

FAMILY TREE

An Individual Learning Package Focusing on the Search for Family Roots

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The nationwide movement for high standards not only determines what students should learn, but also mandates that students demonstrate what they know. FAMILY TREE is a standards-based program addressing National History and English Language Arts Standards. FAMILY TREE students become historians competently demonstrating standards of Historical Thinking. Students become keenly aware of historical events faced by their great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents and understand the impact of those events on their family's lives.

National Standards for History Standards in Historical Thinking

Standard 1: Chronological Thinking.

The student is able to:

- Identify the temporal structure of a historical narrative or story.
- Interpret data presented in time lines and create time lines.
- Establish temporal order in constructing historical narratives of their own.

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

The student is able to:

- Identify the author or sources of the historical document or narrative and assess its credibility.
- Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.
- Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.
- Read historical narratives imaginatively.
- Appreciate historical perspectives describing the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there.
- Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.
- Draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources to clarify, illustrate, or elaborate upon information presented in the historical narrative.

Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation. The student is able to:

- Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions.
- Consider multiple perspectives of various people in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.
- Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation, including the importance of the individual, the influence of ideas, and the role of chance.
- Compare competing historical narratives.
- Hold interpretations of history as tentative, subject to changes as new information is uncovered, new voices heard, and new interpretations broached.
- Hypothesize the influence of the past, including both the limitations and the opportunities made possible by past decisions.

STANDARDS

Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities

The student conducts historical research. The student is able to:

- Formulate historical questions from encounters with historical documents, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, historical sites, art, architecture, and other records from the past.
- Obtain historical data from a variety of sources.
- Identify gaps in the available records and marshal contextual knowledge and perspectives of the time and place.
- Support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

The student engages in historical issues-analysis and decision-making. The student is able to:

- Identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.

NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts

Standard 4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Standard 5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Standard 6: Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print text.

Standard 7: Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience

Standard 8: Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Standard 12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information.)

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FAMILY TREE

FAMILY TREE will help your students make contact with their extended families. It gives students a step-by-step process as well as models to follow in researching their family roots. As a result, your students will experience many of the following:

Knowledge

- Significant events in parents', grandparents', and great-grandparents' lives
- Parents', grandparents', and great-grandparents' beliefs
- How certain persons, events, and places in American history have affected family members' lives and beliefs

Feelings

- Pride in synthesizing their own family tree from a personal perspective
- Recognition that the aging process is inevitable and that satisfaction can come from planning for the next stage
- Appreciation of being a part of a family
- Desire to live a life worthy of a family name
- Satisfaction from disseminating what they have created

Skills

- Writing letters
- Planning and conducting interviews
- Making and editing audio and video recordings
- Filling out a family tree and a family time line
- Organizing and writing a lengthy essay

PURPOSE

Christopher Lasch of the University of Rochester has traced the gradual decline of the family as the primary force shaping the socialization of our young. Increasingly children are growing up without strongly identifying with their parents. Lasch stresses that in earlier generations such identification gave children and youth a feeling of belonging, a sense of place, and “the psychological basis of conscience or superego.” Lacking such identification instilled by their families, many of today’s youth become “other-directed”— they acquire their values from watching TV, attending movies, listening to their own music, responding to the pressures of advertisers, and interacting with their peer group. Such young persons become “more concerned with their own pleasure and the approval of others than with leaving their mark in the world.”

As a result, many young people experience the trying adolescent years without the support of an inner sense of belonging within their extended family. They rarely communicate with their parents about their parents’ own youth. Mobility, suburbanization, and the desire for generational privacy also isolate them from their grandparents. Lasch feels that when youth escape such emotional entanglements with their extended family, they experience not liberation but “inner emptiness.” As a result of this void, “many seek warmth and security in submission to spiritual healers, gurus, and prophets of political or psychic transformation.”

Alex Haley, the author of *Roots*, encourages people to turn off TV, which has killed one old form of entertainment: the family stories. He urges Americans to talk with the older members of their extended family. Haley stresses that there are certain things grandparents give children and youth that no one else can. “It’s sort of like stardust— the relationship between grandparents and children. The lack of this for many children has to have a negative impact on society. The edges of these children are a little sharper for lack of it.”

