Stamp Stories

of Abraham Lincoln

History teachers, do your students' eyes glaze over when you mention a study review for the big test coming up? If so, then break the mold with this fun and engaging activity. *Stamp Stories* emphasizes visual learning with authentic U.S. postage stamps, pictorial windows into American history. In this lesson, students build their own stamp collections to show what they've learned and debate why their stamps reflect the history of Abraham Lincoln.

The Activity

Set-up:

Stamp Stories requires very little set-up. Teachers can acquire collections of stamps from national stamp dealers or even their local stamp clubs. With stamps acquired, organize students into small groups and give each group a collection of stamps to work with. Spend a few minutes discussing the purpose of stamps and invite students to explore the variety of images depicted on US postage.

Step One: *Build a Stamp Collection!*

Students spend *five minutes* building a collection of **FIVE** stamps to visually represent the themes of the unit. Many stamps reflect the historical places, faces and events significant to Abraham Lincoln. Students share their collections formed in Step One with their group members for the second step of the activity. **Five (5) Minutes.**

Step Two: *Compare and Interpret Collections!*

Students compare collections within their groups, explaining how their chosen stamps reflect the theme. After each student interprets their collection, the group creates a new collection of **TEN** stamps *chosen from the collections created by each individual group member.* The group collections will be used in Step Three for the **Big Debate**, so choose wisely! **Ten (10) Minutes!**

Step Three: *Teams Debate!*

Each group prepares their collection to share with the class. Groups debate by using their understanding of history as evidence for why their group's stamp collection visually demonstrates the topic of Abraham Lincoln. **Twenty (20) Minutes.**

Quick Summary of the lesson plan:

1. Teachers first acquire a collection of US stamps from their local stamp club.
2. With stamps in hand, break the students into small groups.
3. Students build a 5-stamp collection based on the Abraham Lincoln unit theme.
4. Students discuss their collections within their group, and the group builds a new collection of 10 stamps.
5. The whole class debates the merits and drawbacks of each group's collection.

Adaptations

Stamp Stories promotes flexibility, allowing teachers to determine how and when to use the lesson plan in their classroom. Just about any classroom topic applies to stamp collecting and students strengthen their visual thinking skills with each stamp collection they build and interpret.

Stamp Stories & Arago

Arago, the museum's digitized collection, enables on-line access to the Postal Museum objects. Arago's **MY COLLECTION** feature allows students to save the objects they search for and the collections can be emailed to other students or even the teacher! Arago combines images of objects with narrative text written by the museum's collections staff and volunteers, providing a voice for objects and offering additional layers of the history in the Postal Museum's collection.

Modify *Stamp Stories* with these suggestions:

- Each students identifies their stamps in Arago, placing them in the MY COLLECTION feature. Students can email their collections to their group members, to continue the in-class discussion.
- Each group must locate and add to their existing collection **FIVE** additional stamps from Arago's digital images, in order to create a more comprehensive interpretation of the topic.
- Groups combine their stamp collections with images from the Postal Operations collection in Arago, Postal Operations features objects that are not stamps, such as mailbags and airplanes. Combining the visual images found on stamps with three-dimensional objects in Arago allows for greater flexibility in interpreting the theme.
- The class debates which stamps most appropriately reflect the topic, and choose one or two stamps from each group to create a classroom collection. Access the team collection in Arago!

Arago: www.arago.si.edu

Postal Museum: www.postalmuseum.si.edu

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National Postal Museum