

Introducing History Fair by using GRAFFITI

Maryhelen Matijevic, a veteran History Fair teacher, shares her method for introducing History Fair to her high school students.

The objectives of GRAFFITI as described by Silver, Hanson, and Strong (1995) are to encourage critical and creative thinking and team-building. The exercise also addresses students' varied learning styles/intelligences. We have adapted GRAFFITI to serve as an introductory exercise for our high school students.

1. Objectives

1. To introduce the idea of History Fair.
2. To remind students of the elements of research in history.
3. To raise students' consciousness about family, local, and community history.

2. Procedures/Organization

1. Prepare 30-35 (depending on the size of the class) problems, questions, or stems on local history, research in history, the idea of the History Fair, each on a separate sheet of 8 1/2 x 11 paper. [samples follow]
2. Make a few introductory remarks about the exercise; offer a few guidelines regarding behavior and procedure during the exercise (appropriate written responses, quick, off the top of your head phrases in response, pass when time is called, etc.).
3. Distribute one problem to each student. Ask students to make a response to the problem. Usually this first round takes one minute.
4. Determine the route, which you will use to pass the papers/problems during each round. When the first minute is over, direct the students to pass their problem in this pre-determined fashion. Announce that they will have a minute to respond to this question. If students do not have an answer, or choose not to make an answer, they should just quietly wait for the next round.
5. Continue to pass the papers around the room, until all or most of the problems have been seen and responded to by all students. Successive rounds may take only 30 seconds, before you announce the direction to "pass again." It is not necessary for all students to see them all-for the final phase is an opportunity to review the responses aloud for the whole class.
6. When the rotation of the papers concludes, ask the students to review all the answers on the paper in front of them and summarize the responses or choose the best response.
7. Then, call on students to share the ideas/responses to each of the questions, stems, problems.

3. Evaluation

This procedure permits students to think about the nature of the research they will be doing, to be reminded of the terms and elements of doing history, to be

exposed to the kind of things they will be doing in their History Fair projects and to be introduced to the History Fair in a non-traditional fashion.

Student responses, student summaries, ancillary discussion that develops based upon those answers are ways to assess student understanding.

Students will then be ready to examine any History Fair handouts/materials that you wish to distribute and to begin the process of preparing their projects.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS/STEMS FOR HISTORY FAIR GRAFFITI

(In the activity, each question should appear on a separate sheet of paper.)

1. Give an example of a secondary source.
2. Give an example of a primary source.
3. What is research?
4. Give an example of a topic you might research that relates to the National History Day theme.
5. List a topic you might research on local history.
6. List a topic you might research on family history.
7. List a topic you might research on community history.
8. List a source of information that you might consult to do your research.
9. How do you determine that your research has been well done?
10. Name one way you could gather data from a source of information.
11. How could a personal interview be as valuable a source of information as a document or a textbook?
12. Why do a History Fair project? / What can we learn from a History Fair project?
13. Why is a photograph an important historical document?
14. Why is a bibliography an important part of research?
15. Why do people think history is boring?
16. What clues could you use to identify that your parents were born and grew up in a different era?

17. What three words come to mind when you think about research?
18. Have you ever kept a diary or journal? How can this be an historical document?
19. What is your favorite family story? Give a one-sentence summary of this story. How did you learn about it?
20. Name a hero/famous person in your family's history.
21. Describe your favorite project that you created. Why were you successful? What did you like about it?
22. Give an example of a topic you might relate to the "rights" part of the National History Day theme ("Rights & Responsibilities in Chicago History").
23. Give a word that describes how you felt about taking history this year.
24. What is your favorite place in your neighborhood or community? Why?
25. From what country did your family originate? Why did they come to this country? Is this story like other families' stories?
26. Name one way you could tell a story besides writing it down.
27. Draw a picture or symbol that represents your idea of an historian.
28. How is research like a can-opener?
29. How is doing a History Fair project like a ferris wheel?
30. How is a student doing a History Fair project like the famous detective Sherlock Holmes?
31. In what ways can a building tell a story?
32. How are newspapers and encyclopedias alike? How are they different?
33. What jobs involve doing research?
34. Name a famous researcher.
35. How many sources of information would be used for a History Fair project that earned an "A", or superior rating?
36. What makes one source of information better than another?