With FAMILY TREE, your students will learn basic information about the lives of at least the following relatives: paternal ancestors (grandparents and great-grandparents), maternal ancestors (grandparents and great-grandparents), and parents. Your students will follow the phases outlined in their Student Guides to obtain the information necessary to complete their MY FAMILY TREE and MY FAMILY TIME LINE charts as well as a lengthy essay. Establish essay parameters which are appropriate for your students.

The Student Guides come complete with models to follow throughout the assignment.

FAMILY TREE

To effectively use FAMILY TREE in your classroom, follow the directions within the Student Guide. Since this was written as a student-driven unit, the Student Guides are self-contained instructional packets. Read the directions below to maximize the benefits of the unit.

1. Teaching Strategies

Option 1 — Whole class

- You have a consistently capable group of students, all of whom are able to do sustained effort over an extended time. Give your students approximately two months to complete all five phases.
- You omit Phases 4 and 5 in order to shorten the activity. In this case, your students refrain from writing and disseminating their essays. They bring their notes and charts to class and share their findings within small discussion groups. If you use FAMILY TREE as an addition to a history unit, start students on their research at least one and one-half to two months prior to beginning the history unit.

Option 2 — Select students

- Use FAMILY TREE as an individual or small group project for extended learning or as a differentiated instructional option.

A Final Comment

Be sensitive to students who probably should not be required to use FAMILY TREE. A few students are so seriously alienated from parents and grandparents that they would refuse to do the project or they would be turned down by the persons whom they wished to interview. Consider modifying the assignment in cases of acrimonious divorce or other situations of parental conflict or loss.

2. Author Suggestions

Phase 1

- Require students to hand in a list of ancestors whom they plan to contact.
- To ease your evaluation, tell students to keep a record of how they spend their time while doing the project. Students might list how many hours they spent on each activity. They hand in this record along with their essay and charts.

SETUP DIRECTIONS

FAMILY TREE

Phase 2

- If most of your class is using FAMILY TREE, stage a role-playing session during which you role-play various students' relatives and students role-play themselves interviewing their relatives. To demonstrate proper interviewing techniques you might have to become the interviewer rather than the interviewee during such role-playing.
- Show students how to take notes under subject headings.
- Encourage students to lay out the MY FAMILY TREE and MY FAMILY TIME LINE charts in front of their relatives.
- Stress how important photography can be to enliven the essays they will write. Ask students questions such as this: "If a book or magazine has a photograph and 450 words on a page, what do you look at first, the words or the photograph? Why?" If relatives don't want to have their original or antique photographs glued or taped into an essay, help students locate a quality copying machine that will make acceptable reproductions of such photographs, or use computer scanners or CDs for photo storage.
- If students must send copies of the QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR ANCESTORS to relatives far away, make copies of those master pages.

Phase 3

- Before students begin filling out their MY FAMILY TREE and MY FAMILY TIME LINE charts, review the models and address any questions.
- Before completing the MY FAMILY TIME LINE chart, students write out and arrange narrow strips that represent a parent's, a grandparent's, or a great-grandparent's life.

Phase 4

- Remind students to study the John Kentfield model essay as they plan and write their essays.
- If a student needs help in articulating a theme or pattern that he/she has found in a family tree but is unable to express, provide help.

Phase 5

- Allow students to share their family trees with fellow class members. Encourage them to bring in pictures and objects.

Evaluation

- Take into consideration how much time a student has spent in researching and writing about his/her family tree. A student can have worked very hard and have little to show because of running continually into dead ends.



3. Timing Options

- Minimum of 10-12 weeks when FAMILY TREE is used as a substitute for a traditional research paper.
- FAMILY TREE can be used over the course of a semester or even most of a school year. This option is especially useful for students who become fascinated with their search or those whose efforts are hampered by dead ends.

4. Resources

Print Resources

- Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Female Ancestors: Special Strategies for Uncovering Hard-to-Find Information About Your Female Lineage*. Betterway Publishers, 1998.
- Colletta, John Philip. *They Came In Ships: A Guide to Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor's Ship*. MyFamily.com, Inc., 2002 edition.
- Croom, Emily Anne. *Unpuzzling Your Past: A Basic Guide to Genealogy (3rd Edition)*. Betterway Publishers, 2001 edition.
- Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian*. Genealogical Publishing Company, 2000.

