

## Biography Project: Research and Class Presentation

Grades	6 – 8
Lesson Plan Type	Unit
Estimated Time	Nine 50-minute sessions

### STUDENT OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Learn to ask relevant questions before beginning a research project
- Learn to take notes and categorize information as they create graphic organizers
- Improve comprehension as they read and skim text for main ideas and details
- Develop research skills (book and Internet) with the purpose of teaching the class what they have learned
- Think critically as they use rubrics and written feedback to evaluate their classmates and themselves

### SESSION 1: BEFORE READING

1. Ask students what a biography is and show an example of one. Ask them what sort of things they would expect to find out about a person's life in a biography. Share a biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. and ask students to work in pairs to generate questions about his life. Then ask for their ideas for how this information might be categorized (such as childhood events, turning points, things he is famous for, *ways that he demonstrated the schoolwide expectations- how did he demonstrate respect, responsibility, safety, did he create rules for appropriate behavior in his work with others? etc.*)
2. Have students brainstorm famous people who might have biographies written about them, and write student responses on the board.
3. Pass out the [Sample Web](#) graphic organizer and discuss how categories and subcategories can be used to summarize a person's life achievements. In the sample for Martin Luther King, Jr., categories include "childhood and young adult," "beginning of his career," "turning points," "march on Washington," "what he wrote," and "assassination."
4. Have each student narrow the list on the board to three famous people they might like to study (they will narrow it down to one during the next session, depending on availability of biographies).
5. Pair off students to discuss the people they're interested in researching. Have them ask each other what they already know about the people. What things do they not know but want to find out? Have students work together to help each other generate questions about each of the people they would like to learn more about.

Integrated Lesson Planning Example

Edited original from CPALMS: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/biography-project-research-class-243.html?tab=4#tabs>

## SESSIONS 2 TO 5

1. Using your classroom or school library, have each student check out a biography of a famous person. The biography should be about one of the three people on the student's list from Session 1.
2. Pass out the [Web Rubric](#) and go over expectations and criteria with students. *Consider adding requirement related to identifying moments, experiences, achievements, etc. when the person demonstrated the tier 1 expectations.*

Web has categories that fit with the information written about the person and are easily understood by the reader.

Each category has supporting information that helps the reader understand the details of the person's life.

The writing is clear with no spelling or grammatical errors.

Each bubble gives brief, clear information.

Web shows the main achievements of the person's life based on the student's interpretation.

3. Use the sample web for Martin Luther King, Jr. to model for students how each item of the rubric applies to the creation of the web.
4. Ask students to skim (or preread) their biographies, focusing on the questions they generated during Session 1 about the selected person. Then have students work with their partners to group the information they find into appropriate categories and start a rough draft of their webs.
5. For homework (and, if time, in class), have students read independently as they complete their webs.
6. Students can also use the [list of suggested websites](#) to add to their webs.
7. When the webs are complete, have each student use the Web Rubric to evaluate his or her own web.
8. Have each student share his or her web with a partner and give each other feedback and suggestions for improvement. The partner can fill out the same rubric using a different color. *Consider what behavioral skills/lesson plans might need to be reviewed prior to this activity? Consider- "providing and accepting feedback from peers"*
9. Collect the students' webs, review them, and use the same rubric with another color to make suggestions for improvement.

## SESSION 6: AFTER READING

1. Return the rubrics to students, giving them time to review the comments from you and their partners. Allow them the opportunity to make revisions to their webs.

Integrated Lesson Planning Example

Edited original from CPALMS: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/biography-project-research-class-243.html?tab=4#tabs>

Consider what behavioral skills/lesson plans might need to be reviewed prior to this activity?

Consider- “providing and accepting feedback from peers”

2. Have students copy their webs neatly onto butcher paper and prepare for the class presentation, writing notes or key words and phrases on index cards to help them remember what they will say.  
Consider what behavioral skills/lessons you might need to review prior to this activity. Consider:
  - Communicating with others
  - Use *Initiating a Conversation* and *Having a Conversation*, and *Contributing to Discussions* with others as a starting point for discussing presentation style (eye contact, volume and inflection in voice, relaxing yet confident body language, etc.)
  - Asking a question (Skillstreaming Elementary and Adolescent)
  - Listening to others (Skillstreaming Elementary and Adolescent)
  - Relaxation (Skillstreaming Elementary) and coping strategies (especially for those that might be nervous in front of groups)

## SESSIONS 7 TO 9: CLASS PRESENTATIONS

1. As students give the class presentations, have other students use the [Oral Presentation Peer Feedback Form](#) to write their feedback.  
Consider what behavioral skills/lesson plans might need to be reviewed prior to this activity?  
Consider- “providing and accepting feedback from peers”
2. Collect the feedback forms, review and check them for inappropriate comments, and give each set to the corresponding presenter.

## EXTENSIONS

Have students use their webs and the online [Bio-Cube](#) tool to plan and write biographies of the person they have researched. When they are finished, ask students to share the books with a younger class.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT/REFLECTIONS

Possible student assessments include:

Use the [Web Rubric](#) to grade the students' webs.

Use the [Oral Presentation Rubric](#) to grade students' presentations based on the quality and completeness of information given.

Observe and evaluate students' participation in group work and ability to critique other students' presentations based on their comments on the [Oral Presentation Peer Feedback Form](#).

Have students reflect in their journals on what they have learned about the value of using webs to help them recall and organize information.

Integrated Lesson Planning Example

Edited original from CPALMS: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/biography-project-research-class-243.html?tab=4#tabs>