Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2007 Volume II: Voyages in World History Before 1500

The Expansion of Maps and Minds before 1500: Christopher Columbus, Ibn Battuta, and Google Earth

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Rationale

The new Social Studies curriculum implemented by the school district of New Haven has set a bold standard for humanities instruction in the city. While usually the unveiling of a new curriculum in an urban district involves a rigidly-paced scripted set of lessons, fortunately, the new curriculum retains ample latitude for teacher creativity, while ensuring that all of our students receive baseline exposure to a common set of standards. With this in mind, I have set out to design a unit plan that will complement the new curriculum and help engage students in a meaningful way. Through this unit, I intend to help augment my students' understanding of geography by using Google Earth and primary sources written by the great explorers Ibn Battuta and Christopher Columbus.

I teach 8th grade Social Studies at Fair Haven K-8 to approximately 100 students each year. One of the unfortunate realities of urban education is that many of our students lack the fundamental skills necessary to perform higher-order tasks required of them in middle school. The city of New Haven has done much to redress achievement issues pertaining to Mathematics and Language Arts, but unfortunately, this increased focus on basic skills in elementary school rarely leaves time for elementary students to explore Social Studies in depth. As a result, I find that many of my 8th grade students arrive at my door with little to no geographic awareness, are confused about the difference between a state and a country, and have little understanding of the world outside of their small city. Thus, the purpose of my unit is twofold: to give students the fundamental geography skills they so-often lack, and to expose them to a world beyond our shores so that they might better understand our place in history.

My unit, "The Expansion of Maps and Minds Before 1500," addresses the idea of how different civilizations understood their own role in the world as their knowledge of its size and geography expanded. Our perception of the world around us influences how we interact with others, and this unit will focus on drawing connections between my middle school students' expanding cognizance of *their* world with that of those explorers who were driven by their desire to learn about the world around them. By introducing new geographic areas through the eyes of the explorers who first encountered them, I have an excellent opportunity to engage my students in geography in a meaningful way and to develop their text-to-self and text-to-world writing connection skills. Furthermore, as this unit would be introduced at the beginning of the first marking period in

either 7th or 8th grade, it would serve as a wonderful opportunity to engage and captivate my students' interest in Social Studies early in the school year. I often find students' interest in the subject tend to lie towards more contemporary history rather than ancient, and by developing a thought-provoking unit on this material, I could more easily "hook" them on the idea of Social Studies.

During the unit, the students will read primary and secondary source accounts of early explorers Ibn Battuta (who traveled over much of the Middle East, Asia and Africa from 1325 to 1354) and Christopher Columbus (who first traveled to North America in 1492). They will read the explorers' observations, and analyze their opinions about the societies that they visited. Then, using the same primary sources, the students will use the free computer software "Google Earth" to trace the routes of those explorers and make short movies of the routes that they used so that they may glean a clearer understanding of the geography of the region visited by their explorer. Students will then be instructed to research those locations today and to write a brief overview of those places' local cultures in the modern world so that they may compare it against the world encountered by their explorer. The unit will conclude with a series of student group presentations on their discoveries, and a test that evaluates the class's understanding of the geography presented by their classmates.

The unit will not only develop students' content-based understanding of geography and cultures, but also will address reading comprehension and fundamental historiographic skills. Before beginning their research, students will also receive instruction on basic historiography, as working with different sources provides an invaluable opportunity to expose them to the art of good history. They will be taught about primary and secondary sources and be exposed to them not only through the reproduced and edited versions they will use for their project, but also through a field trip to the Yale University Beineke Library. Once the students have learned to differentiate between primary and secondary evidence, they will be instructed in the art of historical questioning, and learn why it is important that we understand the quality of our sources, and how inquiries into their nature are essential to writing and supporting a good historical understanding.

By beginning the academic year with a series of lessons designed to help students take ownership of the history they are preparing to study, this unit will undoubtedly prepare them for the rigors of the other topics they will study throughout the year. But, more importantly, it will help them begin a dialogue about what constitutes *good* history, and how this affects our understanding of the world. Much like the maps and interpretations provided by the explorers were imperfect, so is our perception of the world today and our place in it. It is with this idea that I hope my students will proceed through the rest of the year, so that they will learn to be tolerant of alternative approaches to history, and skeptical of conventional interpretations; both marks of great young historiographers.

