

Unit 1

“Knowing and Valuing Our Community Through Its People”

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Overview

Using a multi-task prompt, students will learn to research and prepare a biography of a person who has contributed to the good of the community. The students will also learn to understand the formation and development of a community through studying its people.

Ms. Charlotta Bass, an exemplary African-American leader of South Los Angeles, is used in this unit as a model for knowing and valuing a community through its residents. Ms. Bass migrated to Los Angeles from Rhode Island in 1910, and for more than fifty years, “defended and taught and shaped Los Angeles’ growing black community” as managing editor of the *California Eagle* (the West Coast’s oldest black newspaper). She was an outstanding defender of workers’ rights, champion of civil rights, prominent political leader, and occasional candidate for elected office—running for vice president of the United States on the Progressive Party ticket in 1952. The unit was written, however, so that it could be adapted to studying any person who has contributed to the well being of any community.

In this unit, students learn to define a community and identify its elements. Next, students learn about a biography and the basic questions and issues that are commonly asked in researching a person’s life. Students then apply what they’ve learned about community and biography to the life of Ms. Charlotta Bass and South Los Angeles. Students write biographies of Ms. Bass based on “A Detailed Account of the Life of Ms. Charlotta Bass” (Lesson 2, Appendix 4).

Then students will extend and deepen their understanding of how an individual life illuminates a community’s formation and development. They will do so by carrying out several activities: an oral history to generate information for the writing of a biography of someone who contributes to the well being of the community; design and paint a mural to express their understanding of the connections between Ms. Bass’ Los Angeles and their own community; draw on Ms. Bass’ example as crusading editor of the *California Eagle* to prepare and “publish” their own class newspaper and/or bulletin board; and perform a short play memorializing Ms. Bass’ contributions to the community and how her spirit may inspire other persons to improve the community today.

Unit Assessment

Students will earn a composite score based on a criterion-referenced written test (or on a performance assessment such as the play) to demonstrate their specific knowledge of Ms. Bass and generalized thinking skills about biographies and oral histories.

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California State Framework Connection

The lessons in this unit connect to the following grade/history-social science content standards:

Grade 3.

3.3.1. “...the newcomers who settled here, and the people who continue to come to the region, including their cultural and religious traditions and contributions.”

3.3.3. “...how the community has changed over time, drawing on maps, photographs, oral histories, letters, newspapers, and other primary sources.”

3.4.2. “Discuss the importance of public virtue and the role of citizens, including how to participate in a classroom, in the community, and in civic life.”

3.4.6. “Describe the lives of American heroes who took risks to secure our freedoms...”

3.5.1. “Describe the ways in which local producers have used and are using natural resources, human resources, and capital resources to produce goods and services in the past and the present.”

3.5.3. “Understand that individual economic choices involve trade-offs and the evaluation of benefits and costs.”

3.5.4. “Discuss the relationship of students’ ‘work’ in school and their personal human capital.”

Grade 4.

4.4.3. “Discuss immigration and migration to California between 1850 and 1900, including the diverse composition of those who came...”

4.4.4. “Describe rapid American immigration, internal migration, settlement, and the growth of towns and cities (e.g., Los Angeles).”

4.4.5. “Discuss the effects of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and World War II on California.”

4.5.4. “Explain the structures and functions of state governments, including the roles and responsibilities of elected officials.”

Grade 5.

5.6.7. “Understand how the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence changed the ways people viewed slavery.”

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Lesson 1

Defining and Understanding the Elements of Community

(This lesson is drawn from “Lesson 2: Drawing Your Community,” ACT Handbook, pp. 64-66.)

Overview

In this lesson, students discuss their understanding of what is a community and identify the elements common to all communities. The emphasis of the lesson is on the people of the community.

As a class, students brainstorm the aspects of every community. Special attention is given to identifying the people who do good and help the community. Then in small groups, students list the elements most important to them and then express these elements by doing a collective drawing.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Identify elements common to—with special attention to people who contribute to the well being of—all communities.
2. Express the elements of community most important to them.
3. Cooperate with other group members in making a collective drawing.

