

Make Your Own Heritage Minute Lesson Plan

OVERVIEW

The War of 1812 was a strong force in shaping Canada's geography, politics and ideals, and its effects are tangible even today. Many individuals and events played important roles in the war, and creating Heritage Minutes is a wonderful way for students to learn about these historical figures and events during War of 1812 and have fun at the same time. Here is a basic guideline for helping your students create their own Minutes - the rest is left to their imaginations.

MATERIALS

Storyboarding is a great tool that can help students create their minutes. Students can draw and write a detailed version of their video on paper before the actual video making. For schools without video equipment, the storyboard can be the final product in this assignment. This helps them see the videos visuals, hear its narrative and sounds, and feel its impact before tackling the technology. Try using storyboards in your history classes - for students it is more than just a planning tool. They begin to see history as a living part of their past. The storyboard becomes a springboard to focus their energy into creating a video. It is a chance to become involved in the production process and have their input encouraged and valued.

There are many formats for storyboards. The good news is they all work! The most important feature is have students break down their video into individual shots. The shot is the key to the power and magic of videos. A good storyboard will make clear the impact of a combination of shots and sequences. ([see storyboard attachment](#))

Have the students include the following for each shot:

- shot number
- scene/sequence number
- a basic sketch
- description of action/camera angle
- narrative and/or sound effects length of time for each shot, total cumulative time for the video (in this case the Heritage Minute should last exactly 60 seconds).
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- length of time for each shot
- total cumulative time for the video

Drawing skills are not imperative; stick figures aren't as classy, but just as effective. However, neatness and bold lines are crucial. Request that your students do their storyboarding in dark pencil (preferably 'B' lead) or redo their lines in fine black marker. A good quality storyboard should be able to be reproduced or photocopied many times, and still come out 'clean.' As with filmmakers, the students will want to circulate the copies, and protect their original.

ACTIVITY

Getting Started:

1. Provide a list of key significant events or characters from the War for the students to choose from. Consider including the following in your list:
 - [Tecumseh](#)
 - [Major-General Isaac Brock](#)
 - [Gordon Drummond](#)
 - [The Coloured Corps](#)
 - [The Prophet](#)
 - [The Capture of Detroit](#)
 - [The Battle of New Orleans](#)
 - [The Treaty of Ghent](#)
2. Have each student choose from the list.
3. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students, all members of one group sharing the same chosen event or character. Assign a leader for each group to take responsibility for any resources that the group is using, and to ensure that each group member is involved in the various steps of the process.

Research:

1. Individually, students research their selection using all available information. From this research have them jot 20 of the most fascinating facts which he/she learned.
2. Groups members meet to compare their notes. They compile a master list of information which they can organize either chronologically, or according to topic. In this process they should be identifying which facts should be dramatized, and which ones should be told in narration.
3. Have each group write the script for 2-3 scenes which depict significant events from their selection. At this point it is important to teach the students techniques and vocabulary relating to video production so that they may incorporate the terms into their scripts. Then they can continue writing the narration using the remaining information to complete the vignette.
4. Assign a leader for each group to take responsibility for any resources that the group is using, and to ensure that each group member is involved in the various steps of the process.

The Production:

1. Now that they have all the content, the students should rehearse the scenes and get together all the props and costumes that they will need for the shoot.
2. Have them choose a site which provides a realistic setting for the scene. Arrangements may also need to be made to visit that site for filming.
3. It's time to go on location! The groups take turns going with the teacher to videotape the scenes.

The "low tech" finish...

- What you shoot, and the order in which you shoot it, are going to make up your final project. Make sure your students are prepared with the script, the narration, and any other

images they will want in the film (photos, maps etc...). You will be shooting the scenes in order, and only filming each shot once. The key to this process is organization.

- In the planning process, encourage your students to make their Heritage Minute as simple as possible. This process can become complicated very quickly. If they plan something more realistic it will ensure that they will be happier with the final project, and you will all have more fun in the process!

The "high tech" finish...

- If you have access to an editing facility, or to editing software on your computers then you will probably want to do a few takes of each scene to make the editing process easier.
- After filming, each group should watch their video tapes to select the best "takes" for each scene.
- Pick out some effects and music to add to the realism of the scenes, and finally write careful directions for the editing process.
- You will need to arrange for the narrators to properly record the narrations in the studio.
- If you have any images (photos, maps etc...) that would enhance the narrations, you can get those filmed and put together with the audio portion.
- Finally you will need to get access to the editing facility, or to a computer with editing software to put the whole project together.

Useful Tips

- Make sure your battery is charged for outdoor locations. You might want to take an extra battery.
- Make sure you remember to bring a tape.
- Don't get too fancy with effects on the camera.
- Use a tripod for stability!
- Sound can be a problem, especially outdoors. If possible, use an extended mic from the camera and place it somewhere in the scene (camouflaged by props). Be aware of any background sounds that will be annoying when you see the scene.
- Be aware of objects in the scene that were not invented in the time period that you are portraying, for example - It's unlikely that Tecumseh would be wearing running shoes, or that Sir Isaac Brock would wear a wristwatch!