Historical Narrative

The advantages of using primary sources to teach geography are numerous. Geography is usually (including in New Haven) one of the first Social Studies skills students are expected to master as it is fundamental for any future discussion of places or historical events. Yet unfortunately, unlike the exciting stories of the human condition that propel much of Social Studies, the stale instruction that often permeates teaching map skills is an instant turn-off for many students. By using an explorer, students are given the opportunity to learn the political and physical composition of the world first-hand; immersing them within the field of geography,

rather than treating it as a detached and abstract science.

Through my unit, students will have the opportunity to learn American, Asian, African, European, and Middle-Eastern geography through the eyes of two travelers: Christopher Columbus and Ibn Battuta. They will, through the eyes of these explorers, also practice the critical writing ability of drawing comparisons between what they read and their own lives as well as glean early experience analyzing the value of primary sources as a form of evidence. The biases these two explorers display (often guided by their religious beliefs) prevent an objective perspective on the people and civilizations they encounter, and give students the opportunity to reflect on how their own prejudices affect their view of the world.

The first explorer used in my unit is Ibn Batutta. Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan Muslim who traveled over 75,000 miles on his journey from Africa to China and everywhere in between. Like Columbus, he also wrote a lengthy and detailed account of his journey, although unlike Columbus, he wrote *after* he returned. This provides the students with the opportunity to explore vast expanses of Middle Eastern, African, and Asian geography, as well as to analyze the potential impact of time on Ibn Battuta's accuracy. As he traveled great distances over many years, it its quite likely that much of his account is inaccurate, providing ample opportunity for students to examine another limitation of historical sources.

Ibn Battuta's route is somewhat less direct than Columbus (whom we shall discuss later) as he spends far more time traveling over land for a substantially greater distance. Ibn initially plans a pilgrimage to Mecca, known as a Hajj, which would take him from his hometown in Morocco to Mecca in present-day Saudi Arabia. Yet early on in his travels he stays with a man who mentions several relatives that Ibn should visit on his journey, and Ibn resolves to visit these people, despite the fact that they live in locales far beyond Mecca.

> ". . . I perceive that you are very fond of traveling into various countries. I said yes; although I had at that time no intention of traveling into very distant parts. He replied, you must visit my brother Farid Oddin in India, and my brother Rokn Oddin Ibn Zakaraya in Sindia [modern Pakistan], and also my brother Borhan Oddin in China. . . I was astonished at what he said, and determined with myself to visit those countries: nor did I give up my purpose till I had met all the three mentioned by him, and presented his compliments to them" (The Travels of Ibn Battuta: In the Near East, Asia, and Africa 1325-1354. Trans. Rev. Samuel Lee. Dover Publications Inc.: Mineola, NY. 2004. p.7).

This passage gives the students an early opportunity to locate these places on a map, and gives them some scope of how far Ibn Battuta will travel during his 75,000-mile journey.

Similarly, Ibn Battuta's biases lend themselves towards a discussion of the value of primary sources. Throughout his travels, Ibn Battuta regularly assesses the holiness and moral rectitude of the civilizations he encounters by making notes of their local customs. He is particularly critical of Christians; describing them in Jerusalem, he writes condescendingly: "[A holy Church in Jerusalem] is the church of which they are falsely persuaded to believe that it contains the grave of Jesus" (Ibn Battuta. Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354. Trans. H.A.R. Gibb. 1969. Augustus M. Kelley. p. 57). Later he writes of a former Mosque that has been ransacked and razed, "nothing remains but its walls and some stone marble columns. . . Amongst them is a red column of which the people tell that the Christians carried it off. . ." (Ibn Battuta, p.57). It is worth reading this section through with students and asking them if Ibn Battuta appears to have a favorable or

unfavorable opinion of Christians, and then ask them to consider whether this might affect whether he is completely fair in his treatment of them in his writing.

