

3.2 FAMOUS GERMANS



FOCUS QUESTIONS:

- What positive effect can creative, inventive, and thoughtful people have on society?
- How can they influence their surroundings and make an impact on the future?

STANDARD #2 TIME, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE.

LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson introduces students to the many Germans who have made a positive impact on German society and the world. Students will research famous Germans and share the information with their peers by assuming the identity of the famous person.

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Learning about the “famous” people of a country helps students realize how great an impact one person can make; how one person’s contribution can affect the direction of a society and sometimes even the world. Throughout its history, Germans have contributed not only to German society and culture, but have made significant impact on the fields of music, philosophy, literature, politics, science, art, etc. Bach, Bismarck, Kepler, Merkel and Dürer stand out in their respective fields. A list of important and influential Germans in past and present history is provided for the teacher’s convenience.



Goethe and Schiller Monument, Weimar

TIME:

3-4 (45-minute Class Periods)

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:

- Benjamin Franklin Playing Card Handout (**Handout 3.2 A on Resource Disc**)
- Who Am I? Famous Germans in History - Past and Present Handout (**Handout 3.2 B on Resource Disc**)
- Biography Playing Card Handout (**Handout 3.2 C on Resource Disc**)
- Deck of Cards



PROCEDURE:

DAY 1:

Anticipatory Set: The teacher will hold up a deck of cards and ask students what games or activities they have played using cards. Explain that they will be creating a card game similar to Concentration where they will have to use their memory about famous people! The details will be explained later.

- The teacher should project the blank Benjamin Franklin Playing Card Handout (**Handout 3.2 A on Resource Disc**). The teacher will fill in the categories as students share their knowledge of this famous American. Since it is unlikely that the students will be able to come up with all of the information, this is an excellent time for the teacher to discuss what resources they might use to find the remaining information. What is available? If the Internet is used, what sites are more reliable than others? For closure, the teacher may display the completed card.
- Now the teacher should explain the challenge! Tell students that they are going to (a) research the biography of a famous German - past or present - who has made a positive impact on society, (b) create a “playing card” of biographical data that will be used for talking points as (c) they assume their person’s identity and introduce “themselves” to the class.
- Prior to distributing the *Who Am I? Famous Germans in History - Past and Present* Handout (**Handout 3.2 B on Resource Disc**), the teacher should ask students if they know any famous Germans who have made or are making a positive impact. If the teacher chooses, any additional names mentioned by the students may be added to the list.

As the teacher reads through the list of names, the students should star any person with whom they are familiar or whom they would be interested researching based on the time period in which the person lived or the area of the accomplishment. It is the teacher’s discretion to either assign the names or allow the students to choose whom they will research. The students will use the Internet and any available sources to help them complete the Biography Playing Card Handout (**Handout 3.2 C on Resource Disc**). Only half of the paper is used so that it resembles the shape of a playing card. Since the card will be cut out eventually, the students may use the available space for brainstorming, etc. The teacher should remind students that a picture of the person must be pasted on the back of the card. This may be a hand drawn or a printed image. Once students know the name of their person, the remaining class time may be used for research.

DAY 2:

Research continues as the teacher monitors student progress. For homework students should find clothing and props to help them take on the physical look of the person. They must also find or make an object that is an artifact or symbol of the German person. The teacher should remind students that they will use their playing cards as “talking points” when they introduce themselves - in character - to the class the next day.

DAY 3:

On their own paper, students will take notes as each famous German introduces “himself” and shares his life. Either the student will write their German name on the board, or the teacher may provide students with a list of the Germans they will be meeting. Each student will speak to the class in costume of some variation and share facts about his life as indicated on the playing card. The student may accept 3 questions from the class that will allow greater interpretation on the part of the student. The teacher should collect the cards.

After each student has presented the teacher will assess student knowledge by stating a fact that was shared during the presentations. Students may use their own notes to help them determine who the German is.

DAY 4:

Students should be asked to take a sheet of paper and fold it into 4 sections. In the center of the paper, they should write: Famous Germans. Students are then divided into 4 groups. Each group will be given one-fourth of the German playing cards which the teacher collected from the students the previous day and be asked to place the cards in a row with the face down. The students are given 1 minute to review the cards. In one box

of their paper or score sheet, they are to list in order of the cards the names of the Germans they remember (spelling does not count). After 30 seconds the cards are flipped and the students may check to see who knew the most answers. The cards are turned face down for the next group. They should keep a tally of their correct answers. All students will rotate around the room and continue the procedure until all four stations have been played. If time allows, the cards may be reshuffled and distributed for play to begin again. Students can use the back of their original score sheet.

WHOLE GROUP REFLECTION:

- Were there any similarities among the people? Did they have similar character traits or situations? What conclusions may be drawn about famous people? What makes someone famous?

MODIFICATIONS:

- Depending on the level of the students, the teacher may wish to limit the number of choices and/or allow students to work in pairs or groups.
- Instead of assuming the identity of the famous German, students could share their research with the class and then tack the completed card on the classroom wall or bulletin board for a German “Wall of Fame.”

EXTENSIONS:

- The teacher may require students to write an essay about their person.
- According to the report of the US Census Bureau in 2010, 49.8 million Americans (15.2%) consider themselves of German or part German ancestry (2010 Census issued June 2010, US Census Bureau). Starting in the 17th century when they first arrived in America, Germans have contributed to American life. To help students understand the richness of German-American contributions, teachers may wish to assign the following activity:

German American Hall of Fame

Scenario: As a sign of friendship between the United States and Germany, an organization of German Americans has announced the creation of a German American Hall of Fame to be constructed in Washington, DC to honor German immigrants who have made significant contributions to American society. As a German American, you have decided to submit a letter of application to the panel of historians who will make the selections.

I. Using the internet, research your historical figure: John Jacob Astor, John Jacob Bausch, Albert Bierstadt, Wernher von Braun, Albert Einstein, Karl Fleischmann, Walter Gropius, Henry Heinz, Henry Kissinger, Emanuel Leutze, Henry Lomb, Franz Daniel Pastorius, Joseph Pulitzer, John Augustus Roebling, Carl Schurz, Margarethe Schurz, Henry Steinweg (Steinway), Levi Strauss, John Peter Zenger

II. Write a one-page typed letter of application (in the first person) to the German American Hall of Fame Selection Committee. In your letter, you should address why you believe you should be selected. You should include your accomplishments.