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The Significance of My Great-Grandparent

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by Audrelia Dugi

Introduction

All students have a story within their families that's worth listening to and retelling. However, very rarely do parents share the in depth impact of their families' history. Students have limited communication with their families, because current trends for young teenagers allow more freedom away from their parents. The Dine people have been through several such changes over the last century and a half.

To make my students aware of these issues, they will consider these questions: What is the students' level of understanding about oral story telling? What is the difference between an autobiography and a biography? What is the definition of characters? Can you distinguish between the heroic, political, military and ordinary person genres of biography?

Students who complete a biography of a great-grandparent will have gained a better understanding of their family history and the effects of today's culture on traditional norms.

This unit, *The Significance of my Great-Grandparent*, will be a 9-10th grade writing project. It will be taught integrating ELA Common Core Standards and the Dine' Philosophy of Education Standards. It will cover the course of 3 weeks for 45 minutes a day per class.

With implementing the new Arizona Common Core Standards, we should be working to get our students college and career ready by the time they exit from high school. Each lesson will be aligned to at CCS and short activities will be added to aid and increase the student's comprehension skills.

Purpose/Rationale

After reviewing our districts state assessments score and being placed in the low grading area from our state education department, I have been looking for ways to increase my students' reading and writing skills. I decided to go outside my comfort zone and applied to the Yale National Initiative program. I felt I needed to learn from other states on how they are writing their curriculum units and lesson plans. I have learned from

attending YNI 2013 that our students' reading materials are too basic. Our district will need to step up and read a variety of literature books from different eras and styles in order for our students to advance and to be exposed to the literature that I have been exposed to and have heard that other teachers are using in their classrooms.

At the YNI 2013 seminar, we discussed how we could incorporate books like Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, and Robert A. Caro's *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent* into a lesson for our students. I thought about the native heritage and how in some small way could connect it with such? For *Confessions*, I would take the part early in the book where his mother always agonizes over Saint Augustine's errors. Students do put their mother's through an emotional roller coaster whether is intentional or unintentional. My favorite book was *Orlando*; I have students that are making independent choices on gender preference. I can see how they may relate to the character of Orlando during the sex change; I know for me, it's a time in the book where it gets exciting. In my lesson, we will read a chapter from *I'll Go and Do More* and during Annie Dodge's lifetime, who did personally meet President Lyndon B. Johnson.

I teach English to students with a learning disability and English Language Learners, who are all low level and struggling readers and writers. At least 90% of my lessons have a variety of accommodations, such as; teacher re-reads instruction, small group instruction, use of visual aids and kinesthetic learning, differentiated instructions, and use of graphic organizers. We live in a rural area on the Navajo reservation and have a population of 98% Native Americans at our high school. The closest city is a 3 hour drive in one direction. Most of the students are on a free or reduced meal plan and about ¼ of our high school students live without running water or electricity in their home.

Our school district celebrates one week as Native American week. Each day is designated for a certain activity and type of attire to display. An example would be: Monday, wear t-shirts with your clan(s) painted on the back and learn to make blue corn mush. Tuesday, females will have a traditional bun (hairdo) and males will wear a headband and students will have a fry bread making contest. The finale of the week will be all students and staff wearing traditional regalia and enjoying a Navajo dances, Pow wows and songs.

I chose four different genre's for the biography assignment: heroic, political, ordinary person and military. Annie Dodge Wauneka, whom may be considered heroic for this unit, received the Medal of Freedom in December 1963 from President Lyndon B. Johnson, but was chosen by the late President John F. Kennedy. Her citation read, "Vigorous crusader for betterment of the health of her people, Mrs. Wauneka has selflessly worked to help them conquer tuberculosis, dysentery and trachoma. She succeeded in these efforts by winning the confidence of her people, and then by interpreting to them the miracles of modern medical science." ¹

Peter MacDonald was the Navajo Nation Chairman from 1970-1989. With his electrical engineering degree, Mr. MacDonald pushed for self-sufficiency and incorporated tribal enterprises. During his late reign as Chairman, he was under investigation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. When found guilty and convicted for numerous charges, he was sent to Federal prison from 1990-2001. Peter MacDonald was convicted on fraud, extortion, riot, bribery, and corruption under the US federal crimes. (Wikipedia)

Kaibah was an ordinary woman who was raised in a traditional lifestyle. She was not awarded any medals and never ran for political office. Her story is about woman's duty. Everyone in her family raised their livestock and planted vegetables to sustain a simple lifestyle. Her life was like that of Martha Ballard, the late 18th - early 19th century Maine midwife about whom we read in the Yale seminar.

