



BHH Unit Lesson Plans First Grade My History at School

This unit introduces children to the concept of history as story. By focusing on their experiences at school, students connect history concepts with personal experience and learn history using primary sources from their own lives. And by telling their own stories through pictures, maps, games, school records and various other articles from their lives, first graders find history fun and personally relevant.

The unit largely relies on sharing and class discussions. When you share stories and history sources from your own experience, you model “doing history” for your students. Examination of the sources, such as photos, letters, clothing, and toys, may best be accomplished through thoughtful questioning in a discussion circle. Whenever possible, explore who, what, when, where and why questions to develop the children’s critical thinking skills.

Although historical methodology terms such as “source”, “history”, “artifact”, and “examine” will be almost universally unknown to students at the outset of the unit during the curriculum’s first-year implementation, you may use them in tandem with more familiar synonymous terms. Through this gradual, repetitive exposure, students may begin to recognize and become familiar with a basic history vocabulary. Kindergarten teachers will be using the same method to introduce the vocabulary -- after students have been introduced to these terms, their first-grade teachers may recognize improved comprehension.

Throughout the unit, first grade students construct a Baggie Book:

- Each student has a book made of Ziploc-style bags stapled together.
- As they examine different sources, students place into the baggies those sources that will fit.
- The sources will be of various types, and Bringing History Home (BHH) provides [citation icons](#) that correspond with those types. After the class studies a piece of evidence, the students together choose the BHH icon for that type of source and place it on a bibliography paper to go in their baggies.



Activity I: What is History?

Content Goals

- Students become familiar with the word “history”
- Students learn we can create stories using information from various sources; that we can create stories by looking at photographs, other stories, letters and by talking to people about their experiences and knowledge.
- Students learn that there is a story to be told about their individual lives.

Activities

- Discussion about types of stories
 - ✧ Make-believe stories
 - ✧ Stories about things that actually happened
 - ✧ Teacher may provide examples of make-believe and stories that actually happened, and then ask the children to think of examples.

- What sorts of things can we use to tell stories?
 - ✧ Examine (look closely at) a photograph
 - ✧ Read a book – Read aloud:
 - ✧ *School Then and Now* (Parkes, B.; 2000, Newbridge Emergent Readers Series.)
 - ✧ Read a letter
 - ✧ Examine (look closely at) an object or thing
 - ✧ Talk to one another (What did you do this morning? Where do you live? How many brothers and sisters do you have?)

- You may wish to tell students, “We all have life stories or histories. Over the next couple of weeks, we are going to tell the story of our year at school.”



Activity 2: Timelines

Content Goals

- Students study chronological time in the context of their own lives at school.
- Students understand the concept of sequence within the context of weekly activities at school.
- The children are introduced to the concept of using various pieces of evidence to tell stories about their lives.

Process Goals

- Students synthesize information by creating a timeline that includes various pieces of evidence.
- Students learn to represent events with photos and art, and to place those events in the sequence in which they occur.

Activities

- The class constructs a timeline of a week at school, with emphasis on the “specials” each day to simplify the amount of information.
- Students may decorate the timeline by pasting on magazine pictures, photos of the school, clip art, etc.
- Discussion – The class ‘reads’ its timeline, as it would read a story.



Activity 3: Written Documents

Content Goal

- Students are introduced to written documents.

Process Goals

- Students are introduced to asking questions raised by documents.
- Students are introduced to making connections between documents and other topics associated with them.

Activities

- The class examines and discusses a school newsletter, a school map, and/or any other written documents generated by the school which the teacher believes will meaningfully contribute to the story of the children's time at school.
- After you read the documents, encourage students to interact with them; i.e., if you read a school menu, you might survey students about their favorite and least favorite lunch items. If you read a notice about the school's annual open house, you may ask students if they remember something special about the open house. If you read a snow day notice, you might ask students what they do on snowy days.
- Student report cards.
 - Because real report cards are confidential, make mock Kindergarten report cards and distribute them to the children. The report cards should emphasize unique, positive student attributes. They might even include details students share in the above exercise.
 - The report cards go into the students' baggie books.

