



HISTORY DETECTIVES KIDS

Lesson: Hands-On Investigation!

Grades: 3-6

Subject: Language Arts/Science/History/Technology/Math

Estimated Time of Completion: four to five 30-minute class sessions

I. Summary

This lesson encourages students to determine details and then to use them as they write their own mystery.

Every core subject during a student's day utilizes detective skills. Developing a student's ability to problem solve will enable him to become a better student. Have students check the History Detectives Codebreaker for some steps: analyze, then investigate, then understand, and finally test. In math, you read and look at a problem, search for the method of solving it, question until you come to understand it, and finally test your solution. In science, you begin with a problem, form a hypothesis, work toward understanding, and eventually test your ideas. When you read, you analyze the text, question to investigate, restate to understand, and finally test your understanding through summary or writing. You are a historian in your history class as you search and discover information, find and piece together the parts, examine the clues, and arrive at being able to prove your answer. Knowing the details is the essence of the number one rule: analyze it. The more you practice organizing, gathering and analyzing your clues the better you'll become at solving problems. Detective work is a "hands-on" investigation.

II. Objectives

- Students will analyze text for details
- Students will identify and recognize fact from opinion
- Students will distinguish between important clues and red herrings
- Students will identify details and learn how to write details using the five Ws (who, what, where, when, why, and how)
- Students will practice and improve problem-solving skills
- Students will write to acquire knowledge, clarify thinking, synthesize information, improve study skills, gain confidence and enhance lifelong communication

III. Materials Needed

- History Detectives site, Codebreaker, and print-outs of the History Detective notebook
- A package of plastic clothespins marked "Who, What, Where, When, and Why"
- Optional: Computer with Internet access with a presentation device or available computers for showing before large groups of students
- Sleuth Summarizer sheets from the detective notebook, notebook paper, scissors, crayons or markers, and pencil
- Dot-to-Dot sheet, Detail Question activity sheet, and Handy Organizer

IV. Procedure

1. (Class 1) The teacher will use the History Detectives Kids site and its Codebreaker to introduce mysteries, details, problem-solving, and sleuthing.
2. The teacher will first introduce the Internet site by demonstrating the rules of sleuthing in the Codebreaker. Vocabulary words with meanings from the Codebreaker can encourage students to become acquainted with and use "detective words."
3. After the students are familiar with the detective words, the teacher can refer to students as a gumshoe working toward becoming a PI (Private Investigator).
4. Explain that now students will test their new knowledge. Have students use the numbers under their correct answers of the Clue Sheet to connect the dots.
5. The teacher should mention to students that predictions and conclusions are subject to change. Sometimes, red herrings steer us to make wrong predictions. There will be some numbers here that aren't needed. Don't be tempted to guess or use incorrect answers. In the light of new evidence, a good detective often has to form a new prediction. Please don't say picture predictions aloud. Allow others to form or change their opinions as it is completed.
6. (Class 2) Discuss with students the characteristics of a good investigator (has curiosity, listens well, watches for detail, follows up on leads, records and organizes information, draws conclusions, and tests conclusions). Remind the students of how important it is to be organized and keep good notes.
7. The teacher will hand students the "handy" organizer. Students will be told that occasionally reasoning skills require you to work backwards. Example: If you lost your homework, you would have to retrace your steps to understand where you put it.
8. Each student will receive five clothespins inscribed with one of the detail words: who, what, where, when, and why.
9. Students will find and list three details from the Clue Sheet that corresponds to question word being grouped in a specific finger. One finger has three who's, one finger has three what's, etc).
10. Students will place a clothespin on each appropriate finger marking the type of details shown on that finger. Example: If the thumb was used to record "who," the

clothespin stating “who” should be put on the thumb. If the forefinger was used for “what,” then a clothespin will be connected to it stating “what.”

11. (Class 3) Discuss the meaning of a mystery. Discuss mysteries that students have seen on television or read. Discuss the word “suspense” and what makes a setting suspenseful. Students will record their thoughts in their detective notebook and will use the details to work backwards in writing their own mystery. Ask students if they have ever lost something and had to retrace their steps to find it. Sometimes you have to reread or check a math problem by going over it again.

12. Students should use their imagination and begin to complete their detective notebook using it as if they had recorded information about a real mystery.

13. The teacher will explain to students that they will details into their “handy organizer” and their imagination to complete the detective notebook.

14. Explain that students will all be working from this statement: It was missing!

15. Explain that students will imagine their main character will solve the mystery. The main character could be a detective, a student, or the neighbor. Use the people on the “who” finger to come up with their main character.

16. Explain that students will blend their main character into the story with any others. Explain that students will place this character in a setting from the “where” finger. The students will continue to write and will remove the clothespin each time that they have used something from that finger. Have students continue until all clothespins are removed.

17. Explain that students will use “mystery” vocabulary and their notebook to write a mystery. You may remind students that the more mysterious their vocabulary, the better their story will be. Examples: dark and gloomy, suspiciously, crept up the creaky stairs, peered cautiously around the corner, etc. Explain that students will need to use clues from the “what” finger. Remind students to provide clues so that others can solve the mystery.

18. (Class 4) Have students share their completed mysteries with the class.

V. Classroom Rubric for Project Assessment

| Gumshoe | Deputy Detective | Detective | Private Investigator |
|---|--|---|--|
| The student fails to include less than three of the “W” words | The student used less than three of the “W” words | The student recognizes the value of details by including at least five of the six “W” words | The student recognizes the value of details by including all of the “W” words |
| The student’s mystery lacks clues, language and a conclusion | The student’s mystery lacks either the clues, mysterious language, or a conclusion. | The student’s mystery has fair clues, mysterious language, and a conclusion. | The student’s mystery includes excellent clues, mysterious language, and a conclusion. |
| Effort is not evident through a completed detective notebook and the handy organizer. | Effort is somewhat evident through a completed detective notebook and the handy organizer. | Effort is evident through a good, completed detective notebook and the handy organizer. | Effort is evident through an excellent completed detective notebook and the handy organizer. |

VI. Extensions and Adaptations

- Have students write a written description of someone in the class without revealing the identity of the student. Have students guess the identity of the classmate using the written description only.
- Have the students do "sole" rubbings. Have them put paper on their soles and rub over them with charcoal pencils. Mix up one shoe from each student in the middle of a circle and their drawings. Have students match the shoes to their "sole" prints.
- Have students listen to a mystery and use the "handy organizer" to record the details as they hear them.

VII. Standards

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Language Arts

- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the reading process
- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of informational texts

Math

- Uses a variety of strategies in the problem-solving process
- Understands the general nature of mathematics

History

- Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns