

## ***Studies of the Eastern Worlds: Historical Summaries***

*by Aimee Burman and Elizabeth Seegers  
Danville Middle School  
Danville Community School Corporation*

The purpose of this lesson is on the writing process as it relates to writing historical summaries. The catalyst for this lesson is the visual Christ's Descent into Hell by Hieronymus Bosch and the music "We Didn't Start the Fire" by Billy Joel. Students interpret their own meaning of the visual and song as they focus on the chaos created in both the art and music. Discussion is led to "chaos" in world history. Students choose their own historical event to research and write a historical summary.

**Lesson Plan Title:** Studies of the Eastern Worlds: Historical Summaries

**Keywords:** History/Language Arts/Geography/Interdisciplinary/

**Curriculum Area:** Language Arts

**Grade Level:** Seventh grade

**Appropriate Group Size:** Whole Class

**Time Expected to Complete Instructional Plan:** 15 days

**Instructional Objectives:**

1. Students will interpret meaning from art and music.
2. Students will be able to write a clear thesis statement.
3. Students will be able to locate information on chosen topics using a variety of sources.
4. Students will be able to write about historical events using chronological order.
5. Students will be able to paraphrase important information from various works.
6. Students will compile a correctly written bibliography.
7. Students will cooperatively work in writing circles for peer editing purposes.
8. Students will follow the steps to a final draft through the drafting process.
9. Students will present their findings to fellow classmates in a unique and interesting way.

**Indiana State Proficiencies:**

- Proficiency 1: Exhibit a positive attitude toward language and learning.
- Proficiency 2: Select and apply effective strategies for reading.
- Proficiency 3: Comprehending developmentally appropriate materials.
- Proficiency 4: Select and use developmentally appropriate strategies for writing.
- Proficiency 5: Write for different purposes and audiences producing a variety of forms.
- Proficiency 6: Use prior knowledge and content area information to make critical judgements.
- Proficiency 7: Communicate orally with people of all ages.
- Proficiency 8: Recognize the interrelatedness of language, literature, and culture.

**Materials and Resources:**

Corbis Images:

By the Deathbed, Fever  
Detail of Hell from The Garden of Earthly Delights Triptych by  
Hieronymus Bosch  
Hieronymus Bosch Painting A Carnival  
Intense Flames During the LA Riots  
Ship of Fools; The  
The Temptation of Saint Anthony

Harris, Lisa. "Write Up Their Alley. Greenfield Middle School.  
Joel, Billy. "We Didn't Start the Fire." Greatest Hits Volume III.  
Rief, Linda. *Seeking Diversity*. Heinemann Educational Books, Inc: 1992.  
Rothermel, Dan. *Starting Points: How to Set Up and Run a Writing Workshop-and Much More*.  
National Middle School Association: 1996

### **Preparation:**

Obtain a copy of the music "We Didn't Start the Fire" by Billy Joel. Advance research could be done ahead of time to provide the teacher with a basic knowledge of the resources available to the students, and the topics that the students have to choose from.

### **Student Instruction:**

1. As students enter the classroom they will hear the song "We Didn't Start the Fire" playing in the background.
2. "Focus" work for the day (also referred to as "bell work") is to view the one of the Corbis images and ask the students to write five "W" questions (who, what, when, where, and why) in their writer's notebook about the print.
3. Once students have had the opportunity to ask questions, invite them to volunteer their questions to the rest of the class.
4. Create a classroom discussion about the print and possible answers to some of the questions (there is no right or wrong answer).
5. Play the song "We Didn't Start the Fire" by Billy Joel again and ask the students to just listen to the lyrics.
6. Now ask students to write the five "W" questions about the song.
7. Encourage questions and possible answers.
8. Now ask the students to think about if the painting and the song have any common threads. Guide students toward the chaoticness of the painting and the chaos of the events behind the lyrics of the song.
9. Provide lyrics to the students and ask them to listen again as the song is played.
10. Ask students to determine what topics they are interested in learning more about by reviewing their ten questions and then have them choose three of the people, places, or events mentioned in the lyrics.
11. Present a mini-lesson on thesis statements and ask the students to write a thesis statement for each of the three topics they chose in their writer's notebook along side of the questions they wrote earlier.
12. Hold a "class meeting" to discuss topic sentences and topic choice.
13. Present a mini-lesson on note taking ( I emphasize paraphrasing with the students and have them practice taking notes from a randomly chosen entry in the encyclopedia and after putting the encyclopedia back on the shelf, they are to write a paragraph using their notes. Encourage students to compare and contrast their writing with the writing in the encyclopedia. I ask my students if their paragraph sounds like something they would say, if not, they need to re-paraphrase).
14. Present a mini-lesson on bibliographies.

15. Present a mini-lesson on organization of ideas. For some students this may be chronological. I tell my students that their ideas should be arranged on paper as to how they want their paper to appear when it is finished.
16. Students spend time in the media center researching their topics, discovering related images, and taking notes,
17. Ask student to write personal goals for their paper. What do they want to accomplish?
18. Discuss the scoring rubric with students so that they are aware of how they will be assessed.
19. Have students write a first draft of their historical summaries.
20. Students have peer response groups on their first drafts within their writing circles.
21. Students write second drafts of historical summaries.
22. Teacher conferences are held with each student. Challenge students to ask specific questions about their pieces and teachers are able to keep students on the right track to a final draft.
23. Students are to write third and final draft of historical summaries.
24. Hold a “class meeting” and discuss the presentation of the historical summaries. Invite students to present one of the three topics they researched to the class in any matter that may be relevant. Give the students a list of ideas for presentation. Encourage them to be creative and develop an original presentation.
25. Hold a “publishing day” and invite parents to attend the celebration of students’ work.

### **Student Assessment:**

1. Students’ participation in peer response groups
2. Rubric for historical summaries based on:
  - a. Following directions
  - b. Grammar/Mechanics (spelling, thesis statement, organization, etc.)
  - c. Summaries (paraphrasing, informative, personal final thoughts)
  - d. Bibliography
  - e. Visuals
3. Rubric for historical summaries presentation based on:
  - a. Informative
  - b. Creativeness/Uniqueness
  - c. Presentation completed

### **Extensions:**

This lesson is extended through an interdisciplinary unit with science, geography, math, health, cultures, health, and art. All of these lessons can be found under the title “Studies of the Eastern Worlds.”

### **Teacher Notes:**

This is a new interdisciplinary unit developed on the idea of bringing visual arts into the classroom. The language arts lesson was modified to incorporate the visual arts, but I have experimented with the main idea of this unit. This lesson was implemented into my classroom in the spring of 1999. The students were very intrigued by the project and loved the workshop format. I would strongly recommend reading the book *Starting Points: How to Set Up and Run a Writing Workshop-and Much More* by Dan Rothermel. His ideas and format are wonderful and they work well in the middle school classroom.