Materials and Preparation

Chart paper, markers, chalkboard, and chalk

Time Needed

One to two class periods

Procedure

A. Brainstorm Activity and Discussion

1. Write the word “community” on the board. Ask students to think about what makes up a community (the people, culture, schools, jobs, shops, recreation, streets, homes, churches and so on), but be *sure to emphasize the people and how they make up the community*.

- a. Then pair the students and have them share their thoughts with each other.
- b. Each pair shares its answers with the class.

c. List their responses on the board.

2. Identify and discuss the responses that specifically refer to people. Ask students to write a list of the three to seven responses that are most important to them.

3. Ask students to think about the reasons why they chose certain people as important to the community. Then pair the students and ask the students to share their answers with one another.

4. Each pair selects two to three people that are most important in their community.

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5. Each pair shares its answers with the class.

6. As homework, ask students to think about how they might draw the community, emphasizing the people they’ve selected.

B. Small-Group Activity: Drawing the Community

1. Divide students into groups of four to five students and distribute chart paper and drawing supplies to each group.

2. Tell each group to draw their community and its people. Let students in their groups decide what kind of drawing they will make. But make sure they:

a. Include in their drawings the things they see, hear, and feel about their community.

b. Include at least one item from each student’s list of people important to the community.

c. Decide to make one drawing that includes everyone’s perceptions or make separate drawings by dividing the paper into sections.

3. After your students finish, have them hang their drawings on the wall and allow time for each group to briefly explain its drawing to the class.

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Lesson 2
Defining and Understanding How to Write a Biography

Overview

In this lesson, students learn the definition of a biography. The emphasis of the lesson is on understanding the basic questions that are commonly addressed in researching a person’s life.

First, the teacher defines a biography to the class. Then, depending on the students’ abilities and grade level, the teacher uses one of three suggested ways (see ***Procedure*** below) for students to begin learning the basic questions that are elements of any biography. Next, the teacher assesses the students’ understanding of knowing and valuing community through its people by asking students to write a biography of Ms. Bass, emphasizing her contributions to the community of South Los Angeles. This assessment is based on a detailed account of Ms. Bass either read or distributed by the teacher to the students.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Define a biography.
2. Know the basic questions and issues for writing a biography.
3. Understand how to learn about a community through studying its people.

Materials and Preparation

“What is a Biography?” (Lesson 2, Appendix 1)

“Teacher Version of Ms. Charlotta Bass Biography” (Lesson 2, Appendix 2)

“Oral History Questions” (Lesson 3, Appendix 3)

“Compilation of Biographical Materials and Photos About Ms. Charlotta Bass” (handout)

Time Needed

One to two class periods.

Procedure

A. Brainstorm Activity, Discussion, and Writing

1. Write the question “What is a Biography?” on the board. Then read to the class the brief statement “What is a Biography” (Appendix 1).

a. Ask students to choose a family member and think about what they know about that person’s life. Have students share their answers with the class. List their responses on the board.

b. Read “What is a Biography” once again to the class. Then ask the students to review their responses.

c. Ask the students to guess what questions might be asked to get the responses listed on the board. For example, if a student says her father was born in 1960, then the question would be “When were you born?”

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Ask the students to generate a question for each response (or, the teacher may do so).

2. Depending on the grade level and abilities of the students, use **one** of the ways below for students to learn about the basic questions and issues involved in researching a person’s biography:

a. Divide the class into groups of four or five students and ask each group to select three to six questions they would like to ask of Ms. Charlotta Bass. The teacher will answer as many of these questions as desired [based on “Teacher Version of Ms. Charlotta Bass Biography” (Appendix 2)].

b. Divide the class into groups of four or five students and distribute to each student (or group) copies of “Oral History Questions” (Lesson 3, Appendix 3) and “Compilation of Biographical Materials and Photos About Ms. Charlotta Bass” (handout). Ask the students to read the materials about Ms. Bass and to answer the “Basic Questions...”

c. Ask the students to read “Compilation of Biographical Materials and Photos About Ms. Charlotta Bass” (handout) and then, either working individually, in pairs, or in groups of four or five students, generate as comprehensive a list of questions as possible about the information provided therein.

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B. Assessing Students’ Understanding of Using Biography to Learn About Community

1. Depending upon grade level and abilities of students, the teacher may decide to assess one of the following:

a. How well do the students understand the definition and elements of a biography?

1. Teacher selects three to six questions for researching a biography and writes them on the board.

2. Teacher advises students to listen carefully for the answers to the questions as she/he reads from “Teacher Version of Ms. Charlotta Bass Biography” (Appendix 2) to the class.

3. Students then write their answers to the questions in class.

b. How well do the students understand Ms. Bass’ contributions to the community?

1. Teacher reads from “Teacher Version of Ms. Charlotta Bass Biography” (Appendix 2) to the class.

2. Each student then writes a detailed essay describing Ms. Bass’ contributions to the community.

c. Or, the teacher utilizes another instrument (e.g., a Kid Pix slide show, essay question, quiz, etc.) for assessing student knowledge and understanding of Ms. Bass’ life and experiences, of her contributions to the community.

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Lesson 2

Appendix 1: “What Is a Biography?”

BIO means life and GRAPHY means picture; so biography is like a picture of someone’s life.

A biography is the written story that tells us all about a person’s life beginning from when they were born. In a biography you usually learn a person’s birth date, where they were born, about their family, about their schooling, about their job, and about other important events that happened in their life. By reading someone’s biography you can get to know them even if you have never met them. Biographies are one way that we know about people who lived long ago, but you can also read a biography about a person who is still alive today. You can even write your own biography; that is called an autobiography.

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Lesson 2

Appendix 2: “Teacher Version of Ms. Charlotta Bass Biography”

Charlotta A. Bass should be one of the best-known people in history because of her great accomplishments in life. She did the unexpected. At a time when racism was rampant, she headed a black newspaper in Los Angeles that was a fearless opponent of racism, and ran for three major political offices: City Council, Congress, and Vice President of the United States.

She was born Charlotta Spears and came to Los Angeles in 1910, by recommendation of her physician in Rhode Island. (It is not clear what her birth date was; different sources set it at 1875 or 1879.) When she ran out of money, she decided to look for work in newspaper sales, and John J. Neimore, the founder of a small African American newspaper called *The Advocate*, agreed to pay her \$5 a week to solicit subscriptions for the newspaper. In 1912, when Neimore was on his deathbed, he asked Charlotta Spears to take over the paper. She agreed and later changed the name of the paper to the *California Eagle* and hired Joseph B. Bass to be the editor. Spears and Bass later married and ran the newspaper together until he died in the early 1930s.

Charlotta Bass was a great humanitarian and made her newspaper into a voice against injustice. She fought long and hard for the rights of people all over the world. Knowing this, many people wrote to her and her newspaper asking for help when they felt oppressed. Trusting in Charlotta Bass’ track record, many people who experienced injustice called on her to fight the War Department, the Los Angeles Police Department, the Ku Klux Klan, the Governor of California, and the judicial system.

Remaining fearless, Charlotta Bass traveled to places where her life was in jeopardy in order to get stories that her black readership needed to know. In 1917, she went to Texas, to cover the Houston Riot. This riot occurred because the white policemen and the white citizens of Houston had been brutalizing black soldiers, and the soldiers decided to make a stand. As the soldiers marched into Houston to demand an end to police brutality and mob violence, they were met by the police and an angry mob. At the end of the melee, four city policemen, two black soldiers, and eleven other black and white men were dead. Afterward, whites went on a mob rampage into the black community. Many blacks boarded up their homes and hid to keep from being killed. Charlotta Bass traveled to this war zone to get the story for her readers in Los Angeles, interviewing the victims directly.

In another instance, Charlotta Bass put her life on the line on February 20, 1941, rushing to Fremont High School after hearing that the white students were setting bonfires and holding mock lynchings, burning dummies of black students and hanging them from windows. Posters circulated at Fremont that read, "We want no niggers in this school. This is a white man’s school." Other signs posted on trees read, “Niggers, if you value your life, stay out,” and “Jigs not wanted.”

Although 500 students were running wild on the campus, screaming anti-black slogans, Charlotta walked boldly onto the campus. As a group formed around her, she reasoned with them on a level they could relate to. She asked them if they would have a problem going to school with her children. She reminded them that they had to live together in this world and that blacks and whites had fought together in the war. She reminded them that if Americans fight among themselves, it would only weaken the country and tear it apart. After talking to the students for about twenty minutes, with the students peacefully absorbing her words, the police rushed in and broke up the discussion, though they had made no effort earlier to break up the racist activities.

