

Elaine Arvidson

Professional Portfolio

Field trip to Staatsburg Mansion.

Staatsburg also known as Mills mansion was built in the 1850s. The Mills acquired their wealth in banking during the Gilded age. I bring my students to this site after I have finished teaching the unit on the Gilded age and am introducing Immigration. This field trip is a good way to reinforce what the students have just learned and peek their interest about immigration in the early 1900's.

Some essential questions addressed are: How are goods and services distributed. What is the most effective means of allocation of the factors of production (land, labor, capital, and management?) And how do immigrants impact American society?

Staatsburg can accommodate up to 80 students, they are broken into 4 groups of 20 with two chaperones per group. The groups move through 4 workshops and the trip can be completed in a school day. The workshops are 1) *The Monopoly Game*, here students are given different colored chips and are told the game is to get as many chips as possible and there are no rules, other than nothing physical. The students are then given around 3-5 minutes to do this. When time is up the chips are assigned a value such as red = oil fields, blue = Railroads and so forth. Once the students are given this information they are given more time to get chips, at this point it is interesting to watch how students begin to change their tactics and form trusts. The last activity in this workshop draws on student's knowledge from the what they have learned in class, guess the monopolist. Students are given a description of a monopolist and they guess who they are.

Workshop 2) *Etiquette in the 1900's*, Here students role play That they are guests at the Mills Mansion for a costume party. The Guide gives the students artifacts to work with: a menu from an actual ball at the mansion, newspaper clippings about the ball and photos. The students are also taught what was acceptable behavior among married man & women, and single men & women. Their reactions are always amusing.

Workshop 3) *The Mills Hire a Maid*, This activity takes place in the library. It combines American values at the time with an introduction to why Emigrants are coming to the US. First students read descriptions of what is going on in other parts of the world, civil war, famine, poverty, Pogroms, and even prosperity. They locate these places on a world map, and discuss. After that students are asked to volunteer to role play a person interviewing for a job as a house maid at the mansion. They are given their script and then after all the interviews they are asked to guess who gets the job. It is interesting at who they think will get it and why, and they are always surprised at who does get the job.

The last workshop is part of a tour of the mansion this includes information about all the new advances they were able to afford and the culture of the Mills. The part of the tour I like the best is when the students look at the maid's quarters, and are told what their life would have been like working for the Mills. As I always try to introduce tenement life right before or right after this trip.

After the field trip I have the student do a writing assignment. Usually a one page essay 12pt. font discussing something new they learned or surprised them.

When Cultures Collide a seminar I attended on May 21, 2009 was offered by Susan Stessin-Cohn. She wrote a curriculum “When Cultures Collide” The story of the Esopus Natives and Their Encounter with European Colonialism in Ulster County.

Using local records and artifacts from repositories in Ulster County, including: the County Clerk's Office, the Senate House Museum, Historic Huguenot Street and SUNY New Paltz. Susan Stessin created a curriculum through a grant from the New York State Archives for classroom teachers. This workshop introduced teachers to the highlights of this curriculum.

During the workshop we took on the role of students and worked through some of the lessons. Artifact detective; in this activity we were given a real artifact then in a groups of three we had to name our artifact, guess they type of material it was made up of and the predicted use. The teacher (Susan) Then filled in a large chart in the front of the room after the chart is filled in with students responses the teacher completed the last part which was the real name and use.

Another activity was examining the land deed of Thomas Chambers from 1652. In the classroom you would discuss with students land ownership according to the Delaware people and according to Europeans. We were given a copy of the actual document, a translation of the document and a worksheet with questions to help us analyze the document and it's affects on the native people. Finally students would write an essay or short answer according to grade level, “In what ways did cultural differences including language, affect the land deal between Thomas Chambers and the Esopus people?” and “In general, how might cultural misunderstandings between Native-Americans and Europeans have affected their relations?”

The curriculum contains 14 lessons in all I found them all very well put together and useful. I also saw how I could change some of them slightly to fit the needs of a different time in history. Such gathering artifacts from the early 1900's and having students guess their uses, or finding contracts between labor and management before labor laws were passed and examining them. I will also share this information and curriculum with my colleagues I have ordered enough packets of the curriculum for all 7th and 8th grade teachers in my building.

Mentor a Student Teacher

Lauren Collet a student of Bard University did her student teaching in my class. Bard students are required to start their teaching experience the first day of school doing a month of observation. Lauren was a student at Bailey and immediately became comfortable with her surroundings. During the month of September she became familiar with the students and my style of teaching. We discussed what she would be doing when she returned in February and I asked her to prepare a unit plan for the Progressive Era.

When Lauren returned in February she brought many strengths with her. She was always well prepared, and it was obvious she took her role seriously. We worked together daily looking over her lesson plans, discussing how things went in the classroom what she did well what she would want to work on improving. Lauren was originally an Art History major, so many of her lessons included visuals and art. I found this technique increased student engagement in the lesson and I plan to do more of this myself. She also did a gallery walk with the students a technique I have heard about but never saw. This too I felt was a beneficial activity, but unfortunately activities such as these take time and I discussed with Lauren the pitfalls of doing too many of them.

As with many student teachers the most challenging thing is classroom management. Lauren is very soft spoken and often I had to quiet down the students for her. We discussed different strategies she could use to improve her classroom management and by the end of her time with me I did see an improvement.

Kingston requires that the classroom teacher remain in the room all of the time, with the student teacher. I found this to be quite frustrating, in that I found myself interjecting into her lessons. Although Lauren claimed this did not bother her and she was glad I did, I felt it wasn't giving her total control of the classes. I am planning to have a student teacher again from Bard and I hope to improve my self-control. I enjoy having student teachers but I also find it always puts me behind in my curriculum because they tend to be more creative in their lessons. And, Although I find it difficult to play catch up once they leave I believe what they do in my classroom is important and beneficial to the students.