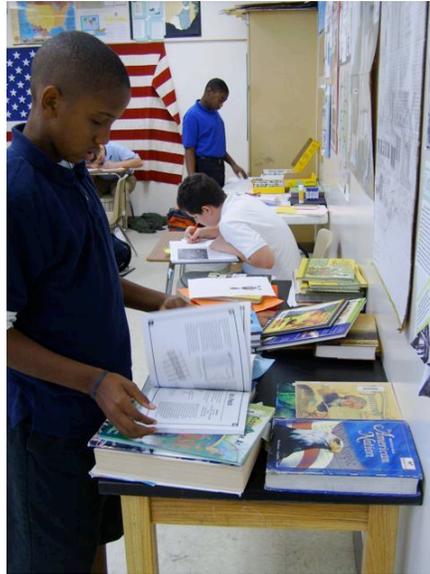


Real Research, Real History

Writing creatively about the Columbian Exchange (1492-1600.)

Building on in-class lessons, students will start the creative writing process by researching their ideas in paper-based books (rather than cut-n-pastable webpages) to create characters and stories that convey their feeling for and understanding of the history that happened in the area in which they live.

When this project was implemented, the students also worked with teaching artist Melba Cooper to illustrate their stories, her documentation is **The Art of Illustration The Colombian Exchange: Creative Stories of Beaufortonians.**



Artist credits: Lisa Annelouise Rentz,
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Learning Objectives:

Give students solid research and creative writing experiences to feed their critical thinking.

Good for these grades/ages: grades 5 through 12; this lesson was developed with Tracy Rentz's 7th grade social studies class at Whale Branch Middle School in 2010.

Time needed for this project: 4 class meetings (plus optional time for typing and illustrating.)

Preparation:

- **preface with:** the unit of study on the Columbian Exchange
- **student prior knowledge:** geography
- **physical space:** classroom, desks, smartboard if possible
- **materials & supplies needed:** reference books, lined paper, pencils
- **staging:** table for reference books

Key Skills:

- **art-making:** concentration, reading for research, sustained writing effort
- **academic:** connecting history lessons to real people and students' own lives

Vocabulary:

Columbian Exchange, ethnocentric, import, export, balance, mercantilism, enlightenment, scientific method.

Handouts & Informative Resources:

- assignment (see below) to also serve as scratch paper.

- Reference materials were a large pile of picture-full, well-used books to optimize student engagement with paper-based resources: National Geographic, May 1964 "The Britain the Shakespeare Knew"; *Pirates, an Illustrated History*; National Geographic, March 2007, "Defending a Forgotten Herd"; National Geographic, September 2003, "21st Century Slaves"; *Adventure Tales of America*; *The Gullah*; *The World of the American Indian*; *The Settling of South Carolina*; *Chronicle of America*. The assortment should be varied and large enough for each student to have one book at a time. These kids shared very well.

Instruction:

Build Knowledge

- study the Age of Exploration, the Columbian Exchange (starting 1492) to the Enlightenment (1700.)

- in addition to the text book and classroom discussion, students had also created maps to display their understanding of geographical connections between Europe, West Africa and the New World.



Engage

Give the students an overview of the creative writing project:

- the genre is short stories and historical fiction;
- the writing format and style should be creative, which means that the students can choose to write about what interests them, from within the unit.

Ask students what creative writing is (imagination, description, adjectives, characters, setting, action.)

Give the assignment:

1. Create an original character to write about in the historical fiction genre.
2. Use facts from your research.
3. Use all your senses: describe smells, texture, tastes, sounds, sights, and intuition (how you feel about what is happening, what you guess will happen.)

4. Use your creative writing to answer this question: What are the effects of the Columbian Exchange?

Apply

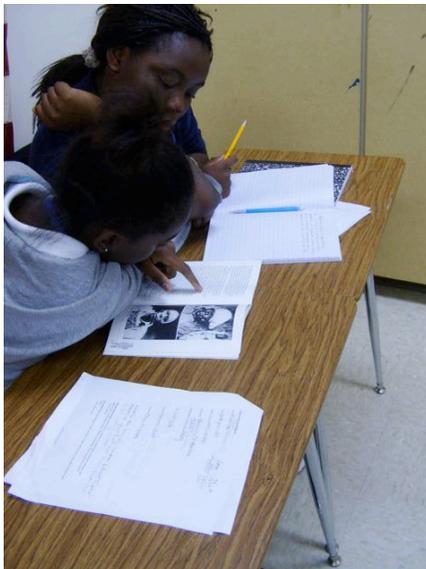
Day one

As a class, explore the pile of books and magazines.

– discuss the value of personal research to the creative writing process (fact checking and being accurate, sounding like you know what you are talking about, answering your own questions, clues for description, epiphanies and serendipity (ideas and something you never would have thought of!))

- give time for students to explore the books on their own.

- announce and guide individual brainstorming time (20 minutes or so)—using the assignment handout, which students can use as a worksheet. Ask students—*what do you WANT to write about? What interests you?*



- save at least 10 minutes for students to share their ideas out loud—*characters? setting? ...and then what do you think is going to happen after that?*

Day Two- writing time. Devote at least two classes to individual writing time.

- The students should be concentrating on their own work.

- circulate, read the works in progress, and offer specific feedback: *what's it like in that village? describe the colors and smells. Who's "he"? Try not to use pronouns. This is funny! Include some more of that, that's good.*

- many students need reminded that they have permission to be creative and to write about what interests them, as long as they're using the historical context of the assignment.

- having an artist or reader on hand is a big help—each student must receive feedback on his writing throughout this process. Jot notes in the margins so students will remember suggestions.

- If reading between class meetings, use post-it notes to make comments on student work.

Day Three:

- reinforce expectations by sharing student writing on the Promethean, reminding of the assignment, and detailing story components (beginning, middle, strong conclusion.)

- ask students to make good use of this final classtime for writing.

- continue giving as much specific feedback as possible, now paying special attention to the ending—don't let a story wither away, the ending must be strong and meaningful.

Reflect

One technique for a good ending is simply 1-3 sentences of reflection about how the character feels now and what he has learned.

Assessment:

In addition to meeting the assignment detailed above, students should act on feedback and edits from the teacher (which should not dwell on spelling or conventions.) Students don't need to make the exact edit, perhaps they will think of something else. Overall, their writing should be clear (for example, few pronouns) and the ending should be strong, final, and satisfying to read. Remind students to think of their readers.



rubric				
CRITERIA	2 points	4 points	6 points	Actual Points
Create an original character to write about in the historical fiction genre using accurate	Use of facts is light and the character is not developed into a personality.	the student uses a few facts to create an accurate character	Students uses facts from different sources to create a full character who feels and	

facts from research			experiences in accordance with the setting	
Use all your senses to describe	little or no description	description is limited, for example, includes only vision	description appeals to 4-5 senses	
Use your creative writing to answer this question: - What are the effects of the First Global Age?	Effects of Columbian Exchange not included—the story does not have depth	The effects of the Columbian Exchange are a backdrop to the story.	The effects of the Columbian exchange are an important part of the story.	
			TOTAL 93 Points Possible	

2011 Curriculum standards:

English Language Arts

7-2.1 Analyze central ideas within and across informational texts.

7-2.2 Analyze information within and across texts to draw conclusions and make inferences.

7-2.3 Identify indicators of author bias such as word choice and the exclusion and inclusion of particular information.

7-2.4 Create responses to informational texts through a variety of methods such as drawings, written works, oral presentations, and media productions.

7-4.2 Use complete sentences in a variety of types: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.

7-4.3 Create multiple-paragraph compositions that include a central idea with supporting details and use appropriate transitions between paragraphs.

Social Studies

7-1.2 Explain how technological and scientific advances, including navigational advances and the use of gunpowder, affected various parts of the world politically, socially, and economically and contributed to the power of European nations. (H, G, P, E)

7-1.3 Compare how European nations exercised political and economic influence differently in the Americas, including trading-post empires, plantation colonies, and settler colonies. (H, G, P, E)

7-1.4 Summarize the characteristics of European colonial power and explain its effects on the society and culture of African nations, including instances of participation in and resistance to the slave trade. (H, G, P, E)

Artist commentary

By devoting time to in-depth research and writing, students can experience the satisfaction of recognizing the amazingness of history and they can learn how to synthesize info into their own imagery and narratives.