Since she was a humanitarian as well as a black activist, Charlotta Bass fought for people of all races. For example, she used her newspaper to notify the black population about the injustices that Latinos suffered in the

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Sleepy Lagoon Case. When a man named Jose Diaz was found dead on a ranch near Sleepy Lagoon in East Los Angeles, the police rounded up between 400 and 600 Mexican-Americans and threw them into jail. They were beaten and terrorized in jail until the police indicted twenty-four of them for the crime, even though the evidence showed that these boys were nowhere near the place where Jose Diaz was found. Initially, seventeen of the Sleepy Lagoon defendants were sent to prison, twelve of them for life. Five were acquitted and the other two asked for a separate trial and were acquitted. Those who were sentenced to prison appealed and were later released. The *Eagle* produced a pamphlet telling the story of the case and aiding in the appeal.

Because she saw a need in Los Angeles for someone within the system to fight for minority needs, Charlotta Bass decided to run for the L.A. City Council. Her platform called for: A fight for postwar job security; a building program for homes for all who need them, regardless of race, creed or color; adequate health and recreational facilities; adequate wages, and low water, power, and light rates for consumers; clean streets; and a rehabilitation program for veterans. Churches, political organizations, and the *Eagle's* black readers rallied behind Charlotta Bass during the election. In a very close race, she lost the run-off.

Up to this time, Charlotta Bass had been a faithful Republican, seeing it as the party of Lincoln, but she saw that the party was now racially segregated and no longer served African American interests and she decided to leave it. She helped to create the Independent Progressive Party of California, which was part of the national Progressive Party formed in 1948. She ran on the Progressive Party ticket in 1948 for a seat in Congress, but lost to a future mayor of Los Angeles, Sam Yorty.

Because of her political activism, she was called before the California Legislature's Joint Fact-Finding Committee on un-American Activities. This was California's version of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), a committee formed by Congress during the Cold War to hunt down American Communists and stir up fear of communism. Those who insisted on their constitutional right to remain silent in front of the committee were blacklisted, lost their jobs, and were shunned by many frightened citizens. Like other black heroes, notably Paul Robeson and W.E.B. DuBois, Charlotta Bass had her freedoms stripped away by the American government. There were restrictions on her ability to travel internationally because the Committee had labeled her a Communist.

In 1951, Charlotta Bass sold the *Eagle* because it was losing money—in part because of the accusations of Communism—and she could no longer afford to finance it with her savings. She said this was the most difficult decision she had to make in her life because she no longer had a forum to write about injustice, in the city and around the world.

However she remained active in the Progressive Party. In 1952 Paul Robeson gave a stirring speech to the Progressive convention nominating her to run for vice president of the United States. W.E.B. DuBois also spoke, seconding her nomination. She accepted the nomination and ran with Vincent Hallinan, but, as Third Party candidates challenging the political mainstream at the time, they received a very small percentage of the vote in November.

After this she retired to Lake Elsinore, southeast of Los Angeles, where she spent the rest of her life active with the small progressive circle living there. She died in 1969. Charlotta Bass lived a long and hard life fighting for the rights of blacks, other minorities, and all victims of injustice. Although she lived to see some advancements in minority rights, the racism that she fought so fearlessly still remains a cancer in American society, and she remains a great example today of how we can all stand up and make a difference in the struggle against it.

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Lesson 3

Doing an Oral History of Someone Who Helps the Community

Overview

In this lesson, students deepen and extend what they learned in Lessons 1 and 2 about community and biography by conducting an oral history of a person who helps the community.

First, students learn the rudiments of oral history. Then working in teams, students practice interviewing each other. Next, each student will interview someone who helps the community. Then, the students will share what they’ve learned about their respective interviewees with the class in one of several ways.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Know the value of historical memory.
2. Conduct an oral history.
3. Learn about their community through interviews with its people.
4. Learn to value the community and its people.

Materials and Preparation

“What is Historical Memory” (Lesson 3, Appendix 1)

“Directions for Oral History” (Lesson 3, Appendix 2)

“Oral History Questions” (Lesson 3, Appendix 3)

“Who Should I Interview?” (Lesson 4, Appendix 4)

Time Needed

One to three class periods.

