Grand Canyon: Exploring a Natural Wonder

A lesson on “What is a Diary?”

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Grade Level: 4
Duration: 2-4 class periods

National Geography Standards

ELEMENT ONE: THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS
1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective

ELEMENT TWO: PLACES AND REGIONS
4. The physical and human characteristics of places.

Arizona Geography Strand

Grade 4
Concept 1 The World in Spatial Terms
PO 5 Describe characteristics of human and physical features

Concept 2 Places and Regions
PO 5. Describe how regions and places (e.g., Grand Canyon, Colorado River, Casa Grande Ruin, Canyon de Chelly, Yucatan Peninsula) have distinct characteristics.

ELA Common Core Standards

Reading
Key Ideas and Details
4.RL.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).

Writing
Text Types and Purposes
4.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Speaking and Listening
Comprehension and Collaboration
4.SL.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

4.SL.5 Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to
Overview

The Grand Canyon is one of the most visited Wonders of the World and is a national park in the United States. In 2006, Governor Napolitano selected the book, *Grand Canyon Exploring a Natural Wonder* as the fourth grade selection for her book program. From this book, students can learn what distinctive characteristics are found at the Grand Canyon.

Purpose

In this lesson, students will explore the Grand Canyon through the visual diary of the author. They will learn about the habitat of the animals and plants that live there. Then they will make a visual and written diary of a trip they take around their school.

Materials

- Chart Paper and markers
- Digital Cameras for student use
- Computer lab and photo paper
- Writing paper and pencils
- Clipboards
- Arizona’s Topography and Rivers map

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. create a journal or diary

2. write a story with a beginning, middle and end to describe their school

3. present their diary to the class

4. describe the Grand Canyon

Procedures

*Several days prior to doing this lesson, take pictures of ordinary classroom activities. Print these up for use on Day Two. Have access to a computer lab for printing off the photos.*

Day One

1. Locate the Colorado River and Grand Canyon on a map. Explain where the Colorado River begins and ends. Show where the Grand Canyon and the national park are located.

2. Read the book *Grand Canyon: Exploring a Natural Wonder* looking at the pictures with the text. Note that this is a diary or journal of the author’s trip with beautiful hand-drawn pictures. Explain that a diary is written in the first person because it is telling what the author did. The author says “I did this” or “I saw this”. Explain that the drawings are water-colored sketches that he made while visiting the canyon area.

3. Re-read the book and this time have the students write down words (either from the text or from the pictures) to describe the Grand Canyon. Then have the students take the words in their word lists to create sentences. Each student should have at least 5 descriptions of the Grand Canyon written in complete sentences.

Language Conventions of Standard English

4.L.2

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

a. Use correct capitalization.

b. Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.

c. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.

d. Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.
Day Two

4. Demonstrate how you could do a diary of a day in your classroom by taking pictures of the various activities the class does during the day and gluing them on the chart paper with sentences describing the activities.

5. Have the class make a diary of their ordinary activities. Divide the pictures so each small group has one or two. Then have them create sentences to describe this activity.

Days Three and Four

1. Remind the students of the diary the class made with the class the day before. Since digital cameras might be scarce, group the students into groups of 3-4 students.

2. Tell the students that their assignment is to take a trip around the school for fifteen minutes with a digital camera. They are to document their trip as the author did. They will need to take at least 5 pictures of the sights they see and write about these sights on the paper attached to the clipboard.

3. Go over the criteria for the diary. The groups should record: what the picture is and what they were thinking of when they took the picture (remembering to write in the first person narrative). Remind the groups that their assignment is to document their trip they took around the school so someone else could repeat the same trip or route as well as understand why the picture was important to be included in the diary.

4. Have students present their diaries to the class.

Assessment

The mastery criteria for the writing assignment is:
- 5 pictures of sights on the campus (5 pts)
- Complete sentences explaining why each picture meant something to the authors/photographers (5 pts)
- Used “We” in their sentences (5 pts)
- Recounted orally their experience in an organized manner.
- Sentences were grammatically correct.

The sentences about the Grand Canyon can be graded for accuracy and given a geography score.

Extensions

Students could be assigned this same sort of assignment over the weekend to document their activities and later share their diaries with their classmates.

Students can use the computer lab and download their photos and make a power point.

Sources