Community connection:

This lesson first took place in Beaufort SC, a coastal area that was part of the Columbian Exchange.

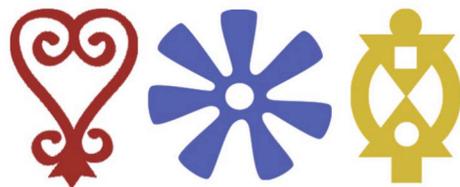
Teacher reflection, Tracy Rentz, Whale Branch Middle School:

It took a while for them to get going, but some of these stories are really getting good and very creative!! Their English teacher read some yesterday, and she said that it was some of the best writing she has seen from them in 2 years. Sometimes, it takes these kids awhile to get motivated, and into something different that they have not tried before, why they have not done creative writing before, I do not know. They are excited. They are having to think, think about dates and what fits into their stories to make sense and that is good. They are not used to that kind of creating. This has been extremely good for them.

Artist reflection:

In addition to books for research, it might have been helpful to have objects--tools and materials (ship's ropes, sweetgrass, indigo, rice, etc) that students could handle and match up to their character's role/trade (since students emphasized jobs in their stories.)

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a US Department of Education Arts Education
Model & Dissemination Grant
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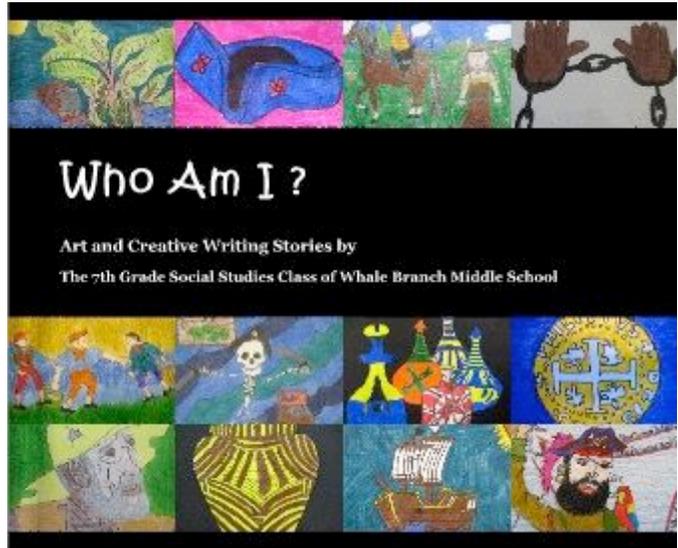
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creative learning + wisdom helps me & lets me help you

Work by Whale Branch Middle School students became a book, *Who Am I?*, published via Blurb.com (search for the school there and you'll find the book.)

The Quest for Ivory

My name is Hiemrobey, and I am finally in Africa. I was born in North America in the year 1464, and I am fifty-four years old. I died in 1518.

In my lifetime, I have sailed from North America to Europe, and then finally, I went to Africa. I went there to hunt the elephants just for their ivory. I wear clothes that have holes in them, and socks that are dirty. My shirt is brown, and my pants are black. My job is a hunter. I kill the elephants for their ivory; because of that, the elephant population has gone down. So now, I have to find alternative places to hunt my elephants. I have to work on killing more, because the demand for ivory is so very high.



Because so many hunters like me have killed so many elephants for their ivory, today countries have placed local rangers to protect the elephant. They were on the brink of extinction. Today there is a lot more in the world because people like me do not hunt them. That is it on my lifetime. I am Hiemrobey. 1464-1518. I was fifty-four years old.

Now I am up in Heaven, and I see the elephants that I hunted and killed. Now that I have seen them, they say "are you the guy that hunts the elephants"? I said "yes". So the elephants say "why did you do this to us"? I say to them "because we need ivory to sale and trade". I explain to them that "I made a lot of money by the sale and trading of your tusks"! We talked together about why I did that to a lot of elephants for a very long time.

After the conversation, I felt very bad for what I had done. How could I kill all of these innocent animals? I asked the elephants to forgive me for what I had. The elephants agreed, and understood why.