Roy O. Hawthorne was a former Navajo Code Talker, considered a warrior among Navajo people. During World War II, the Navajo language was used to create a code. This code was created very strategically that other Navajo's whom did not receive any special training would not be able to decipher the code. Roy O. Hawthorne highlights the basic foundation on how the Navajo code was created. He is now the current vice president of the Navajo Code Talkers Association

Using the four examples of genres above, students will listen to the elders talk about their past heritage. They should know what kinds of questions to ask and to avoid during their interviews. While listening, students should also know what kind of notes to take: direct quotes, timeline information, or how to make quick decisions about whether to write down a story that is too personal.

Background Information

During my post-secondary years, I took a class where we were only to interview elders and write their stories. This was an eye opener for me. I truly thought I was close to my grandmother and thought I knew enough about my ancestors. When I listened to elders in the nursing home and others I interviewed I was stunned to hear and learn that stories are different depending what area of the reservation you reside.

The end of a biography is usually delicate and the hardest part. As Hermione Lee put it, "-as though the end of the task is also the end of a relationship. Biographers find it hard to narrate the deaths of their subjects without any emotions, as simply the next and final event in the story. The biographer is left looking at the receding view of the person they have been obsessed with, moving away from them into the silence of the past." ²

My hope for my students is not to bring them sorrow, but a sense of pride. Pride in what their great-grandparent has accomplished or has been remembered for. It's a touchy subject to talk about the dead, but reasons for education, reconnection and possibly recognition, families will hopefully bypass any objections and move forth with this assignment. I liked how Hermione Lee's tenth rule for biography states that there is no rule for biography. Every situation is unique with an elder and every precaution must be taken when approaching them about a past person, so rules will need to be modified if needed to meet cultural expectations as well as meet basic standards.

Another teaching approach would be to use the on-line Art Authority. At first, it was difficult to find what I was looking for, which were Native American pictures. However in Art Authority, pictures are under the label: Indians. I commonly associate the word Indians with the people from India, not from our native land. In using Art Authority, I would like to show a simple image where the students will use colored pencils to draw the figure as closely as possible. In their final project, I would like each student to draw an imaginary image of their great-grandparent. For instance, if the subject were heroic, then I would like to see medals or a Wonder Woman cape. If the subject were in the military I would like to see the US and Navajo Nation flag or tanks. If possible, I would like each student to post any portraits of their great-grandparent. I know this would be a difficult task, since photos were not easily taken or cameras were not owned by Navajo's.

Annie Dodge Wauneka (1918-1997), was the daughter of the first Navajo Nation Presidency, Chee Dodge, whom served in office from 1922-1928. She was the fourth child and the only child with a different mother.

Annie had to stay home to herd sheep while her siblings were sent to private school to receive a proper education. Whenever her father had guests or staff meetings at their home, Annie would be the one to serve the men so she was able to listen to their discussions. This early exposure led to relevancy. Annie was able to attend grade school in Fort Defiance, AZ then later Albuquerque Indian School where she completed 11th grade. Chee needed her at home to take care of the livestock. After her marriage to George Wauneka, they settled at her father's ranch in Tanner Springs. Annie attended the Chapter meetings with her father and husband in Klagetoh and Wide Ruins. At the age of 41, Annie ran for council representative for her chapters and won. The significant project Annie took on was making the Navajo people aware of tuberculosis. She became the chairperson of the Health and Welfare Committee. It wasn't uncommon to see Annie in her pick-up driving to remote hogans or to hospitals to educate Navajo's about this killing disease. She also brought together medicine men and western medicine to help her people, got Navajo's to have floors and windows installed, and getting women in for pre-natal care. (I'll Go and Do More, Annie Dodge Wauneka. Carolyn Niethammer 2001)

Peter MacDonald (1928-) was the only Navajo Nation President to serve four terms in office from 1970-1989. At the age of five, while herding sheep with his mother, he was sent a mile away to drink water from the well. He held in as much water a five year old mouth could and walked to his mother to give her the water to drink. Peter was raised to rise early every morning to run and tend to the livestock. By the time he enlisted into the Marine Corps, boot camp was not competitive enough for him. After serving in World War II, Peter attended college. He worked with Hughes Aircraft as their engineer and later became the designer for the Polaris missile project. He returned to Navajo land and ran for council office. Eventually, he would be sent to a Federal prison for numerous convictions. Since his release, Peter continues to assist young Navajo to pursue their education at a secondary level; he currently works at Arizona State University.

