Letter From A Leader
Students write letters promoting a civilization

Author
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Grade Level
6 and High School
Duration
1-3 class periods

National Geography Standards

ELEMENT TWO: PLACES AND REGIONS
4. The physical and human characteristics of places.

ELEMENT FOUR: HUMAN SYSTEMS
10. The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of earth's cultural mosaics.
11. The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on earth's surface.

Arizona Geography Strand

Grade 6
Concept 2 Places and Regions
PO 1. Identify regions studied in Strand 2 using a variety of criteria (e.g., climate, landforms, culture, vegetation).

High School
Concept 2: Places and Regions
PO 1. Identify the characteristics that define a region:
   a. physical processes such as climate, terrain, and resources
   b. human processes such as religion, political organization, economy, and demographics

Other Arizona Standards

Grade 6
Strand 2 World History
Concept 2: Early Civilizations
PO 4. Compare the forms of government of the following ancient civilizations:
   a. Mesopotamia – laws of Hammurabi
   b. Egypt – theocracy
   c. China – dynasty

PO 5. Describe the religious traditions that helped shape the culture of the following ancient civilizations:
   a. Sumeria, India (i.e., polytheism)
   b. Egypt (i.e., belief in an afterlife)
   c. China (i.e., ancestor worship)
   d. Middle East (i.e., monotheism)

PO 6. Analyze the impact of cultural and scientific contributions of ancient civilizations on later civilizations:
   a. Mesopotamia (i.e., laws of Hammurabi)
   b. Egypt (i.e., mummification, hieroglyphs, papyrus)
   c. China (i.e., silk, gun powder/fireworks, compass)
      a. Central and South America (i.e., astronomy, agriculture)

PO 7. Describe the development of the following types of government and citizenship in ancient Greece and Rome:
   a. democracy
   b. republics/empires

PO 8. Describe scientific and cultural advancements (e.g., networks of roads, aqueducts, art and architecture, literature and theatre, mathematics, philosophy) in ancient civilizations.

PO 9. Identify the roles and contributions of individuals in the following ancient civilizations:
   a. Greece and Greek empires (i.e., Socrates, Plato,
High School Strand 2 World History Concept 2: Early Civilizations

PO 3. Analyze the enduring Greek and Roman contributions and their impact on later civilization:
   a. development of concepts of government and citizenship (e.g., democracy, republics, codification of law, and development of empire)
   b. scientific and cultural advancements (e.g., network of roads, aqueducts, art and architecture, literature and theater, mathematics, and philosophy)

PO 4. Analyze the enduring Chinese contributions and their impact on other civilizations:
   a. development of concepts of government and citizenship (e.g., Confucianism, empire)
   b. scientific, mathematical, and technical advances (e.g., roads, aqueducts)
   c. cultural advancements in art, architecture, literature, theater, and philosophy

ELA Common Core Standards Reading Standards for 6-8 for Literacy in History/Social Studies

Key Ideas and Details
6-8.RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
6-8.RH.2 Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
6-8.RH.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

6-8 Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Production and Distribution of Writing
6-8.WHST.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
   a. Produce clear and coherent functional writing (e.g., formal letters, envelopes, procedures, labels, timelines, graphs/tables, experiments, maps, captions, charts, diagrams) in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Overview

The study of ancient civilizations is a fascinating learning experience for students. They are naturally curious about the history, culture, and accomplishments of past cultures. In this lesson students share their knowledge of an ancient civilization by writing a letter from a leader of one of the cultures.

Purpose

In this lesson, students will gather information on an ancient civilization from a series of National Geographic books and report their findings in the form of an informative/persuasive letter.

Materials

- Class set of Reading Expedition Series, Civilizations Past to Present: China, Egypt, Rome, Greece, and Mexico, by National Geographic Society (6 copies each of 5 titles)
- Paper and pencils

Objectives

The student will be able to:

- read one of the Reading Expeditions Civilizations booklets and gather information on that civilization from their reading.
- report their findings in the form of a formal business letter.

Procedures

Prerequisite Knowledge: how to write a business letter.

Background Information: This lesson is an alternative approach to using the World History text book for this time period.

1. Assign each student one booklet to read.

2. Tell students that while reading they are to write down information on that civilization's culture, contributions, and trade items.

3. When they finish gathering the information, students are to compose a business letter using one the following scenarios. Their letters should explain why that civilization was great and what they have to offer in trade.

- Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt writes to the King of Punt
- Montezuma of Mexico writes to Cortez of Spain
- Julius Caesar of Rome writes to King Cassivellaunus of Britain
- Kublai Khan of China writes to Marco Polo of Italy
- Pericles of Greece writes to the King of Persia

Optional: To be used with National Geographic Society books on Peru, Mali, India, Japan and the Vikings.

- Guthrun the Dane (Viking King of northern England) to Alfred the Great (English King of southern England
Letter from a Leader

♦ Atahualpa (Incan King) to Francisco Pizarro (Spanish conquistador)
♦ Mansa Musa (King of Mali) to Ibn Battuta (Muslim explorer)
♦ Shah Jahan (Emperor of India) to Charles I (King of England)
♦ Meiji Mutshuhito (Emperor of Japan) to Ulysses S. Grant (President of the United States)

Assessment

The student will compose an business letter using one of the scenarios listed above. This letter can be graded according to the rubric that accompanies this lesson (80 out of 100 will be mastery), or the Six-Trait Writing rubric emphasizing organization, ideas, and conventions (mastery will be 4 out of 6).

Extensions

Students could write a response to the letter taking the other person's point of view.

Sources

Reading Expedition Series, Civilizations Past to Present: China, Egypt, Rome, Greece, and Mexico, by National Geographic Society