

Florence: The Cradle of the Renaissance

Overview and Objectives

Overview

In an Experiential Exercise, students take a “walking tour” of Florence, visiting seven sites to learn about various aspects of the Renaissance. Students apply their knowledge by creating a scrapbook page about their visit to Florence.

Objectives

In the course of reading this lesson and participating in the classroom activity, students will

Social Studies

- identify and explain Renaissance advances in architecture and engineering, painting, sculpture, literature, science, and mathematics.
- describe Florentine politics, as reflected in the work of Machiavelli, as well as Florentine commerce and trade.
- discuss the factors that made Florence an important cultural center during the Renaissance.
- explain how various advances made during the Renaissance reflect humanist thinking and ideals.

Language Arts

- write captions and a summary.
- demonstrate an understanding of grammar and sentence structure.

Social Studies Vocabulary

Key Content Terms *Florence, Donatello, Michelangelo, secular, Dante Alighieri, Leonardo da Vinci, Niccolo Machiavelli*

Academic Vocabulary *intense, texture, analyze*

Preview

Suggested time: 10 Minutes

1 Have students examine an image of Florence. In the presentation, project *Florence, Italy* (Visual 28 in print materials), and have students analyze the image. Ask,

- What interesting details do you see here?
- How would you describe this city? The geographic features surrounding the city?
- What are the city's most noticeable features?

2 Have students complete the Preview activity in their Interactive Student Notebooks. Review the directions with students. After all students have completed the Preview activity, allow them to share their responses, encouraging them to come up to the visual and point out items they circled.

3 Connect the Preview activity to the lesson. Explain to students that they will be taking a “walking tour” of Florence to learn about many of the advances made there during the Renaissance. Florence became Italy's leading cultural center during the Renaissance and was the birthplace of many important writers, artists, and thinkers. In this lesson, students will be introduced to many of these people and will discover how their achievements affected Renaissance life and ideas.

Vocabulary Development

Suggested time: 30-40 Minutes

1 Introduce the Key Content Terms. Have students locate the Key Content Terms for the lesson in their Interactive Student Notebooks. These are important terms that will help them understand the main ideas of the lesson. Ask volunteers to identify any familiar terms and how they might be used in a sentence.

2 Have students complete a Vocabulary Development handout. Give each student a copy of the Vocabulary Development handout of your choice from the Reading Toolkit in the Program Resources. These handouts provide extra Key Content Term practice and support, depending on your students' needs. Review the completed handout by asking volunteers to share one answer for each term.

Reading

1 Introduce the Essential Question and have students read Section 1, Introduction. Have students identify the Essential Question on the first page of the lesson: *What advances were made during the Renaissance?* Then have students read Section 1. Afterward, have students respond to these questions:

- Describe the city of Florence.
- How did Florence become such a wealthy city?
- Why do you think Florence has been called the “cradle of the Renaissance”?

2 Have students complete the Reading Notes for this lesson. Assign Sections 2-9 during the activity, as indicated in the procedures for the Experiential Exercise. Remind students to use the Key Content Terms where appropriate as they complete their Reading Notes.

Experiential Exercise

Suggested time: 120 - 150 Minutes

1 Before class, prepare materials and the classroom for the activity. Follow these steps:

- Arrange the desks to create seven stations as shown in the diagram in the presentation. (Note: This activity works best in a large space. Consider setting up the stations in a gymnasium, library, or other large space.)

- Set up the stations. Choose one of these two options:

Option 1: Set up the stations yourself, following the directions on the back of each placard.

Option 2: Have students set up the stations.

- Have masking tape available for attaching items to desks and walls.
- At each station, place both copies of one of Station Directions A–G and the corresponding placard, along with the other required materials in a one-gallon plastic bag. (Note: To make the activity run more smoothly, consider creating another set of placards.) You may want to place copies of the Student Text at each station. Otherwise, students will have to carry their Student Text and their Interactive Student Notebooks with them.
- If you have students set up each station, tell them that directions on the back of each placard describe how to set up each station and show what the station should look like. For bigger classes, have students create two set-ups at each station.
- Only one octagon and one beach ball are needed for Station A, though students may need assistance in creating the masking-tape octagon.
- If stations must be dismantled at the end of a class, have students return all the materials to the bag, throwing away any tape, so that the stations can be quickly reconstructed.

2 Pair students and introduce the activity. Have students sit on the floor near the center of the room. Explain that they will now assume the roles of modern tourists taking a walking tour of Florence. At each of seven sites, they will read a section of the Student Text, perform a task, and record notes in their Interactive Student Notebooks.

3 Have students read Section 2 and complete the corresponding Reading Notes. Explain that this section provides background information about Florence and why the Renaissance was centered there.

4 Introduce students to the walking tour. In the presentation, project *Information Master: Directions for the Walking Tour* and review the directions with students. Quickly review the procedures at each station to give them a general idea of what to do. (Note: You might find it helpful to invite a few adult aides to assist in monitoring this activity.)

5 Have pairs begin their tour. Assign each pair of students a different station to start from. When a pair finishes at a station, have them raise their hands to indicate they are ready for you to check their work. Use the Guide to Reading Notes to check their answers. Continue until most pairs have visited all the stations.

6 Hold a class discussion. Have students sit with their partners. Ask,

- What aspects of Renaissance Florence did you most enjoy learning about?
- What things did you learn about the Italian Renaissance that you didn't know before?
- What were some of the advances made during the Renaissance?
- Why do historians call Florence the “cradle of the Renaissance”?

At this time, you may want to announce the results of the vote on Machiavelli's ideas from Station F.

Processing

Suggested time: 20 Minutes

1 Have students complete the Processing activity. Students create a scrapbook page that describes Renaissance Florence. Review the steps with students. Allow them time to create their pages. You might want to have their peers edit their picture captions and paragraph.

2 Have students share their scrapbook pages with their partners or with the class.

Quicker Coverage

Shorten the Activity Reduce from seven to three the number of stations students visit. Set up only Stations A–F. Have half the pairs visit Stations A–C and the other half visit D–F. Then have a pair who visited Stations A–C join a pair who visited Stations D–F. In these new foursomes, have students share what they learned at each station, as well as their answers to the Reading Notes. Have students complete those sections of Reading Notes for the stations they did not visit. All students will need to complete the Reading Notes for Section 9, but will omit Question 3, which pertained to Station G in the activity.

Abbreviate the Processing Activity Instead of assigning the scrapbook page, have students annotate the image in the Processing activity with at least two facts they learned from their reading and from their walking tour of Florence.

Deeper Coverage

Conduct a Wrap-Up Activity Follow these steps:

- Create a spectrum by placing a 10- to 15-foot strip of masking tape along the floor at the front of the room. On the board, above opposite ends of the spectrum, write “Most Significant Advancement” and “Least Significant Advancement.” Remind students of the purpose of a spectrum.
- Remove the placards from the wall and assign one to each pair (Note: Do not assign Placard G). You may have more than one pair assigned to a placard.
- Tell students that based on their reading and completed Reading Notes, they should determine where on the spectrum they would place their placard.
- Have one student represent each advancement and come forward to stand on the spectrum where the pair thinks their contribution belongs. Tell students to hold their placards in front of their chests.
- Challenge the other students to identify advancements they believe are misplaced. Encourage discussion about where the advancements should be placed. The purpose of this activity is not to find “correct” locations, but to have students support their opinions.