

SMILEY FACE CIRCLE STORIES

Grade Level: 3 to 5

IN THIS LESSON

Students will explore artifacts from the 1970s to learn about the fads and fancies that shaped this remarkable decade. They will then write collaborative “circle stories” about the objects. Since many of today’s teachers grew up in the 1970s, students will have the opportunity to gain insight into their teachers’ own childhood experiences, develop historical empathy, and better understand the relationship between past, present, and future.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide an overview of 1970s toys, decor, and popular culture
- To improve visual literacy and interpretive skills
- To develop writing skills and conceptual thinking
- To encourage creativity

ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.

SUGGESTED ARTIFACTS

PEZ dispenser
Avon cupcake, parakeet, & pig perfume holders
45 RPM records
Albums from 1970s
Grease DVD
Plastic dog figurines
Dancing Disco Dino
Disco light ball
Woman’s poncho
Wooden tennis racket
Singing Mimi doll
Sunglasses
Camera
Bozo’s Circus pictures and souvenirs
Charlotte’s Web movie (original release, 1973)
Schoolhouse Rock video/book

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Blank writing paper
Pencils

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This lesson was developed and written by Olga Aneziris.

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ACTIVITY

DAY 1

1. As a salute to the popular “smiley face” of the 1970s, have students arrange their desks and chairs in a circle.
2. Put one artifact on each student’s desk along with background information about the object (three to five sentences written on a note card). Each card should end with the following questions: Have you ever seen this object before? Do you have anything similar to it?
3. Give students time to read their artifact cards and prepare their answers. Then have each student explain his or her artifact to the class.
4. Brainstorm answers to the last two questions with the class, recording their responses on sheets of chart paper.

DAY 2

1. Tell students they are going to create “circle stories” based on these artifacts. Every student will contribute only one sentence to each story.
2. Once again, arrange desks in a circle. Put one artifact and blank paper on each desk. Model a circle story by asking a volunteer to make up a sentence about one of the artifacts. Encourage children to use the first thing that comes to mind. The sentences can express real situations or fantastic, impossible, or silly ideas. The only rule is that they must be about the artifact. For example, if your artifact is a soccer ball, the story might begin, “Sam loved to play soccer.” Ask another student to add a second sentence, such as “He played every day after school,” or “One day, the soccer ball began to talk to Sam.”
3. Proceed with the activity by having each student write down a first sentence inspired his or her artifact.
4. On the teacher’s signal, students should rise and move one chair to the right, carrying only their pencils. Artifacts and compositions should remain on the desk.
5. After moving, each student should sit, read what has been written so far, and add the next sentence to the story.

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6. Again, the teacher should signal for the students to move. The circle continues until all the children have cycled back to their own seats. (If the class is too big to finish one circle story, create two concurrent circles.)
7. Finish by asking students to read the resulting compositions aloud. You can bind them together to create a *Smiley Face Circle Stories* book to keep in your classroom or share with the school.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Have students make illustrations of their objects to add to the *Smiley Face Circle Stories* book.

Have students do library or internet research on their artifact. Each student could then create a label for a "mini-museum" exhibition.

Invite students to interview a family member about his/her memories of an artifact they learned about in class.