2011-2012 Lesson Plan for Henrico 21 Awards

Lesson Title: 21st Century Ballads
Target Grade/Subject: 6th grade/English
Length: Three 90 minute blocks

Summary:

In an effort to preserve and share American culture at the beginning of the 21st Century, our classroom will create a virtual museum that will allow future generations to understand the stories, ideas, and events that have made an impact on students' lives in the year 2012. Students will collaborate in small groups to create a ballad that tells the story of an event in their life that has been memorable to them. These events may be personal or cultural and should contain a theme as well as the basic elements of a story.

Essential questions:
● How can I learn from professional writers to become a better communicator?
● How do professional writers gather ideas from sources other than themselves?
● How are inspirational ideas and themes related?
● How do ballads represent the generations in which they were written?

Lesson Development:
Process/Tasks/Assessment:

1. Literature Selections

Students have read, listened, and watched various examples of ballads, such as the ones listed below. I selected examples in various forms and from different backgrounds.
● "Step It Out Nancy," a folk poem; Text; Youtube
● "The Sneetches," a short story by Dr. Seuss; Text; Youtube
● "Love Story," a song by Taylor Swift; Text; Youtube
● "Casey at the Bat," a sports poem; Text; Youtube

After reading, students researched the author's inspirations behind each piece and recorded a theme for each piece. As a group, we discussed how the inspiration relates to the theme and what each of these ballads reveals about the generation in which it was written. We also made generalizations about the types of cross-generational ideas that inspire people (ex. personal stories, sports stories, popular entertainment, current events, etc.).

Ballad	Real-Life Inspiration	Theme
Love Story		
Casey at Bat		
Step It Out, Nancy		
The Sneetches		

2. Prewriting Research

In small groups of two or three, students used the Internet to create list of cultural moments, such as 9/

11, that have impacted their generation and could serve as an inspiration for a modern ballad (we had completed a list of personal memorable moments in a previous class). Students began their web search using a Year in Review article, such as this one from Scholastic, but then expanded their search to help narrow their topics. Students who were interested in significant events, such as 9/11, were encouraged to find a personal story that would help them see the event through a person's eyes rather than a news lens. After completing this initial research, small groups selected either a personal or cultural topic for a ballad poem. Once students had selected their topics, they brainstormed a theme, or a lesson abut life, that their ballad would illustrate.

3. Drafting

Students completed a pre-writing plot diagram for their ballad and then collaborated on their poem using Google Docs and a Schoolspace discussion board.

4. Creative Project

After writing the ballad, students created an artifact for our virtual museum by completing one of the projects below. Students recorded their resources using a shared works cited page in Google Docs.

- Project 1 Idea (Video): Create a music video for your ballad using Windows Movie Maker, Adobe Premiere, Animoto,Roxio PhotoShow, Jaycut (or an application of your choice on your home computer). You may perform your ballad, but it's not a requirement as long as you showcase your ballad's words on the screen. Watch several online music videos to get ideas about how to put your video together.

- Project 2 Idea (Text Visual): Use Scrapblog, Mixbook, or another online book maker website to create a digital storybook version of your ballad. Be sure to illustrate your ballad with photos that match the tone of your story. If you use a tool other than the ones I've listed, be sure the site enables you to create a product that can be displayed (aka embedded) on another website.

- Project 3 Idea (Audio): Add music and perform your ballad as a song. You may use your own instruments or edit loops and tracks online. You may use Audacity on your computer to record your audio or another online mixing tool, such as Aviary or Roc. You may also use software on your home computer. Just be sure to save your file as a .mp3 or .m4v.

- Project 4 Idea (Choice): If you have an idea for a project that does not fit with the three ideas above, please see me, and we will talk about its feasibility.

5. Reflection

Students shared their projects with the class. After each group shared their project, the other groups listed one thing they liked about the project and one suggestion or improvement idea for the next. This feedback was then shared with the group. After each group had presented, students completed a reflection survey where they evaluated their own contributions to the group as well as their group members' contributions.

5. Assessment

Students were assessed twice for this assignment using the rubrics below. The first assessment was on their final product, and the second assessment was on how they collaborated with each other. Rubrics were shared with students at the beginning of the project.

Final Product

Criteria	5	4	3

Ballad Inspiration and Theme	The real-life inspiration and theme are clearly understood by the reader.	The real-life inspiration and theme are partly clear but could use more details to help paint a better picture for the reader.	The real-life inspiration and theme are not clear to the reader.
Ballad Plot Structure	Ballad contains a setting, character, conflict, climax, and resolution.	Ballad is missing either a setting, character, conflict, climax, or resolution.	Ballad is missing many story elements.
21st Century Project	Project was created using Web 2.0 technology and able to be embedded in a website.	Project was created using Web 2.0 technology but not able to be embedded in a website.	Project was not created using Web 2.0 technology.
Creativity and Communication "Neatness"	Project displayed creativity. Written words used correct spelling, capital letters, and punctuation). Spoken words were clear and easy to understand.	Project displayed creativity. Written words may have contained a few or spoken words may have been unclear in places but didn't affect the overall effect of the piece.	Project may or may not have displayed creativity. Written words had many mistakes. Spoken words were unclear. Overall quality of the piece was affected by this.
Timeliness	Project was turned in one time.		Project was turned in late.

Collaboration and Reflection

Criteria	5	4	3
Self-reflection	I gave myself an A for my contribution to the project.	I gave myself an B for my contribution to the project.	I gave myself a C or below for my contribution to the project.
Group-reflection	My group gave me an A for my contribution to the project.	My group gave me a B for my contribution to the project.	My group gave me a C or below for my contribution to the project.
Teacher reflection	My teacher gave me an A for my contribution to the project.	My teacher gave me a B for my contribution to the project.	My teacher gave me a C or below for my contribution to the project.
Effective Collaboration	My group worked well together. My teacher did not have to remind us to stay on task. We were able to use our	My group worked well together most of the time. We needed some help from our teacher to get back on task. We could have made greater use of our	My group did not work well together. The teacher had to remind us several times to get back on task. We did not use our time wisely

	time wisely.	time than we did.	at all.
Timeliness	I completed my reflection survey on time.		I completed my reflection survey late.

TIP Chart Assessment:

Research and Information Fluency: 6
Students were allowed to select, research, and write about an event of their choice using the method most appropriate given their topic. For students who were writing about current events, they selected websites and databases. Some students were writing about popular book series and were rereading passages from the novels during the research process. Although they were not using a chart to officially list and record the answers to their questions, students did generate their own questions and research answers throughout this process.

Communication and Collaboration: 7
The goal of this project was to create a web presence that would communicate the wants and values of their generation with those who come after them. Students selected their own groups for this project and communicated with each other both inside and outside the classroom using Google Docs and Schoolspace. Through the reflection process, students were able to assess their own contributions to the project as well as their group members. Their reflection responses were incorporated on the Collaboration and Reflection rubric.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: 6
In the beginning of this project, students were answering teacher-directed questions, but as the project progressed, they began asking and answering their own questions using higher-order thinking skills. Students were not told how to complete this project; rather, the assignment was open-ended, giving students choices in how best to accomplish the goal. In the reflection part of the project, students answered open ended questions explaining the thought process behind the creation of their project. This reflection was part of Collaboration and Reflection rubric.

Creativity and Innovation: 7
Students had to apply what they learned about ballads and the way authors gain inspiration from their culture and personal experiences to create their own ballad that revealed an insight into their own culture. Once the ballad was created, students were free to use their choice of a technology tool that would enable them to share their work on the web. In the reflection, students were given an opportunity to reflect on what they learned as well as identify future goals for themselves.