Procedure

A. Brainstorm Activity and Discussion

1. Write the question “What is historical memory?” on the board. Depending on grade level and abilities of students:
 - a. Ask students to brainstorm what the words mean and list their responses on the board, or
 - b. Read and explain “What is Historical Memory” (Appendix 1).

In either case, the teacher should:

- a. Explain the terms historical and memory.

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- b. Emphasize that history is often a form of storytelling.
- c. Explain that history may be learned from written sources (e.g. newspapers, diaries, etc.) or oral sources (e.g. songs, traditions, sayings, stories, memories, etc.).
- d. Ask the students to write two to six things they have learned about themselves, others, or the community from what people told them.
- e. As homework, distribute and have students read copies of “Directions for Oral History” (Appendix 2) and “Oral History Questions” (Appendix 3).

B. Review, Brainstorm Activity, and Mock Interview: Doing an Oral History

1. Review the major points of “Directions for Oral History”(Appendix 2) with the students.
2. Review the “Oral History Questions”(Appendix 3) with the students. Make sure that students understand that the questions they ask determine what they may or may not learn about another person.
 - a. Tell the students they will be interviewing each other in order to learn what it is like to be an interviewer and an interviewee.
 - b. Ask students to brainstorm about what questions they wish to ask each other. Be sure to remind the students that the questions they ask determine what they may or may not learn about another person.
 - c. List the suggested questions on the board.
 - d. Decide on six to ten questions for the student oral history. Make sure each student writes them down, leaving sufficient room for answers.
3. Divide students into pairs and have them practice interviewing each other. Time permitting, ask each student to share with the class what he/she learned about the other student.
4. As homework, distribute and have students read “Who Should I Interview?” (Appendix 4) for ideas about a member of the community to interview.
 - a. Each student should then write a one-paragraph paper to be turned into you the following school day, following the format:
“I wish to interview _____ because he/she helps the community by _____
(two to five sentences).

C. The Oral History and Report.

1. After the teacher approves the proposed subjects of the oral histories, students are to select their interview questions from the ones presented in this lesson and the previous one.
 - a. Each student writes a questionnaire based on her/his selected questions, making sure to leave plenty of room for answers.
2. As homework, the student conducts an oral history of the person he/she selected.

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3. The students share their oral histories with the class, by doing one of the following:

- a) Read the answers to their questions.
- b) Display their questionnaires on a bulletin board.
- c) Write a biography, ideally emphasizing how the person helps the community.

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Lesson 3

Appendix 1: “What Is Historical Memory?”

History is everything that happened in the past and memory is what we can remember. Historical memory then is what we remember about the past. If you look closely at the word *HISTORY*, you will see the word *STORY*. A historical memory is really a story remembered about the past. There are different ways to learn about a historical memory; you can read a written historical memory in a biography or a newspaper or a diary, or someone can tell you about a historical memory like they would tell you a story, or maybe they could sing a song, or perhaps there is a saying or a phrase that is a historical memory. Historical memories are very important because they keep us from forgetting our past.

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Lesson 3

Appendix 2: “Directions for Oral History”

1. Ask the person , “May I please ask you some questions?”
 - If they say no, you need to choose someone else.
 - If they say yes, say “thank you” and then ask the first question.
2. Ask your questions slowly and speak clearly. Do not whisper and do not yell.
3. Pay close attention to the person when they answer the questions.
4. Write the answers down on your paper.
5. Say “Thank You” when you are done.

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Lesson 3
Appendix 3: “Oral History Questions”

Typical oral history questions are presented below. Not all questions need be asked. Depending on grade level and individual student ability, the student might ask only a few questions or many.

Group 1.

What is your full name?

How do you spell your full name?

Were you named after someone?

Is there any special significance to your name? nickname?

Group 2.

When were you born?

Where were you born?

Where did you grow up?

What did you like most about where you grew up?

What did you dislike most about where you grew up?

Would you please tell me one of your favorite family stories?

Group 3.

What did you like most about elementary school?

What did you dislike most about elementary school?

Would you please tell me one of your favorite school stories?

Group 4.

What do you do for a living?

How did you come to do that for a living?

What do you like most about your job?

What do you dislike most about your job?

Group 5.

How long have you lived in, or been part of, our community?