Ibn Battuta is similarly distressed by the Chinese. This bias is generally more overt. Of the Chinese, he writes:

> "The Chinese are all infidels: they worship images, and burn their dead just like the Hindoos. . . The Chinese, generally, will eat the flesh of dogs and swine, both of which are sold in their markets. They are much addicted to the comforts and pleasures of life. . ."(Lee, p.208).

Important to note in this short excerpt is the fact that he is making a *religious* judgment about these people. Mosque-raiding could generally be accepted by people of all faiths as despicable. Here he specifically mentions how offended he is that the Chinese practice cremation. It would appear then, that Ibn Battuta is nearly incapable of perceiving any non-Muslim in a positive light. For students, this can be a crucial lesson. Much like many xenophobes today lack credibility with an irrational fear of other cultures, Ibn Battuta serves as a prime example of how his bias sways his judgment. He even goes so far as to judge other Muslims on how far or close to his own religious piety they fall (Lee, p.17).

The second explorer in my unit is Christopher Columbus, undeniably one of the most prominent explorers in history. While evidence suggests that other civilizations and explorers had arrived in North America before Columbus, his arrival in the West Indies prompted an explosion of trade and exploration in the New World. While initially he believed, in error, that he had arrived in Asia (as the continent of North America was not known to exist), his meticulously written journal, beginning in 1492, gives us a wonderful lens through which to view his first encounters what later came to be known as the Caribbean. In my unit, students will read excerpts from Columbus' journal to glean an understanding not only of geography but how biases can affect historical writing.

Christopher Columbus's Journal provides an excellent opportunity to give students context clues from which to discern the route that he took. The opening entry of his Journal describes intimately the people for whom he is sailing (the Spanish) as well as the points of departure for what he believed would be his quick route to the Indies. Columbus departed from Saltes, Spain and headed southwest as he described as being the "course for the Canaries [Islands]" (Columbus, Christopher. The Journal of Christopher Columbus (during his first voyage, 1492-93). Trans. Clements R. Markham. 1893. Hakluyt Society). Through his first entry, which describes preparation for his travel, students can discern the initial direction of his voyage.

To teach about biases in Columbus' account of his journey, one need look no further than his descriptions of the native inhabitants of the islands he reaches in the New World. He initially describes the inhabitants of an island he renames "Isabella," by saying" it is true that they looked upon any little thing that I gave them as a wonder, and they held our arrival to be a great marvel, believing that we came from heaven" (Columbus. p.56). This short entry from Monday, 22 October 1492, leaves room for students to explore two views of Columbus': First, that a European, arriving on the island inherently believes he has the right to rename it after the queen of a country the people who lived there had never even met. An interesting extension activity for a teacher to use might be to explore the innumerable places in the world obviously named by the explorers who reached that territory, rather than the names given to their lands by their indigenous residents.

The second bias of Columbus' worth exploring is the implied condescension towards the natives. In addition to

this initial source, which effectively describes the natives of Isabella as primitive, Columbus' entry on Monday, 12 November, 1492 is also illuminating. Here he describes his plan to foist Christianity onto the natives:

> It seemed a good idea to take some persons from amongst those at *Rio de Mares* to bring to the Sovereigns [Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain], that they might learn our language so as to tell us what ther is in their lands. Returning, they would be the mouthpieces of the Christians, and would adopt our customs and the things of the faith" (Columbus, p.73)

Apart from the Eurocentric notion that it would be morally justifiable to kidnap these people and make them into a "multitude of nations. . . converted to our faith," (Columbus, p.73) this passage gives students an excellent opportunity to examine the question as to whether Columbus' own bias prevented him from giving a dispassionate account of the indigenous population's religious practices. By assuming that these people *need* to be converted, Columbus assumes that he is in a superior position of strength relative to that of the Natives.

In conclusion, these two explorers are extremely useful for teaching both geography *and* historiography to students. Apart from their vivid writing style that is excellent for keeping students engaged in their work, they display obvious biases that students can identify. They provide an opportunity for students to learn the fundamental limitations of any accepted account of a historic event or period.