Kaibah-At the age of five, she was shown by her older brother how to sheep herd from morning until early evening. Her brother was sent away to school and Kaibah stayed home with her mother, she was given the duty to tend to the sheep alone. Her mother taught her to cook, to prepare for ceremonies, and how to act around group of individuals. Kaibah assisted with wedding affairs, with puberty ceremonies, and with family gatherings. She was groomed by her mother to become a worthy house wife for a future husband.

Roy O. Hawthorne was a Navajo Marine who was selected to undergo an intense secret training that would use his Navajo language to send code messages during World War II. Japanese were considered one of the top code breakers. ³ Upon his return back home, Roy was ordered not mention his assignment to anyone. The secrecy was as delicate as the Manhattan Project, which was the development of the atomic bomb. Fifty-eight years later, the United States Congress awarded the Congressional Gold Medal and the Congressional Silver Medal to the Navajo Marine Code Talkers.

Day 1 Lesson

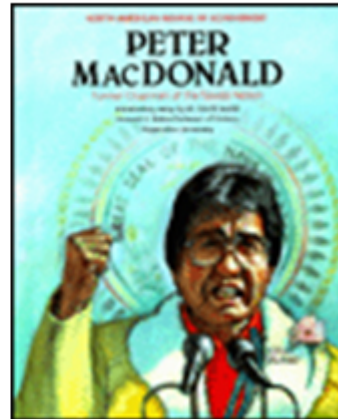
Today you will introduce the topic of autobiography and biography. Ask the students, "What is the difference between an autobiography and a biography?" List 3 answers on the board. Then show kids the Merriam-Webster definition of each word.

Autobiography- the biography of a person narrated by himself or herself

Biography- a usually written history of a person's life

Give an example about your autobiography for the class by introducing yourself. (Name, Navajo clanship, place of birth, parents, and gives a brief timeline of major events in your life. Then have each student do the same.

Activity 1- Post up pictures of Annie Dodge Wauneka and Peter MacDonal on the front board. Tell students to view the pictures for 2 minutes. Then ask them to use five adjectives to describe each person. (Courtesy of Google) Focus on their attire, facial expressions, and posture.



Homework: Have the students read the short biography of Annie Dodge Wauneka. Homework 1- A. Wauneka.docx

Day 2 Lesson

CCS: Reading RI.1-3

Students will read half of Chapter 2 of "I'll Go and Do More" Annie Dodge Wauneka Navajo Leader and Activist p. 23-34. Explain that this particular chapter is a short timeline from age five to when she gets married.

Activity 2

Go online to create a timeline of Annie D. Wauneka.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline/>

Day 3 Lesson

CCS: Reading RI.1-3 & Listening and Speaking.1.a

Students will read the other half of Chapter 2 of "I'll Go and Do More" Annie Dodge Wauneka Navajo Leader and Activist p. 35-45. Explain that this particular chapter is a short timeline from age five to when she gets married.

Activity 3-

Students will go back online to complete timeline on Annie Dodge Wauneka. Upon completion, students will print.

Day 4 Lesson

CCS: Listening and Speaking 1.b & Language.1

Today students will be grouped by three's. Explain that one person will be interviewed while the two interview and keep a record of their own responses. Rotate in the group until everyone has been interviewed. Rules attached. Rules for interviewing.docx

Activity 4

Students will go online to complete a bio cube on the individual

Homework-

Students will be given short biography of Peter MacDonald to read.

Homework 2-P. MacDonald.docx

Day 5 Lesson

CCS: Reading (Literature) Key Ideas and Details (1, 2, 3) Craft and Structure (4, 5, 6).

Students will read from "The Last Warrior" by Peter MacDonald. Chapter 2 is an overview of Peter's childhood. Class will read aloud pages 35-44. Key vocabulary words will be posted on chart paper, using Step Up to Writing vocabulary guide, Tools 2-3a.

