

Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt

Language Arts and Social Studies

Grade Level: First/ Second

Introduction/ Background:

This lesson extends from our Faith Ringgold author study which looks at slaves escaping to freedom after reading Ringgold's Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky and reading and watching Jeanette Winter's Follow the Drinking Gourd. This lesson is rich in social studies content with the investigations about the lives of slaves and also ties in a function of quilts by African Americans. This look at quilts, having such an important role as a route to freedom, will help the children see the historical connection that we have to quilts outside of the quilting bees and importance in our personal family histories.

The story will be read and discussed as a whole class, while the activity will be carried out in a center.

Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate what they know about the underground railroad by comparing, contrasting (with stories and biographies read earlier), and answering questions in a discussion format following the hearing of the story.
- Students will review what they know about the genres of literature by classifying this story, along with several biographies, information books, and other examples of historical fiction into those categories.
- Students demonstrate their conceptions of geographical locations that they are familiar with and the concept of a map by making a pictorial map that shows the route from their home to school (or another familiar location).

Materials:

- Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt by Deborah Hopkinson
- Additional trade books about the underground railroad, the experience of slavery, and biographies that fit into the genres of biography, non-fiction (information), and historical fiction.
- Construction paper
- scissors
- glue
- tissue paper, card board
- pencils
- Markers

Procedure:

1. Read Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt to the class. Ask students what they thought about the book and what similarities and differences they saw between this and other books that we have read about the underground railroad. Possibly record what they say on the board or on a chart, especially noting the variety of things that the slaves used to help guide them: map on the quilt, North Star, constellations of stars, bird calls by people that are aiding the escape, moss on trees etc.
2. After the discussion is beginning to come to a close ask students what type of book Sweet Clara is. At this time also hold up and ask about the genres of the other books. (My students have already learned the terms and what they mean, but if they had not explanation would be necessary).

3. Give directions to the group for the activity that will be carried out at the project work center.
4. Students will make a map pictorially, as in the story, to represent places and things on the way in route from their home to school or another familiar place. (Students that are bused may want to use a nearby park, friend or relatives house).
5. A large sheet of construction paper will be used as the map background. Decide on and make a list of the places you will include on your map (four or six is a good number, the first place being home and last being the destination). Divide the large sheet into four or six blocks.
6. In each block make a representation of the place or landmark using construction paper cut-outs and markers. (Examples of places and landmarks are parks, stores, restaurants, signs, large rock, group of trees, church etc.)
7. After the students have completed their maps they can share their routes with the class and take them home to see if they will work.

Evaluation:

1. Students knowledge of and comparisons about the underground railroad and routes to freedom will be evaluated through the discussion by questioning and observation. Re-direction will be given if students have display misconceptions and in-depth questioning will be provide to see how they analyze and synthesize the knowledge that they have.
2. Students understanding of the definitions and classification of the genres of literature (biography, non-fiction, and historical fiction) will be evaluated through direct question and answer during the discussion.
3. I will check to see if each student has completed the map, followed the directions, and made representations of places that are familiar to them. If these are not met, it will question/ conference on an individual basis and re-direct from there.

Re-teaching/ Extension:

1. To extend this activity we will be looking at actual maps that show the routes used on the underground railroad and talking about some map concepts.
2. Extension activities can always involve more literature sharing about the time period.
3. There is also a Reading Rainbow video of Sweet Clara that could be shown.
4. A study of Harriet Tubman and other individuals who helped slaves to freedom would also make a nice connection.