Unit Timeline

The unit is divided into three distinct sections: an exploration of historiography, the analysis of primary sources to discern the routes these travelers took and their impressions of the people they met, and finally, the creation of a computer generated video using Google Earth to trace the route of their explorer. While I have included sample lessons at the conclusion of this unit, to a great degree, I have built in a substantial amount of room for other teachers to improvise. Social Studies is a subject that can and is taught in a wide variety of ways. My sample lessons are how I would teach the lesson, but you may interpret my unit in ways that are most suitable to your own classroom.

Unit Objectives

By the completion of this Unit, students will be able to. . .

> 1 Distinguish between primary and secondary sources.
> 2 Analyze and evaluate the value of primary sources.
> 2 Discern the routes taken by explorers using their writings as a guide. Identify the biases of early explorers and assess how they affected their records.
> 3 Compare and contrast the civilizations found by early explorers with the structures, people, and cultures present today.
> 4 Use Google Earth to create computer-generated films tracing the routes taken by early explorers.

Section I - Fundamental Historiography

The most important aspect of my unit is exposing students to primary source material. One of the principal misunderstandings of many students who enter my room is that history is concrete and fixed. The Connecticut State Department of Education requires that students be able to "formulate historical questions based on primary and secondary sources, including documents, eyewitness accounts... diagrams and written texts." The first several lessons of this unit address that standard and lay a framework for understanding history for the rest of the year.

Helping students differentiate between primary and secondary sources is an essential historiographical skill if my students are to develop as Social Studies students. Robert Marzano, in his book Classroom Instruction that Works, researched what forms of instruction were most effective in ensuring student comprehension. His research found that comparing similarities and differences was the single most meaningful form of instruction, and this provides an ideal forum to explore the appropriate roles played by both primary and secondary sources (Marzano, Robert. Classroom Instruction that Works. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: New York. 2001. p.7).

The series of lessons on the differences between types of historical sources begins with secondary sources. While this may seem counterintuitive at first, it is logical in that it is the more likely the form of sources with which the students are most familiar (as they have been using textbooks and prepared worksheets for many years by the time they reach me). Teaching about secondary sources will help my students understand how historians (and even their teacher) are unable to escape biases that shape others' understanding of the past.

Secondary sources are interpretive. The study of history is not a concrete narrative, but rather, a series of academic arguments supported by what we find in primary sources. The work of historians can be found everywhere, including students' textbooks. However, one would never think to state that a middle school social studies textbook contained the most thorough account of every historical incident ever recorded, so the human narrative remains incomplete. Students must understand that secondary sources are scholars' attempts to piece together the past, and that, consciously or unconsciously, their omission or interpretation of events cannot ever be considered definitive.

A clear way to explain this to students (as is outlined in Lesson Plan 2 in the Appendix) is to explain to students that history does include facts. Adolph Hitler was the führer of Germany in 1939. He did lead the German army into Poland in an attempt to annex the land for his country. However, his motivations - the "why?" question - are a matter of interpretation. Historians make many different arguments to this point.

Conversely, primary sources will allow us to see history unfiltered. Primary sources are documents of the time that are written by the subjects of history themselves. Diaries, travelogues, newspaper articles, statistical information, and other period texts are all considered primary sources. These are the subjects of historical inquiry. Historians use primary sources to justify their theses, and their use (or often, abuse) of these texts form the foundation for their explanations of why events occurred.

A compelling way to teach students to discern between primary and secondary sources is to stage and record on tape a "spontaneous" argument with a fellow teacher or a student (who is, obviously, in on the ruse) in front of the class. The topic and dramatic nature of the argument is at the teacher's discretion, but after the argument, immediately ask students to write down their interpretation of the argument, making sure to ask them to record details such as what they believed the argument to be about, how those arguing reacted, and what the result was. Then, after several minutes of writing, ask the students to share out some of their

responses. Note the differences between student interpretations on your chalkboard or overhead. Afterward, watch the video of the argument with your students. Compare it against what your students generated, and describe how their interpretation of the event is similar to a secondary source, where as the video recording can be considered a primary source. A sample version of this lesson can be found in the appendix.