On-line Resources

- Interact's website provides links to some excellent electronic resources to enhance this unit (especially if your students are having a difficult time finding living relatives to provide them with information on their family or your students want to search beyond the scope of this unit). Please visit our Web site at www.teachinteract.com, in the search bar type FAMILY TREE. Select title from list. Click on view related Web sites.

SETUP DIRECTIONS

FAMILY TREE

5. Using the Internet

If you have access to the Internet, your students will benefit from up-to-date genealogical information. Before using the Internet, become familiar with your school's Acceptable Use Policy. Always preview any web site you make available to your students. Following are suggestions for making web sites available for your class:

- a. **Interact's Resource List** Several recommended Web site addresses are listed on a Resource page available through the Interact Web page. To find the FAMILY TREE Resource Page, complete the following steps:
 - Connect to the Internet
 - Go to Interact's site at: www.teachinteract.com
 - In the search bar type FAMILY TREE
 - Select title from list
 - Click on view related Web sites
- b. **Bookmarks/Favorites** You can use any browser to mark specific web site address for your students to use. Depending on your browser, these saved web addresses will be called "Bookmarks" or "Favorites." To create a Bookmark/Favorite follow these steps:
 - Go to the Web site
 - Click on the Bookmark's "pull down menu" and choose different terminologies and/or processes for marking or saving Web addresses.
 - The name of the Web site will automatically enter on your menu as a bookmark or favorite
 - Search out several appropriate Web sites and place the sites in a folder entitled "Personal Finance" on your browser. When you have completed your search, save the entire folder on the desktop or to a disk. You can then insert the folder into the browser on each available computer in the classroom or computer lab.
- c. **Off-line browsing** If Internet access is limited for your students, you may want to save selected Web sites to your hard drive in your classroom or in the computer lab. Downloading Web sites requires significant hard drive space; you may want to put only a few downloaded files on each computer and have students rotate time at the computers.



If your students do not have classroom access to the Internet, you may access the Internet and build a notebook of information printed off the various web sites you locate.

FAMILY TREE

6. **Special Needs Students**

Like all Interact units, FAMILY TREE provides differentiated instruction through its various learning opportunities. Students learn and experience the knowledge, skills, and attitudes through all domains of language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Adjust the level of difficulty as best fits your students. Assist special needs students in selecting activities that utilize their strengths and allow them to succeed. Work together with the Resource Specialist teacher, Gifted and Talented teacher, or other specialist to coordinate instruction.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR ANCESTORS (1)

FAMILY TREE

Below you will find some suggestions of questions you may wish to ask your ancestors. Obviously you do not have to ask your ancestors to answer all these questions. You will need to choose the questions you wish to ask each relative.

Immigration

- Which of our ancestors was first to settle in North America? When? Why did this person come here? (Answers to this last question will likely require hypothesizing.)
- Has your family name been changed since your first ancestor came to America? If so, why? How do you feel about such a change?

Migration and Community

- How many times have you moved within this country?
- What caused you to move each time?
- Do you plan to move again? Where? When?
- What size farms, towns, cities, and suburbs have you lived in? Which living environment seemed most supportive of a humane life? Of socio-economic advancement? Of culture?

Racial/ethnic Group

- To what racial/ethnic group do you belong?
- At what age did you become conscious of being a member of this group?
- When other Americans think of your group, do they define it through skin color, religion, language, background, or what?
- Has being a member of this group significantly influenced your life? If so, how?

Religion

- Are you a member of a certain religion?
- If you are, is it because of birth, conscious choice, or both?
- Did your parents' religious faith significantly influence your childhood and your upbringing? If so, how?
- Has your religious faith ever caused you to be in conflict with what you observe in American culture? If so, how?

Economics

- Are you better off economically than your parents? If so, how?
- Is/was your job a satisfying one? Why or why not?
- What was your most satisfying job? What makes you feel so proud of your work there?
- What was your most difficult job?
- Are you happy with our American economic system? Why or why not?

Government and Politics

- When has government most directly touched your life?
- Do you vote regularly? Why or why not?
- Are you a dedicated member of any political party? If so, which one? Why or why not?
- Which presidents during your lifetime have most captured your attention? Why?
- Have you actively participated in any aspect of government? Why or why not?