Formative Assessment – Report Cards



Activity 4: Photos

Process Goals

- Students learn to examine photos for historic evidence.

Activities

- ◇ Read aloud -- *Schools Long Ago and Today* (Trumbauer, L.; Time for Kids Reader, Harcourt.)
- ◇ Students share photos of themselves taken in the past year or two. If possible, take playground and classroom photos throughout the year to create a supply of photos for this activity. **Questioning strategies to help students understand photos as historic evidence:**
 - What is history? Explain to students that the photograph they chose to bring tells a story of what happened in the past. The photo is part of their personal history.
 - Ask:
 - Who is in the picture?
 - What is/are he/she/they doing?
 - Where was the picture taken?
 - When?
 - Why did someone take this picture?
 - How did you feel when it was taken?
 - What do you think happened after the picture was taken?
 - Did other students ever have an experience similar to the one in the photo?
 - Can we think of a picture that would tell us a story about our school?
About our town?
- ◇ Students tell the stories behind their photos. *Mix-pair-share* is a good format for this activity. Each student will pair-up with another, share the story of their picture with their partner, and then pair with someone new to share again.
- This activity may be voice-recorded to give it the feel of a permanent record.



Activity 5: Other Sources

Content Goal

- Students learn that many sorts of things can be used to tell stories or histories.

Process Goal

- Students engage in brainstorming as a creative process.

Activities

- Students understand we learn about people by studying the things they do, wear, eat, play etc. These concrete things help us re-create stories about what happened to people, about peoples' choices, about family customs, etc.
- Games
 - ◇ Class brainstorms a list of games they have learned or that they play at school.
 - ◇ In pairs, students demonstrate some activities from the list.
 - Ask if and how these games differ from things the children liked to play as toddlers.
 - ◇ Students color pictures of children playing and place in their baggie books.
- Clothes
 - ◇ Students brainstorm clothes they wear for different occasions.
 - ◇ Show and tell format may be used for students to share favorite outfits.
- Food
 - ◇ Parents create an afternoon potluck by bringing a treat that is part of a family or ethnic tradition, and sharing the story of that tradition.
 - ◇ Students draw a picture of their favorite treat to place in their baggie book.



Activity 6: Mapping

Content Goal

- Students understand mapping is a representation of the physical world.
- Students are introduced to the concept of scale.

Process Goal

- Students construct maps of two different locations.
 - Class examines various maps of the school, the city, the state, the country, the world, whatever is available to demonstrate that map size doesn't necessarily change when the size of what is mapped changes.
 - As an introduction to how maps are useful, ask your students to remember how it felt to learn their way around the school.
 - ◇ Was there someone to tell them which way to turn?
 - ◇ Did they follow the leader in lines?
 - ◇ What if there had been no one to show them around -- how would they have know where to turn to go to the cafeteria? Which door went to the playground? How to find the library?
 - ◇ Show the class a map of the school and gives each student a copy of their own.
 - Children trace the route from their current classroom to various sites in the school and school grounds.
 - Students make a map of the classroom and a map of the playground.
 - ◇ This may be done either individually, as a class, or in pairs, as teachers deem appropriate.
 - ◇ Discussion – the maps are the same size, but are the things the class mapped the same size? Why aren't maps the same size as the thing being mapped?
 - ◇ Students place their school maps in their baggie books.

Formative Assessment -- Maps



Activity 7: Mind Maps

Content Goal

- Students review the unit.

Process Goal

- Students are introduced to the mind map concept.
- Students synthesize the unit's activities into a history of their kindergarten year at Stewart (or whichever school they attended.).
 - To conclude the unit, the class makes a mind map based on the baggie book contents.
 - As students brainstorm as many concepts as they can remember from the unit, write the concepts down in a list on an overhead or chalkboard. When the brainstorm is finished, assign each student a concept to illustrate with a drawing using markers or crayons or paints.
 - When the pictures are finished, paste on a large piece of butcher paper or pin on a bulletin board around the title "My History at School".
 - Discussion – taking turns, students tell a story based on their picture.

Summative Assessment – Student contributions to the class Mind Map