Fundamentally, students should learn from this series of lessons to be skeptical of the history that they are taught. Apart from the distinction between primary and secondary sources, the desire to seek out the raw, unfiltered information available to them as students of history should be instilled. Justification is required when explaining causality, and the students should leave with the inclination to be critical of explanations for why events in history have occurred.

Section II -Research in Sources

Once students understand that history is a series of interpretive narratives about why events occurred, they are ready to engage in the work of critical historians, themselves. The students will form several groups and be given the option to choose from one of the two historical sources described above. They will be given time to read the two sources and then be asked to identify where their explorer traveled, what their explorer found in each of those locations, and possible problems with the source they were given.

There are several distinct advantages to having students work with the original texts of the travelers themselves. The first is that it allows them to develop as historians by analyzing the biases and problems of their narratives. Ibn Battuta had a ghostwriter record his travels years after he returned from visiting Africa and Asia and lifted a portion of his writing from an earlier explorer, Ibn Jubayr, leaving room for a great degree of inaccuracy in his work. On the other hand, Christopher Columbus wrote in his journal as he explored the new world, giving us a much more immediate account of his exploration. It is important for students to be able to discern the different shortcomings between types of sources, and this exercise would give them practical experience doing just that.

The second, is that it allows them to develop the text-to-self writing skills essential to their adequate passage of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). The students are asked in this portion of the unit to identify with the explorer about whom they read. The students are asked to imagine what it would be like to explore a strange land without modern equipment or resources. Despite the vast distance traveled, these explorers did not have modern transportation, and it often took years to traverse distances that today can be covered in hours. Asking students to identify with the travelers invests them in the experience of their unfolding journey and gives them practice early in the year connecting the text to themselves and the world around them.

The third advantage of allowing our students to engage in their own historiography it that it helps them analyze their own biases and assumptions about other cultures. Travelers such as Columbus and Battuta often judged the civilizations they encountered as relative to their own. Battuta described cities as being particularly "holy" or "unholy" based upon his own assessment of their observance of Islam. Columbus made similar judgment about the peoples of the Caribbean that he encountered on his first voyage in 1492. And, more recently, our own students judge outsiders and each other based upon the judged person's distance from their own culture and beliefs.

These three aspects of the unit are addressed in three separate lessons that are designed to help students understand that the study of history is the study of themselves. In other subjects such as language arts, students are asked to evaluate whether characters in a novel are believable, or whether the author's prose is

adequate. However in Social Studies those questions are irrelevant because the true subjects of history are not only the people of the past but us, as well. Ibn Battuta and Columbus were human beings with human motivations that manifest themselves even in our students, today.

Section III - Tracing routes with Google Earth

As was mentioned above, the key and final component of the unit will involve the students using Google Earth to create a virtual tour for their classmates to observe. Technology has opened up wonderful new opportunities for educators in America, and the software company Google has led the charge in creating new and exciting tools that are often provided free-of-charge to the general public. Google Earth, is such a tool.

Google Earth is a remarkable tool that allows users to view the entire Earth as a three-dimensional composite of satellite photographs. Available Mac OS X and Microsoft Windows on Google's website (http://earth.google.com) for no charge, the application allows users to use Google's powerful search engine to locate places on the planet. It is then possible to (in many locations) zoom in to the point where people and cars are visible on the ground. Using the *Landmark* feature, users can place virtual pushpins on the Earth, then play them in sequence as the camera zooms out and then back in again, pausing briefly at each landmark.

The advantages of using Google Earth are twofold. First, Google Earth allows students to glean a conceptual understanding of the distance between places on the planet. Quite often, I find my students have little to no understanding of planetary proportions. Due to the lack of Social Studies skills taught in the primary grades, my students care little for the world outside of their neighborhood and, consequently, do not understand the vastness of the world in relation to Connecticut. To say to my students, "Columbus sailed across the Atlantic Ocean" would result in shrugged shoulders or rolled eyes - they possess no understanding of the scale of such an accomplishment. However, to have the students measure the distance of one mile in their neighborhood, then compare that against the nearly 5000 miles sailed by Columbus, or the nearly 75,000 miles walked by Ibn Battuta over thirty years, gives them a much greater understanding of the impact of their travels.