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How did you become part of the community?

Why did you stay in the community?

Group 6.

What changes have you seen in the community?

What has remained the same in the community?

Why are you interested in (helping) the community?

What do you like best about the community? Why?

What have you done to make things fair in the community?

What do you do to make this a better community?

What kinds of things would you like to see different in the community? Why?

Have you ever taken chances? What kinds?

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Lesson 3

Appendix 4: “Who Should I Interview?”

Choose an adult who lives or works in your community. This person should help make the community a better place. You can choose one of the following people or someone you think of on your own:

mother
father
grandparent
aunt
uncle
teacher
principal
custodian
teacher’s aide
school volunteer
crossing guard
mail carrier
fire fighter
police officer
librarian
store owner or worker
bus driver
politician

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Lesson 4

Creating a Mural Featuring Ms. Bass and The Students’ Community

Overview

In this lesson, students design and paint a mural to express their knowledge of Ms. Charlotta Bass and the history of Los Angeles and the connections or relevance of both to their community and its people.

First, students will brainstorm possible ideas and events for the mural. Working in small groups, students will sketch the ideas and decide on the elements of the mural. The students will then paint the mural, prepare captions, and share the mural with students in other classes.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Identify similarities and differences between Ms. Bass’ Los Angeles and today’s Los Angeles.
2. Identify people in their own community who have some of the same qualities as Ms. Bass.
3. Explain some of the history of Ms. Bass and Los Angeles to others.
4. Speak about some of the people who are trying to improve the community.

Materials and Preparation

Pictures of Los Angeles murals (ideally, local ones)

Postcard showing scene from “Women and the Labor Movement in California” mural

Paper, pencils, crayons, butcher paper, paints, and paint brushes.

Time Needed

One to three class periods.

Procedure

A. Brainstorm Activity and Discussion

1. Divide students into three groups. In each group, include one academically high student and one academically low student, with the remaining students drawn from the middle achievement ranks. Each student is responsible for participating in her/his group and earning her/his group (presuming the teacher decides to evaluate this assignment).
2. Ask one group to brainstorm about the most interesting aspects of Ms. Bass' life. List their responses on the board.
3. Ask a second group to brainstorm about what parts of Ms. Bass' life reminds them of today. List their responses on the board.
4. Ask a third group to brainstorm about people trying to improve the community who remind them of Ms. Bass. List their responses on the board.

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5. Ask students to examine the three lists on the board and think about what ideas and events are their favorites and why.

a. Divide the students into pairs and have them share their answers with their partners.

6. As homework, ask your students to draw pictures of their favorite scenes in Charlotta Bass’ life or in the lives of people who remind them of Ms. Bass.

a. Each student should then write a brief essay, using the following format:

These scenes are my favorites because _____
_____ (teacher selects number of sentences).

B. Small-Group Activity: Designing, Drawing, and Painting a Mural

1. Divide the class into groups of four to six students and distribute paper and drawing supplies to each group.

2. Show the students pictures of murals and explain that murals are a form of public art.

3. Tell each group that it will design a mural about Ms. Bass and their community. Let students in their groups decide what kind of mural they will draw. But make sure they:

a. Include some scenes showing Ms. Bass’ life and experiences.

b. Include some scenes showing their community and the people working to improve it.

c. Write captions for each scene included in the mural.

4. After your students finish, have them hang their murals on the wall and allow time for each group to briefly explain its mural to the class.

5. Ask your students to show and explain their murals to students in other classes.

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Lesson 5

“Publishing” a Newspaper/Bulletin Board about the Community and Its People

Overview

In this lesson, students “publish” a newspaper/bulletin board to share what they’ve learned about Ms. Charlotta Bass and their community and its people.

First, students learn about the sections of a newspaper, using the *California Eagle* and the *Los Angeles Times* as examples. Using materials and their writings and drawings from earlier lessons, the students decide on a layout and content; they may also wish to commission “new” articles for their newspaper/bulletin board.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Identify the different sections and content of a newspaper.
2. Identify and write three types of stories: human interest (biographies), current events, and opinion pieces (commentary, editorials, letters to the editor).
3. Design a layout for a newspaper.
4. Create a masthead for a newspaper.
5. Put together a newspaper/bulletin board.