Cinderella

Hello. I am Imani Brown. I am a poet. I started writing poetry as a young child after my father died. I decided to write poetry since my family wouldn't listen to me when I talked to them. I would just express my feelings in my poems.

I was born on June 2, 1645. I grew up in a messed up home. I have five brothers and sisters. I am sixteen years old. Out of all of my siblings, I was the only one who was treated wrong. If someone broke the vase in the house, I would be the first name to be called. And boy was I furious for that! I almost never smiled.

The only time I ever smiled was when I saw other people. Other people smiled, and were nice to me. I also smiled when and if my brothers and sisters did get into trouble.

I grew up as a slave in the house. I was like Cinderella.

I started writing poems when I was twelve years old. My first poem was called "Who Am I?". My first poems were not recognized. I did not realize what talent I really had.

But one day, my mother was going through my belongings and found all my poems. The best thing about my mother finding out about my poems was that she is a teller. A teller is a person who tells the people all the newest information in the kingdom.

So the very next day, my mother yelled for her Q. My mother started to read my poems. My mother thought the poems were funny, and when she read them, she did so in a funny way. However, the townspeople "oohed" and "aahed." They shouted, "read more"! They asked "Who is this passionate poet"?

My mother was surprised and shocked. She smiled, and proudly for once said my name. She said she would be back next week with more to read. The townspeople were happy and excited!

Now, week after week, I go to the town square to read my poems to the townspeople. I draw a very large crowd. I have even been offered to be published. All thanks to my mom the teller. I am happy now, and I smile everyday-even at my mother.

I, Jaleel Spouse

I am Jaleel Spouse. I was born in 1570 in England. I am twenty-two years old. I was in college, trying to become an artist.

I, Jaleel Spouse, think that all children should go through school without dropping out.

I, Jaleel Spouse, am a black man who lives in England in the 1500s. I draw pictures of Indians, and how they live. I heard of the Indians, and their culture, through tales from the explorers like Columbus and Cortes.

I, Jaleel Spouse, have a father that is white, and a mother that is black. We live in England, and we are very rich. I have always had a passion for drawing, especially for drawing how people work and how they live.

I, Jaleel Spouse, am now a famous artist. I live in Seabrook, South Carolina. Many of my drawings are sold in markets up and down the southern coast here. I make a very good living off of their sales.

I, Jaleel Spouse, am married and have two children. My wife is beautiful. I met her in college. She likes to draw too.

I, Jaleel Spouse, draw pictures of Indians in ripped up clothes. I also draw pictures of Indians with their weapons that they use to find and hunt their food.

I, Jaleel Spouse, see birds flying in the air. I see Carolina Wrens. I see Blue Birds. I see Cardinals. I see Seagulls. I see Pigeons. I also like to draw these.

I, Jaleel Spouse, hear sounds of celebrations when I draw. I hear drums beating in a perfect rhythm. I hear maracas shaking. I hear the harpsichord play a funky tune.

I, Jaleel Spouse, have all sensations when I draw. I can taste the foods the Indians cook. I can touch the arrows the Indians use to hunt with. I can smell the open fields the Indians roam on, and the animals the Indians come in contact with-the deer, the fish, and the birds.

I, Jaleel Spouse, was out in one of these open fields drawing one day when I got to meet an Indian. His name was Red Arrow, and he was a Yemassee Indian. I think he was about sixteen years old. He had colorful feathers in his hair, and paint all over his face and body. His moccasins and pants were made from animal skins. I asked him if I could draw him. He agreed.

I, Jaleel Spouse, and Red Arrow talked as I drew him. Red Arrow said that he had a family. In his tribe, he explained, the women wear dresses made from Bison skins that they exchanged from Indian tribes from the West. Men also wore Bison pants, and Bison moccasins. His tribe ate local vegetables, and fished the local rivers.

I, Jaleel Spouse, kept drawing as Red Arrow kept talking. He was born in a village. He said his favorite game was Lacrosse. I tried to play the game with him, but it was very difficult for me.

I, Jaleel Spouse, liked the day I had with Red Arrow. Years of drawing Indians, I finally I got to draw one in real life! Red Arrow is my inspiration.

I, Jaleel Spouse, will never forget that day.