The second advantage to using Google Earth is that, in the context of this unit, it allows the students to compare and contrast the description of the area given by their traveler with what exists in those places today. Our explorers were amongst the first from their home regions to describe the lands they encountered. But of course, much has changed since Ibn Battuta first wandered across Saudi Arabia on his Hajj to Mecca (for one, it wasn't air conditioned). Asking students if they think Ibn Battuta found skyscrapers at the time of his journey can highlight exactly how far humanity has come since the early days of exploration.

For the unit, the students will be initially asked to trace the route their explorer took using their primary account of their journey on a blank map provided to them. Asking students, without training, to plot their explorer's route using Google Earth would be foolish, and would leave plenty room for frustration and mistakes. However, just as we teach our students to make rough drafts of their writing before turning them in, they should do the same when tracing these routes. The writing of these primary sources can often be complex, especially for my students, and leaving room for teacher guidance is a good practice to ensure accuracy.

After finishing the two-dimensional map provided at the outset, the students will then be trained in the workings of Google Earth. Google Earth is user friendly, but features that are essential to the proper generation of the movies to be exported can require some training. Teachers should read through the additional section in the Appendix detailing the specific steps required for successful completion of the movie.

Finally, the students will be charged with the task of mapping out their explorer's journey using Google Earth. Certain aspects of the computer-generated movie's creation should be emphasized. Great care should be taken to show students an appropriate depth to zoom, as the *landmark* pushpin will not only record the location you specify, but also how far you have zoomed into a specific location. This is important because it will allow students to effectively demonstrate to their classmates comparisons between the civilizations encountered by explorers and the current structures and people that stand in their place.

The result of these efforts is a striking geography lesson that I have already pioneered with some of my students. The world is a vast and diverse place, and Google Earth will allow my students to become explorers themselves, discovering interesting information about new lands that they may not have previously understood.

Appendix A - Lesson Plans

Sample Lesson Plan 1

Objective:

Students will be able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources

Opening:

Before class, or on an earlier day, arrange to have a fake "argument" with a student in the class about their cheating on a recent exam. As students are entering the room on the day of the lesson, make the announcement that you recently overheard some students talking in the hallway about your pre-selected student cheating on one of your quizzes. Accuse the student in front of the class and allow an argument to ensue.

After several minutes of argument, instruct the class to freeze, and immediately and silently write down on a piece of paper what:

A) They perceived the argument to be about
B) How each person involved reacted
C) The result of the argument

After they have had sufficient time to write, share out the responses and compare and contrast the varying interpretations of a singular event in this class. Explain that multiple perspectives are the biggest challenge for historians, and how one event can have multiple meanings.

Introduction to New Material:

Introduce the concept of a "secondary source." Explain that, in our example, the varying perspectives of the class constituted secondary sources because they were all *observers* commenting on what they saw. They were, in effect, outside of the actual action. Examples of secondary sources include textbooks, the History Channel, and any other outside or later comment or interpretation on an event.

Introduce the concept of a "primary source." Explain that, in our example, if the student or the teacher were to write down *their* interpretation of the events that transpired, that would be a primary source because it is a person who is living through history, commenting on the history that is happening to them. Examples of this often include journals, court documents from bygone ages, and other events that transcribe events from the age it was written.

Guided Practice

Give students a series of passages in a packet that are clearly discernable to be either primary or secondary. Read through the first two passages together on an overhead transparency. One should be primary and the other secondary. Make sure to ask students *why* they believe each passage to be primary or secondary, and have them list characteristics that lead them to believe that to be true.

Independent Practice

Students will read through a series of passages for the rest of the period, identifying them as either primary or secondary, with a short explanation for why they believe that to be true.

Sample Lesson Plan 2

Objective

Students will be able to explain how bias can influence historical understanding.

