Big Question Unit #1

How Did Our Ancestors Live?

By: Melissa Norvitch
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Goals

The goal of this unit is for students to understand their family roots, and how these roots have influenced their lives today.

Purpose: The purpose of this unit is to provide students with the opportunity to investigate their ancestors’ lives. Knowledge of how people lived previously will give students a greater appreciation of the world around them today. It is important for students to understand where they came from so that students have the ability to understand who they truly are.
Unit Standards

Grade Level: Second Grade

Estimated time to complete the unit: Five lessons, (approximately five forty minute time periods)

Standards that will be accomplished:

- NCSS Standard #2: Time Continuity and Change
- Minnesota Standard U.S. History: The student will understand how families live today and in earlier times, recognizing that some aspects change over time while others stay the same.
- Minnesota Standard Historical Skills: The student will demonstrate chronological thinking.
- Local Standard History: The student will create a personal history showing change over time.
Specific Objectives

Students will:

• Explore the meaning of an “ancestor”. 
• Find their ancestors within their family. 
• Brainstorm as a class about what the students think homes, work, and transportation were like years ago. 
• Interview their Grandparents or another elderly community member about their life. 
• Create a personalized family tree 
• Write a biography about the person they interviewed.
Unit Sub questions

What is an ancestor?

Who are your ancestors?

How/What can we find out about the ways in which our ancestors lived?
Resources

Books

Coming to America: The Story of Immigration
By: Betsy Maestro

The Keeping Quilt
By: Patricia Polacco

Thomas A. Edison: Young Inventor
By: Sue Guthridge

Videos

America Is
By: Canusel Films

Websites

Http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/lessons/grades/?u=28
Assessment

Culminating Activity:

Students will come to class with a written biography about the older family member/elderly community member in which they interviewed.

Each student will have the opportunity to present their biography to the class. This biography will tell the other students what the life of the interviewee was like, how they are related to this person, and how they lived. Part of the presentation will include bringing a prop representing this ancestor or dressing up like their ancestor. (Students can be creative with this part of the presentation)

Students will be evaluated on their presentation according to the following rubric labeled “Ancestors Presentation”
**Ancestors Presentation**

Name: ________________________  Teacher:  
Date of Presentation: ____________  Title of Work: ____________  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Audience cannot</td>
<td>Audience has</td>
<td>Student presents</td>
<td>Student presents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>understand presentation because there is no sequence of information.</td>
<td>difficulty following presentation because student jumps around.</td>
<td>information in logical sequence which audience can follow.</td>
<td>information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about subject.</td>
<td>Student is uncomfortable with information and is able to answer only rudimentary questions.</td>
<td>Student is at ease with content, but fails to elaborate.</td>
<td>Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required) with explanations and elaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visuals</strong></td>
<td>Student used no visuals.</td>
<td>Student occasional used visuals that rarely support text and presentation.</td>
<td>Visuals related to text and presentation.</td>
<td>Student used visuals to reinforce screen text and presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>Student's presentation had four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Presentation had three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Presentation has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Presentation has no misspellings or grammatical errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery</strong></td>
<td>Student mumbles, incorrectly pronounces terms, and speaks too quietly for students in the back of class to hear.</td>
<td>Student incorrectly pronounces terms. Audience members have difficulty hearing presentation.</td>
<td>Student's voice is clear. Student pronounces most words correctly.</td>
<td>Student used a clear voice and correct, precise pronunciation of terms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total---->** ____________
Lessons

Lesson 1

Big Question: How Did our Ancestors Live?

Grade Level: Second Grade

Length: Approximately forty minutes

Materials: Recipe cards with the names of all of the students on them. The book, *Coming to America: The story of Immigration*. The definition of the word ancestor which is; to go before, one from whom an individual is descended. A banner hanging above the doorway saying “Welcome to Ellis Island”.

Procedure: At the beginning of the day as students walk into the room, welcome them to their new land America (or Ellis Island). While students are walking in hand them their name card and tell them that this is their American name.

After all students have entered the room and everyone is seated ask this question: What is an ancestor? Let students brainstorm as a class about what they think an ancestor is. Write all of their ideas on the board. Then read the definition of an ancestor, from the dictionary, to the students. Discuss with the students that ancestors are people in our family who lived before us.

