



Activity: Writing Journals

TEACHER NOTES *and* INFO

The journal entries discussed in this activity are different from the thinkbook entries described in *Getting Wet*. Journal entries can be written for just about any purpose. They are helpful to put the learner “into” the material.

Many journals are based on “pretend you are...”

- a soldier stationed at Fort St. Frederic in 1734,
- a heron looking for a place to nest,
- an island in the middle of Lake Champlain,
- a girl searching for berries in the 1500s,
- a drop of water in the Winooski River...in East Montpelier,
- a cannon on board the *Philadelphia*,
- a mouse at Crown Point,
- a soldier with Arnold’s fleet during the escape from Valcour Island.

Some journal entries are formal assignments that serve as the major assessment of a unit of study. Other journal entries can be written in the thinkbook as a quick response to a reading or discussion. Journals are excellent to use to process a field trip: ask the student to become an entity at the place where you visited. Students can also write journal entries that become a dialogue with another student with a similar (or different) perspective.

Carol Livingston has her students work on journals before, during and after a trip to Crown Point State Historic Site. Although you may not be able to visit Crown Point, this process is offered as a model of an extensive “pretend you are” journal assignment. The comprehensive objectives and questions serve as a model for this kind of writing.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

After reviewing some basic historical information about the Crown Point State Historic Site (see *Field Trips*, p. 285), explain the journal writing assignment to the class. Give them the handout, “Welcome to Fort St. Frederic and His Majesty’s Fort at Crown Point.” Students will complete first drafts



The assessment piece for this assignment is included in the Assessment chapter.



Other Ideas

• *Journals can also be used as a learning log or for recording specific science observations. Sue Hardin from the Frederick Tuttle Middle School in South Burlington writes:*

“Our students write a journal entry daily in their science class, so that trips to the brook to test water or collect benthic creatures are ‘written up’ in their journals.

On our first visit to the brook, we also have the students sit down (six feet away from anyone else) and describe the place using their senses—what they see, hear, smell, feel about the experience. Students can later transform this journal entry into a poem or return to the same spot at a different season and follow the same procedure.”

• *Another science-related writing activity for outdoor environmental observations is to have students select one square foot of ground and describe everything they find there. They can also sketch one thing they see.*

of the journal prior to the trip (at least two entries) and work on entries and gather more information at the site, from displays, museum staff, slide show and the forts!

Give students a handout that they can use at the site that includes:

1. a chart to record:

- housing
- tools
- work
- travel
- food
- leisure
- cooking

2. space for student, with a partner to generate ON SITE a “typical day”

3. a timeline for students to record events of their soldiers’ times at the fort, including personal and historical events.

After the field trip, students will complete final journal entries in the classroom. They use original drafts, notes from the trip, memories and impressions, classroom resources and discussions to complete final drafts.

Final drafts can be displayed on a timeline with illustrations, read aloud or performed. Students can stage a play where they “discover” diaries or read aloud “around the campfire.”

STUDENT HANDOUT - “Welcome to Fort St. Frederic and His Majesty’s Fort at Crown Point”

Soldier’s Journal, Samuel LaCarre, Entry #1

by Nora Sumner-Kopf, Grade 7, Camel’s Hump Middle School, Richmond, Vermont

Last night we had our first frost. It killed almost all of our squash and beans. I’d like to request to go fishing today to get food. I’m afraid of the lake freezing. The fort is almost finished and I’m getting impatient. It’s hard work—hauling all those stones. The barracks are finished but they do not retain much heat. My two little flannel blankets aren’t enough for these cold nights. The wind is blowing and making whitecaps on the lake. As I sit here I shiver. Fort St. Frederic really catches the wind off the lake. I’m having second thoughts about fishing because it’s too cold. I’d rather stand over a warm fire to help bake the bread.

Welcome to Fort St. Frederic and His Majesty's Fort at Crown Point

You are a French soldier in the French Army stationed at Fort St. Frederic during the years 1734 to 1759

OR

you are a British soldier stationed at Fort Crown Point during the years 1759 to 1784. As this soldier, you are to write a series of journal entries (AT LEAST THREE) in which you describe your daily life as a French or British soldier.

YOUR JOURNAL ENTRIES SHOULD ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. What date are you writing the entry and what place at the fort are you writing from?
2. What does the lake and the surrounding land look like? What is the plant and animal life? Describe the setting and environment.
3. What do you see, hear, smell, taste and feel as you "live" here?
4. How do you travel? Where?
5. What do you eat and how do you prepare food?
6. Where do you live? With whom? What are the furnishings? Describe the specific location of where you will live in the fort.
7. How do you spend your time? What do you do for work? What tools do you use? What do you do to relax?
8. What is on your mind? What are your concerns? your hopes? fears? What else is going on in the world that you might be thinking about?
9. What have your experiences been while stationed at the fort?