Activity 5

Students will go to computers and go online to create a cube for Peter MacDonald. They will only complete half on the information input. Save as Draft.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/cube-30057.html?tab=4#tabs>

Day 6 Lesson

CCS: Reading (Literature) Key Ideas and Details (1, 2, 3) Craft and Structure (4, 5, 6).

Students will read from "The Last Warrior" by Peter MacDonald, the second part of Chapter 2 pages 45-53.

Activity 5

Students will go to computers and go online to create a cube for Peter MacDonald. They will only complete the other half on the cube, then print, and assemble.

Homework: Students will read the short biography on Kaibah and Roy O. Hawthorne.

Day 7 Lesson

CCS: Writing-Research to Build and Present Knowledge (9).

Step Up Strategies: Two-column guided response.

Students will make a list of characteristics on the difference genres in biography: heroic, political, military and ordinary person. Class discussion on reading selection from Kaibah and Roy O. Hawthorne biography.

Homework: Students will talk to their parents about upcoming project and review the four genres of biography with their parent(s). They will work out as family which side of the family would best fit one of the four genres. Student will need to confirm that family member they have in mind for the upcoming family project.

Day 8 Lesson

CCS: LS.3 Presentation of knowledge and ideas (4)

Students will have rules reviewed on elder section. A teacher will be invited to the class that is older than fifty years old for students to begin formal interview. Each student will take notes and will generate one question each for the elder. After interview, the class will be put into groups of three's to review notes and may swap sentences.

Day 9 Lesson

CCS: W.3.a.c & L.3

CCS: Language-Conventions of standard English (1, 2)

Students will write out their first short biography from the interview the class did on an elder from the previous day. Worksheet help from Step Up to Writing will be used to help students create an introduction, next, and last narrative piece. Rough draft will need to be two to three pages in length.

Day 10 Lesson

CCS:

Step Up strategies: 10-6 Peer review/editing/revision.

Students will complete their rough draft for peer review. Peer will edit the writing piece. Each student will use the Step Up to writing rubric to rate the writing piece.

Homework: Student will interview elder on their own time. They will use this weekend to get answers questioned and they will need to draw out their images using colored pencils. For example, if the elder was heroic, student may draw medals, stars, or a muscular bicep.

Day 11 Lesson

Step Up Strategies- 10-18 Narratives Scoring Guide

Students will turn in completed colored drawing and last edited version of biography for teacher edit.

Day 12 Lesson

Final biography will be typed using the computers.

Day 13 Lesson

Step Up Strategies: 7-5 Sharing and Publishing Personal Narratives.

Presentation day-Students will read their biography aloud in front of the class. Their drawings will be displayed in the classroom for other students to see.

Bibliography and Reading List

Neithammer, Carolyn. *I'll Go and Do More*, Annie Dodge Wauneka: Navajo Leader and Activist. University of Nebraska Press, 2001

MacDonald, Peter. *The Last Warrior: Peter MacDonald and the Navajo Nation*. Orion Books, 1993

Bennett, Kay. *KAIBAH*, Recollection of a Navajo Girlhood. Published by Kay Bennett, 1975

Aaseng, Nathan. *Navajo Code Talkers*. Forwarded by Roy O. Hawthorne. Walker Publishing Company, Inc 1992

* Within the Navajo culture, stories are told orally and not written down. Immediate family members will be interviewed.

Additional Resources

Bio Cube <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/cube-30057.html?tab=4#tabs>

Timeline <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline/>

Step Up to Writing. Sopris West Educational Services www.sopriswest.com

Appendix

Common Core Standards

http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/files/2012/09/accs-9-12-ela-standards-final09_17_2012.pdf

Office of Dine Culture, Language, and Community Service

[http://www.odclc.navajo-nsn.gov/Books%20\(pdf%20files\)/Taa%20Sha%20\(yellow\)/i%20to%20ix/i%20to%20ix.pdf](http://www.odclc.navajo-nsn.gov/Books%20(pdf%20files)/Taa%20Sha%20(yellow)/i%20to%20ix/i%20to%20ix.pdf)

Notes

1. Carolyn Niethammer. 139
2. Hermione Lee. Biography. 138-140
3. Nathan Aaseng. Navajo Code Talkers. Viii

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