



Transatlantic Outreach Program  
Teddy Bears Across the Sea  
A German – North American Cultural Exchange Unit

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**Submitted by:**

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Target Audience: Grade 4/5 students

Time Frame: Year-long Project

**Introduction:**

The centerpiece of this yearlong unit is the exchange of Teddy Bears and their diaries between a Canadian and German grade 4 class. Each class selects and names a Teddy Bear as a representative of their class, which is then sent along with a diary to their partner class overseas. When the Teddy Bear and diary arrives at their temporary home class, each student takes turns taking the Teddy Bear home for a short period of time. While the student has the Teddy Bear, he/she makes entries into the Teddy Bear's diary noting everyday occurrences and special activities. The diary becomes a conveyor of cultural information for its home class. At selected times, the Teddy Bear and diary is mailed to its home class for analysis where students compare and contrast the cultural details found in the diary. Depending on the variety of content in the diaries, the teacher will select appropriate strategies to assign to students to allow them to extract and organize their cultural observations.

**Technology Option:** There are a number of opportunities for incorporating technology into this unit depending on the technology available to both classes. The diary portion of the activity could be recorded and submitted online. Live conversations could be held using Skype or other software.

Please Note: Although this unit was created from a Canadian perspective, all references to Canada can simply be changed to United States of America for American school use.

#### Materials and Requirements:

- This unit requires a North American teacher connecting with a German teacher. This is possible through organizations such as iEARN (International Education and Resource Network: <http://iearn.org/>) or through contacting schools directly. Many schools and school districts have websites with contact information.
- This activity is suitable for intermediate and middle school students (possible modification: you may choose a substitute article for the Teddy Bear).
- One common language will need to be chosen for communication between students. For my exchange, we are using English. My partner German class has had 2 years of English language instruction and wishes to write in English.
- This project has a yearlong time frame, but could be shorter, if desired.
- One Teddy Bear and a hardcover notebook suitable for diary purposes
- Class photo for front of diary, optional
- Air Mail Postage funds
- A copy of "A Kid Like Me Across the Sea" unit from Transatlantic Outreach Program or similar mapping sheets/activities
- Communication with home families so that parents are aware of the activity

#### Prescribed Learning Outcomes: (Using British Columbia standards)

- students will apply critical thinking skills to a selected issue
- select and use **strategies** during reading and viewing to construct, monitor, and confirm meaning
- select and use **strategies** after reading and viewing to confirm and extend meaning,
- write a variety of clear **informational writing**
- use writing and representing to extend thinking
- compare Canadian society with the society of another country
- assess the relationship between cultures and their environments
- mapping skills
- There are a number of other outcomes in other subject areas that could be incorporated into this project depending on area of

focus.  
Scope of Unit:

1. Introduction to Germany.
2. Introduction of Teddy Bear/Diary exchange
3. Analysis of Diaries on return to home class
4. Optional Pen Pal exchange between classes or periodic exchange at holiday times
5. Reflection at end of exchange period.

1. Introduction to Germany

This portion of the unit can vary in length depending on learning goals and time frame. There are many useful lessons and teaching aids in the "A Kid like me across the Sea" unit available from the Transatlantic Outreach Program (abbreviated as AKASEA in this unit) that can be modified for this age range.

A. Where is Germany?

- i. Brainstorm and chart with class everything they know about Germany. Keep this document until end of unit for comparison.
- ii. Map of Europe and Germany activity. Class discussion "Where is Germany?" Indicate where Canada, North America, Europe and finally Germany is on class map.  
Distribute maps, atlases and mapping activity sheet (Worksheet 3, page 9 from AKASEA) to students for completion.  
Discuss size of Germany compared to Canada: Give students data on population and area of Canada and Germany.  
Compare data and brainstorm implications of the size differences: Chart student predictions and keep for later use.  
Technology option: This website has interactive mapping activities: <http://www.yourchildlearns.com/geography.htm>

B. What is Germany Like?

- i. Geography of Germany: Distribute "Geography of Germany" map. page 18 AKASEA. Brainstorm various markings on map for possible meaning. Enter cardinal directions on map. Discuss what canals are. Complete matching activity with Teacher Resource 4 and Worksheet 6 as listed on page 16 of AKASEA. Have students create a legend for Worksheet 6. Writing activity: "If you could live in one of the places we have just learned about in Germany, which place would it be and why."

C. Introduce the Teddy Bear/diary exchange to class and describe how it

will work. Explain that our exchange class lives in Germany and in the town of Weiskirchen Rodgau, Germany.

D. Where is Weiskirchen Rodgau?

- i. Our exchange class lives in Weiskirchen Rodgau outside of Frankfurt/Main. This lesson will focus on learning more about the location of our exchange class. Have students locate Frankfurt/Main on their map of Germany. Tell students our exchange class lives in a smaller town SE of Frankfurt/Main called Weiskirchen, which is a part of Rodgau. Place a marker on map to show approximate location of Weiskirchen Rodgau. Show coat of arms for Weiskirchen: meaning: "The four waterwheels refer to the mills that were once found in Weiskirchen, and the white church tower is **canting**, referring to the community's name, from the **German** for "white church". Explain "canting." Compare to our city's coat of arms. Have students colour Weiskirchen's coat of arms and write it's meaning on the back.

E. Preparation of Diary

- i. We will prepare our diary and Teddy Bear for shipping to Germany. Brainstorm with class a name for our Teddy Bear. On the front of the diary we will create a cover with the Teddy Bear's name: i.e. "Peter's Visit to Germany." Inside we will fasten a photo of our class with the Teddy Bear. We will also include cards to the receiving class. It would be nice to include some German phrases in our cards.

