail in 1851.

Journey Questionnaire

Title of story?	
Name of character?	
Where did the journey begin?	
What is the reason for the journey?	
How did the character travel?	
What was passed or visited on the way?	
How long did the journey take?	
Where did the journey end?	
How far did the character travel?	