Materials and Preparation

Samples of stories and layout from *The California Eagle* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

Paper and drawing supplies.

Time Needed

One to two class periods.

Procedure

A. Brainstorm Activity and Discussion

1. Divide the class into groups of four to five students and give them photocopies of *The California Eagle* and copies of the *Los Angeles Times*. Ask the students to look at the copies and to:

- a) Identify the different sections of a newspaper.
- b) Identify different kinds of stories.

List their responses on the board.

2. Review the students’ responses and explain to them the different sections of a newspaper.

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3. Explain to the students, using examples from the newspapers, the following types of stories: human interest, current events, and opinion pieces.

4. Ask students to identify which of their writings for earlier lessons, if any, qualify as human interest, current events, or opinion pieces.

5. Point out to students the layout of different sections and pages of a newspaper (i.e. the front page, the Metro section, the editorial page, the Living section).

a. Ask students to notice the locations of text, pictures, drawings, etc.

6. Ask each group to brainstorm possible content and layout (i.e. masthead a la the *California Eagle*) for its own newspaper/bulletin board.

7. As homework, ask each student to “submit” stories for the newspaper. Depending on grade level and abilities of students, the teacher might have students write either a human interest story or a current event story or an opinion piece (or two or all three).

8. Or, ask students to “submit” art work or photos or a masthead for their newspaper.

B. Small-Group Activity: “Publishing” a Newspaper/Bulletin Board

1. Depending on your interest and the students’, ask the groups to prepare either a newspaper or bulletin board. Each group should include at least two each of the following:

a. An opinion piece (editorial, commentary, letter to the editor):

1. Perhaps a fictionalized account “ghostwritten” for Ms. Bass by a student;

2. Perhaps a student’s views on what should be done to resolve a community issue.

b. A human interest story, perhaps highlighting an oral history from Lesson 3.

c. A current event:

1. Perhaps highlighting an event that occurred in Ms. Bass’ Los Angeles;

2. Perhaps describing some event that either makes life easier or harder in the community (i.e., expansion of a public library, cleaning up trash, removing graffiti).

d. A drawing and/or photo illustrating a story.

2. After the students finish, the work should be “published” as a newspaper or as a bulletin board.

3. Each group should be prepared to discuss its newspaper/bulletin board with the class.

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Lesson 6

***“Helping Our Community,” a Play About Ms. Bass and Community Leaders:
Then and Now***

Overview

In this lesson, the class writes a short play about Ms. Bass and the community: then and now.

First, students brainstorm about what acts they would like to perform. Next, working in small groups, the students write the dialogue and decide on the scenery for each act. Finally, the students perform the play.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate their mastery of the life of Ms. Bass by presenting key events from her life in a short play.
2. Show how the spirit of Ms. Bass’ ideals and activities are still relevant to today as seen in the acts of people who help the community.

Materials and Preparation

“Compilation of Biographical Materials and Photos About Ms. Charlotta Bass” (Lesson 2, handout)

“Teacher Version of Ms. Charlotta Bass Biography” (Lesson 2, Version 2)

Costumes (optional)

Time Needed

One to two class periods.

Procedure

A. Brainstorm Activity and Discussion

1. Divide class into groups of four or five students and ask each group to brainstorm about a play whose theme would be “Helping Our Community.”
 - a. To help students brainstorm about possible scenes, ask them to answer the question “What specific things did Ms. Bass or the persons they interviewed do to help the community?” They may refer to the “Teacher Version of Ms. Charlotta Bass Biography” (Lesson 2, Appendix 2) and to their oral histories for ideas.
 - b. List their responses on the board.
2. Ask the class to discuss the groups’ responses and to select anywhere from five to ten events as the content of the play.
 - a. Let the students decide on the sequence of the events and whether they want an opening/introductory act and a closing/finale act.

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B. Writing and Performing the Play

1. Depending on the number of events selected, assign one to each group or else recombine groups so that there is one event per group.
 - a. Ask each group to decide on scenery/setting for its act and to write dialogue (perhaps two to five minutes in duration).
2. Compile each group’s work and edit for consistency.
3. Compile a list of characters and select the children to play each role.
4. Ask the students to memorize their lines.
5. Rehearse the play.
6. Perform the play. Good Luck!