F. German Language

- i. Explain to students: "German and English come from a common source called Germanic languages. Around 400 A.D. Germanic-speaking tribes from northern Germany sailed to the British Isles, stayed there and kept their language. That's why many German and English words are similar" pg. 32 AKASEA Explain this is different from the French language which is a Romance language descended from Latin, but has been influenced by the German language.
- ii. Give students a copy of a German/English pictorial dictionary created from pages 39-44 of AKASEA. Enlarge, if possible or use a portion of these pages and enlarge. Have students carefully circle one of the pictures for each letter that sounds or looks identical to English. (one A word, one B word, etc.) Make observations as a class. (nouns are capitalized in German)

Make connections to French language, which they are learning, if appropriate. Teach stem phrase "Ich mag ..." which is followed by a noun to say "I like x" and Ich \_\_\_\_ gern" where a verb is inserted between Ich and gern to indicate "I like \_\_\_\_", for example, Ich tanze gern means "I like dancing." In groups of 4, have students design and sign a card to be included with the Teddy Bear and diary package to Germany. Encourage them to write something in German about themselves using their pictorial dictionary, for example: "Ich mag Apfel" or "Ich singe gern."

Additional Options: Teach counting 1-10, distribute Greetings sheet (pg 38 AKASEA) and practice saying the different greetings.

- G. Mail Diary and Teddy Bear with student cards to Germany via Air Mail
- H. While waiting to receive the Teddy Bear and Diary from Germany, discuss and model diary entries with students. Explain that each student will take the diary and Teddy Bear home for 3-4 days. During that time, the student will write what the Teddy bear sees and does at his/her house. The student is to write as if he/she were the Teddy (first person) For example, "Today I went to Marc's house. Marc lives in a townhouse with his mom and two sisters. We had dinner at 6:00 and ate spaghetti and meatballs. Marc's little sister took me to the hockey rink to watch Marc play hockey with his team. We went to bed at 9:30." Brainstorm the different scenarios the diary entries might look like with the class. Encourage including holiday celebration details. Have each student write an example entry to confirm understanding. Review this process when the Teddy Bear and Diary arrive from Germany. Teacher makes a schedule for taking the TB and diary home.
- I. When the Teddy Bear and Diary arrive, review diary process and commence sending the TB and diary home with students. Encourage neatness, students may include sketches, photos, etc with their entries. Teacher checks quality of work on return of diary to school.
- J. Teddy Bears and diaries can be sent back to home class periodically throughout the year, if agreed upon. When they are returned to their home class, students will read the diary entries aloud in class and make cultural observations about the entries, as follows. (This is done over a period of time.)

- i. Distribute Diary Observations sheets 1 (similarities to Canada) and 2 (differences to Canada) to students. Explain sheets.
- ii. Selected student reads a diary entry aloud to class. Class discusses any cultural observations they observe from the entry.
- iii. Students write the observations on sheet 1 or 2 with the date of entry.
- iv. Repeat procedure for remainder of diary with variations:
  - a. Variation One: Distribute copies of the diary entries to groups of 4 students and have them go through the same procedure as in i-iv above. Have each group report out their findings to the class and check for accuracy and interpretation.
  - b. Give each student group a different section of the diary and have the group go through the same procedure as in i-iv above and report out to class. Compare and contrast the different observations depending on type of information revealed.
  - c. Give each student a different diary entry and repeat i-iv above on a separate answer sheet. Have students report out to their group.

H. As a class, using their compare and contrast sheets, categorize and group the cultural differences the students have observed. Have students form groups depending on the categories created. In these new groups create a poster demonstrating the cultural observations observed. For example, a celebrations poster, a foods poster, a hobby poster, a sports poster, etc. Have students include copies of diary entries as primary sources.

I. Writing Assignment: Students write an informational report on the cultural similarities and differences between Germany and Canada.

J. Brainstorm as a class everything they know about Germany and record on chart paper. Present original class brainstorming sheet from beginning of year and compare the two sheets. Present Class Predication sheet of implications of the size differences between Canada and Germany. Discuss. Discuss how much they have learned

K. Students write a reflective response on what they have learned about Germany in this unit, what they have enjoyed and have not enjoyed, and what they would change in this unit, if anything.

L. Additional opportunities: This unit could be expanded in many directions. Here are a few suggestions:

The classes could participate in:

- \* pen pal exchanges via email or letters,
- \* in live conversations over the Internet
- \* students could complete informational reports on Germany or its cities, regions, etc.,
- \* regular German language lessons could be incorporated
- \* class exchange of holiday cards,
- \* a study of German Fairy Tales and/or literature

Student worksheets attached below.



Group Members:

Our Diary Observations

Dates of Diary: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: In your group, read aloud the diary pages you have been assigned to read. As you read, stop when you find something **that is similar or the same about Germany and Canada** and write that observation down on this page. If you need more room, continue working on the back of this page.



Group Members:

Our Diary Observations

Dates of Diary: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: In your group, read aloud the diary pages you have been assigned to read. As you read, stop when you find something **different about Germany** from Canada and write that observation down on this page. If you need more room, continue working on the back of this page.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## My Reflections on our Teddy Bear Exchange



1. What have you learned about Germany?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

use the back if you need more room...

2. What were your favourite parts about the Teddy Bear Exchange Unit?

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3. What were your least favourite parts about the Teddy Bear Unit? Why do you think they were your least favourite parts?

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4. If you could change anything we did during the Teddy Bear Unit, would you change anything and how would you change it?

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5. List three words that pop into your mind when you think of Germany:

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