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| **Substitute Teacher Toolkit Lesson Plan** |

**Subject**: History

**Grade level:** Elementary Grades 1-6

**Objectives:** The goal of the lesson is to provide the substitute teacher with the chance to get to know the students in the classroom while engaging them in the study of history in meaningful ways. The lesson will aim to be relevant to student life while developing critical thinking that is crucial for developing a historian’s perspective.

**Materials**: Historical sources of the substitute teacher’s choice [For the Image Puzzle Activity], paper, and writing tools.

**Differentiation:** Every activity is designed to be simple and inclusive in which every student can have their chance to participate. The teacher should provide students with the option to either write down their answers or give them orally.

**Description**:

1. **Introduction**  
   [20 minutes]

The purpose of the first part of the lesson is to give the substitute teacher to chance to assert themselves in the classroom to ensure little behavioural or management issues, to get administrative tasks out of the way (such as attendance), and to get to know the students in the classroom.

The substitute teacher can ask each students for a short introduction of their names and about themselves, or the teacher may engage in any other sort of icebreaker activity [See the Ice Breakers page on our website for more ideas]. It is important to remember that the purpose of this activity is that the students get to know the substitute teacher and vice versa; it is expected that the students already know each other.

1. **Activity 1: How I got Here**   
   [20 minutes]

Understanding the causes and consequences of historical events is one of the main pillars in the study of history. This activity will provide students with the opportunity to analyze causes and consequences in their own personal lives.

Step One: Students will be creating a personal timeline leading to their presence at this current time and place on a paper. The teacher should provide the students with prompts, for example by asking the students why they came to class today. Short term causes can include: the bell ringing and their parents forcing them out of bed in the morning. Long term causes can include their family moving nearby or the student passing all their previous school years.

Step Two: Students will be asked to imagine the consequences of their presence in class and to reflect on their causes. The teacher can proceed to ask students to rank the causes of being in class according to their importance. The teacher can ask students ‘What If’ questions to further engage them in various possibilities (for example, what if your alarm clock hadn’t woken you up in time for school today?). Teachers can ask about both good and bad consequences of being in class; for example, them being in class is good because they won’t get detention for skipping class.

Depending on the grade level of the class, this can be a good exercise to teach students about terms such as causes and consequences, human agency, triggers, and short to long term causes (Seixas & Morton, “The Big Six” (2013), pages 116-117).

1. **Activity 2: Image Puzzle**  
   [20 minutes]

A large part of the study of history is done by interpreting and analyzing sources. Working with primary forms of evidence is a practice not many students learn to do properly if the sources are not explored by asking critical questions such as who created the source, when was it made, and what was its purpose. Sources provide students with an insight into certain historical contexts and encourages them to conduct further research about the conditions and worldviews present in the historical source being studied.

Image Puzzles consist of the teacher showing a picture, image, or drawing of a moment in history and encouraging students to observe, question, research, and reach their own conclusions on the source. The teacher should use an image source that is appropriate to the grade level of the class.

Step 1: Initial observations

Either in pairs or individually, students observe the image provided and describe what they see. The teacher decides if they wish the students to voice their observations or note them down in writing. The teacher should ask specific inquiry questions such as the arrangement of the people in the image and what actions are being shown.

Step 2: Making Inferences

The teacher encourages the students to make their own conclusion about the image. Questions can be such as what do they think is happening in the image, what time period do they think it is, and what sort of persons are being shown in the image are discussion questions teachers can use to encourage students to think critically. Questions should vary from simple to more complex depending on age group. Students should also create their own questions in a ‘What I want to Know’ format if they have any.

The teacher may withdraw information from the students initially and gradually provide the students with information such as the creator of the image, the people being portrayed, the date of the image, and so on. As new information gets revealed, the students should re-examine their questions and comments and improve them.

Step 3: Decoding the Image

With the help of the teacher providing the students with additional information and context, students should reach a conclusion about what the image is showing and why the image is historically significant. The teacher may conclude the activity in a number of ways, such as having students do their own additional research on the historical context of the image if online access is provided, having each pair of students write their own conclusions and opinions on the image, or the teacher may listen to the students’ points of views and fill in the blanks by telling the students about the image.

By the end of the exercise, students should be able to answer the following on the source: Who made the source? What kind of source is it? When and where was the source created? Describe what is happening in the source. Why was the source created? [Seixas & Morton, “The Big Six” (2013), pages 53-58.]

**Resources:** Seixas, Peter & Morton, Tom. “The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts’ (2013). Toronto: Nelson Education Ltd.