

Oh Captain, My Captain

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Grade level: Middle and high school

Content areas: English Language Arts and Social Studies

Invitation: “You'll never be the actor your father was,” taunted the patron. “When I leave the stage, I will be the most famous man in America,” replied Boothe. Sadly, he was. Throughout this lesson, students examine the life of Abraham Lincoln to learn more about one of America's greatest political figures.

Assessment: Students create timelines, concept maps and a biopoem to describe the life and impact of Abraham Lincoln.

Technology tools

Dana by AlphaSmart or Dana Wireless

Printer

Computer

AlphaWord software

PiCo Map or Inspiration for Palm OS

Internet sites:

Read an account of John Wilkes Boothe the day of the assassination at:

<http://members.aol.com/RVSNorton/Lincoln36.html>

Read Lincoln's an account of Lincoln's last day:

<http://members.aol.com/RVSNorton/Lincoln45.html>

Additional resources:

Lincoln: A Photobiography by Russell Freedman

“Oh Captain! My Captain!” by Walt Whitman

Biopoem format (see end of this lesson)

National Standards for Students

National Educational Technology Standards

- Understand basic concepts and operations
- Practice responsible use
- Use technology tools to enhance learning, collaborate, publish and promote creativity.
- Use telecommunications and a variety of media and formats to communicate.
- Locate, evaluate and share information

National council for the Social Studies

- Research people, places and environments
- Practice civic ideals

National Council of Teachers of English

- Read a wide range of print and non-print texts
- Read a wide range of literature
- Apply a wide range of reading strategies
- Use spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively
- Employ a wide range of writing strategies
- Apply knowledge of language structure and conventions
- Conduct research
- Use technological and information resources
- Participate in literacy communities

For a detailed explanation of NETS for Students visit: http://cnets.iste.org/students/s_stands.html

Access NCSS Standards for Students at: <http://www.ncss.org/standards/2.0.html>

Learn more about NCTE Standards at: <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>

Step-by-Step

Step 1: Define biography as a "life portrait."

The purpose of this task is to help students understand that biography is more than a fact-based book that records a person's life. When students understand that a biography is actually a portrait of a life, they learn ways to share what they learn about historical figures in meaningful ways. Explain that students will create a "biograph" or a "life portrait" of Abraham Lincoln.

Step 2: What difference does a day make?

Launch *DanaWeb* if you are using Dana Wireless or use the web browser on your classroom computer to visit the hour-by-hour accounts of Booth's and Lincoln's activities on April 14, 1865. (NOTE: If using Dana Wireless, go to the Options Menu in DanaWeb and uncheck "Load images with pages.")

Step 3: Collect and share data

Launch *ToDo List* from Dana's application launcher. Work with a partner. One creates a category for Booth and the other creates a category for Lincoln. Use the *ToDo List* on Dana (or Dana Wireless) to enter the hour-by-hour account of Booth's and Lincoln's activities that day. When complete, each student beams the category to his/her partner.

Step 4: Analyze information

Working again with a partner, launch *ToDo List* from Dana's application launcher. Students read the items, prioritize the key events they want to explore further, click the Details button and then click Note to add more information about the event. Use classroom resources, such as textbooks and additional resources from the media center to collect more data about key events.

Step 5: Making connections

Working individually, students launch *AlphaWord* from Dana's application launcher. As the teacher reads "Oh Captain! My Captain!" by Walt Whitman and selected passages from Lincoln: A Photobiography by Russell Freedman, students write words and passages that are vivid to them. This should be a simple list of terms, words, phrases that are meaningful. Explain to students that they may want to cite some of Whitman's or Freedman's work in their own writing.

Step 6: Organize ideas

Working individually, each student launches *PiCo Map* or *Inspiration for Palm OS* from Dana's application launcher. Students create a map of the key points they want to stress in their biography of Lincoln.

Step 7: Create

Create the biopoem template using *AlphaWord* and beam to students. (Note: Alternatively, you may create it using Microsoft Office on your computer and hotsync via *AlphaWord Sync*, *Quickoffice* or *Docs to Go*.) Using resources created in the *ToDo List*, *AlphaWord* and *PiCo Map* or *Inspiration for Palm OS*, students create their own biopoems of Abraham Lincoln.

Step 8: Publish

Students send biopoems to the computer, print from their Dana, hotsync or beam to the teacher to hotsync.

Extensions: Use Quickoffice or Docs to Go to create PowerPoint presentations of students' biopoems.

Home-to-school connections: Using Dana at home, work with parents to list all Lincoln related honors, such as schools and streets named for Lincoln. Brainstorm lists of powerful people students and parents would like to see honored in similar ways.

Biopoem format: The basic biopoem was developed by Gere, A. (1985). Roots in sawdust: Writing to learn across the curriculum. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Biopoem Format

First name

Four traits that describe character (place, thing, concept or event)

Relative of (list relationships, “brother” or classification)

Lover of (list three things or people)

Who feels (three items)

Who needs (three items)

Who fears (three items)

Who gives (three items)

Who would like to see (three items)

Resident of

Last Name