Opening

Display a picture of a close-call at home plate between the Red Sox and the Yankees (or your local rivalry - for New Haven, this works great) on the overhead. Read the students the following scenario:

"It is the top of the 9th inning of the 7th game of the World Series between the Red Sox and the Yankees. There are two outs and the bases are loaded and the Red Sox are down by one run. The ball is hit, and a runner on third comes flying home just as the ball makes it back to the plate and this close play is made. The whole crowd is on their feet waiting for the umpire to make the call and. . ."

Give students five to finish the story and make a note at the top of the page as to which team they support in real life. Have students share out their responses with the class, making a point to announce at the beginning of each response which team they personally root for. Invariably, those students who support the Red Sox will have the Red Sox win in the story, and those students who support the Yankees will have the Yankees win. Have students hypothesize why this is.

Introduction to New Material

Explain to students that just like we perceived a bias in our initial writing prompt, based upon whom each

student personally favored, similar problems exist with history. Many times writers who transcribe history in primary sources are *biased* , meaning that they have a particular way of viewing the world that influences their opinion.

Guided Practice

Distribute copies of two current events news articles on the same event from one historically conservative newspaper and one historically liberal newspaper. Ask students to read through the two articles, and identify the perspective of the author who is writing the article. Important things to ask include: "Who does this author side with?" "What important details does one author include that the other does not?" "How do these pieces of information affect how we view the piece and reflect that authors' position?"

Independent Practice:

Distribute copies of the primary sources the students will use for their projects. Ask students to read through these primary sources and identify any biases that they believe the author may have possessed when writing their historical account. You may put a questionnaire in worksheet format if it would be appropriate for your students.

Sample Lesson Plan 3

Objective

Students will be able to use Google Earth to plot their explorer's route.

Opening

Establish expectations for computer lab use that are tailored to your district and school policy.

Introduction to New Material

Ask students to load Google Earth on their computers. Walk them through the following functions.

Rotating and spinning the Earth

To spin the earth, simply click and hold on the model globe, then rotate it as if you were to rotate a globe in real life. You can also use the controls on the top right to angle and zoom it.

Finding a specific place on the Earth

To find a specific city or town, use the search box in the upper left-hand corner of the program to type in a city place or name (for example, New York, NY) and then click the magnifying glass. The program will automatically zoom in for you.

Putting a "placemark" on the Earth

To put a placemark or landmark on the globe, simply click the pushpin button at the top of the window. A box will appear asking you for specifics about what you wish to name that placemark. Students should name their placemarks after the names of the locations visited by their traveler. When they have dragged their placemark to the correct location, and named their placemark, they may click "ok" to save and keep it.

Guided Practice

Give students a series of locations to find and "placemark" on the planet. Make sure that your selection of locations is diverse in format, so that students may glean a better understanding of how flexible the search engine for the program is. A good list might include: New York, NY, The Rocky Mountains, The Eiffel Tower, and Tokyo, Japan. Each of these samples is formatted differently and includes both cities in the United States, as well as in other countries, and includes landforms and landmarks. You may tailor the list to your liking.

Independent Practice

After students have mastered the basics of Google Earth, ask them to use their primary source to located three major places that their explorer visited when they were traveling. Supervise and monitor as needed.

Notes

The Travels of Ibn Battuta: In the Near East, Asia, and Africa 1325-1354. Trans. Rev. Samuel Lee. Dover Publications Inc.: Mineola, NY. 2004. A wonderful translation of the original Ibn Battuta texts focusing on the breadth and depth of his travels, though it is edited for length.

Ibn Battuta. Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354. Trans. H.A.R. Gibb. 1969. Augustus M. Kelley. Generally regarded as the most widely accepted translation of Ibn Batutta's writings.

Columbus, Christopher. The Journal of Christopher Columbus (during his first voyage, 1492-93. Trans. Clements R. Markham. 1893. Hakluyt Society. An absolute necessity for any of the Columbus activities, the Hakluyt Society is well-regarded as an excellent source for historical translations.

Marzano, Robert. Classroom Instruction that Works. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: New York. 2001. This book outlines much of the research done by Marzano about the most effective forms of classroom instruction as based upon statistical analysis.

Websites of Importance

http://earth.google.com - The website where teachers can download free copies of the program Google Earth that is used extensively in this unit.