Explain to students that many of our ancestors came to America from other countries. Many of them entered America by going through Ellis Island first. Then read the book, *Coming to America: The Story of Immigration*.

Conclusion: Review with the students what the meaning of an ancestor is and explain that tomorrow we will be exploring our own ancestors.
Lesson 2

Big Question: How Did our Ancestors Live?

Grade Level: Second Grade

Length: Approximately forty minutes


Procedure: We will review with the students one more time what the definition of an ancestor is. Then ask the students who is a part of their families? Why is family important to them? Next the teacher will read aloud the book, *The Keeping Quilt*, to the students.

After the book has been read as a class we will discuss what types of people are in our family, and even how we may not even know everyone who is in our family. The teacher will then hand out the Family Tree sheet. The teacher should give an example of how to fill in the sheet, and that they may need help from home in order to fill in everything. Students should have five to ten minutes to begin working on their family tree.

Conclusion: Remind the students that their family trees should be filled out the best they can by tomorrow and that our lesson tomorrow will be in the computer lab.
Lesson 3

Big Question: How Did our Ancestors Live?

Grade Level: Second Grade

Length: Approximately forty minutes

Materials: A computer with an internet connection, and a projector so that it can be
projected onto a screen. The website, http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/lessons/grades/?u=28

If the above technology is not available try to find a computer lab for students to explore
this sight. Students will need their completed family tree.

Procedure: Talk with students and brainstorm with them about what they think was
different when their ancestors were alive. Ask questions about their transportation, food,
homes, and work. Go to the website and explore travel such as walking and boats. Let
the students initiate this investigation. On the board write what is alike and different
about the way people live from today compared to our ancestors.

Then have all of the students take out their family trees. The teacher should check to see
that all of them are completed to the best of the students’ abilities. If there is a certain
student having trouble with the project now would be the time to help the child. Students
should then circle one person on the tree that is older than them (preferably not Mom or
Dad) that they could interview.

Conclusion: Tell students that they will need to be thinking of what they want to learn
about from the person they interview, and some possible questions they could ask.
Lesson 4

Big Question: How Did our Ancestors Live?

Grade Level: Second Grade

Length: Approximately forty minutes


Procedure: Begin the class period by discussing what a biography is. Tell the students it is a story written about a person’s life written by someone else. Then explain to the students that we will be reading an example of a biography. Read the book *Thomas Edison: Young Inventor*. After reading the book have the students take out their Family Tree sheets. They will need to make sure they have one person determined to interview. Explain to the students that from the interview the students will be writing a small biography about the person. It will contain only one paragraph of interesting information about the person. Then each student will need to present the information to the class. Students will also need to know that they should bring a prop that represents the person they interviewed or even dress up like the person.

Conclusion: Students will need more than one night to complete this. They should probably have a week until the final lesson so that there is enough time to contact the person for an interview, and to write their biography. Give the students the biographical sheet and explain that the top part is the interview and the bottom is where the write their biography (a paragraph) and are able to draw a picture if they would like. Give the students a copy of the rubric for their presentation. Explain the rubric and how you will be looking for those similar things that are on the rubric during their presentation.
Interview

1. What is your full name?

2. Where were you born and when?

3. Where have you lived?

4. What was one of your hobbies when you were younger?

5. How has our world changed since you were younger?

6. How is our world the same?
Biography….Write about one thing that is interesting to you from your interview and it only needs to be one paragraph (four or five sentences). Go ahead and draw a picture if you would like!
Lesson 5

Big Question: How Did our Ancestors Live?

Grade Level: Second Grade

Length: Approximately forty minutes

Materials: Students will need their completed interview and biography sheet. They should also have a prop or be dressed up like the person they interviewed. Each student will also need a rubric completed by the teacher with comments from their presentation.

Procedure: Have students present their biographies by going down the list of students in alphabetical order. Give a couple of minutes at the end of each presentation for students to ask questions. Students presenting should also be sure to explain their prop or clothing. The teacher should be filling out the rubrics as the students are presenting.

After each presentation the students should hand in their biographies.

Conclusion: At the end of the presentations ask the students what some of the differences are between how we live today and how people lived many years ago?