



The Morgan Arboretum Unit

Grade: 4

Subject: English Language Arts

Time: 3 weeks

Objective:

- To be able to work together in a team in order to produce a clear and coherent text that will be incorporated into a class newspaper.



Description:

Field Trip:

This unit started with a field trip to the Morgan Arboretum where students played team-building games outside and were able to explore their surroundings, learning about the many different trees and animals we have in Quebec.

Lesson #1:

Following the field trip, I taught a lesson on using the five senses to help us remember some different facts that we had learned while at the Morgan Arboretum. Each time we talked about a new sense, I asked the students to use that sense to visualize themselves back at the Arboretum. We talked about sounds (we listened to sounds of crunching leaves, birdcalls and spring peepers), smells (we smelled ginger and pine), touch (we touched leaves, sticks, and helicopter seeds), and sight (we looked at a slideshow of the pictures I had taken). I then asked the students why I hadn't brought anything for them to taste (we can't eat anything in the forest because it could be poisonous, but we did discuss what animals eat). After that, the class brainstormed a list of ideas about the Morgan Arboretum based on the five senses. The students then went back to their desks and individually answered their assigned question:

1. Write three facts about Kathleen Usher
2. Write three facts about Chris Adam
3. Write three facts about the Morgan Arboretum
4. Write three facts about the survivor games
5. Name four types of trees

Lesson #2:

For the second lesson, students were placed into teams with other students who shared the same questions as they did. Each team was given a chart paper, a photo that would prompt ideas related to their question, and a different coloured marker for each group member (each student had a different colour so that it was easy to see who contributed to the team paper). The students needed to discuss their topic question and work together on choosing ten to fifteen facts. Once the facts were written, they had to choose which ones they wanted to use in their article and put them in order so that the article made sense and would flow accordingly.



Lesson #3:

This lesson focused on editing the article. Students were given roles within their teams to ensure that they had chosen their facts, that the spelling was correct, that the facts flowed nicely, that all the information was correct and to add more information/details if needed. I introduced the idea of the “Paragraph Hamburger Helper” in order to assist students in writing a cohesive paragraph. I then explained the four roles and gave each student their “role badge” to wear around their necks (with the title of their role on the front and a checklist of their job on the back): editor, word wizard, information seeker, photo finder. Only the editors and word wizards were left in the classroom to work on their charts while the information seekers and photo finders were allowed to go to the computer lab to work on their parts. Once everything was collected, the students re-grouped and continued working together, updating their article and adding new information. After the final editing was complete, the students re-wrote their articles in their team copybook and stapled their chosen picture with it.

Lesson #4:

Two students in each group were allowed to go to the computer lab to type up the final copy of their article. Each team then presented their article in front of the class. We also brainstormed possible titles for our class newspaper.

Lesson #5:

Miss. Kathleen visited our school to teach a lesson on creating art using different things from nature found in our own schoolyard. Students collected leaves, flowers, etc. and then “painted” a collective art piece using these items. The artwork was then torn into pieces, each student was given their own piece and with that, they wrote about what they saw/how they felt.



Conclusion:

I compiled all of the articles, pictures, and artwork responses into a classroom newspaper and gave it to each student as a surprise during the parent/teacher interviews.

Reflection:

What worked well:	The students loved the whole unit! They really enjoyed the fact that they spent time outside and that they could explore the woods and their schoolyard. They were very proud of their articles, ecstatic to see their pictures in the final product and couldn't wait to show their parents all of their hard work!
What didn't work well:	Overall, the unit took a little longer than expected (specifically the lessons where the students worked in their groups to write and edit their texts). Because we were pressed for time (I needed to finish the unit before the end of my stage), I put a lot of information into the lessons and some students were overwhelmed, as they were not used to such a heavy workload.
Ways to improve:	If I were to do this project again, I would spread out the content so that there would not be an overload of information. This would allow the students more time to process everything as well as more time to edit their texts properly, without having to rush.



Tools

These are the tools I used for the differentiation in the Morgan Arboretum Unit. Students were split up into groups and each member received a “role”. The roles were written on small cards attached to a string worn around the students’ necks. The description was written on the back so that the students could always refer to it if needed. The children really enjoyed their specific responsibilities and felt valued within their team.

Editor

I have checked that:

- ✓ There is a beginning and an ending.
- ✓ All the sentences are organized in a logical order.
- ✓ The sentences flow one after the other.
- ✓ There are details added in each sentence.

Word Wizard

I have checked that:

- ✓ There are no spelling mistakes.
- ✓ All the sentences make sense grammatically.
- ✓ Each sentence starts with a capital and ends with a period.
- ✓ I know what all the words mean and can explain the difficult words.

Information Seeker

I have checked that:

- ✓ All of the information from the article is correct.
- ✓ I have found new information to add to the article.
- ✓ I used my own words to write in my notes and did not copy the words straight from the Internet.

Photo Finder

I have checked that:

- ✓ The photo I chose is the best photo that represents the article.
- ✓ I am allowed to use the photo from the Internet.
- ✓ I have written down where I found the photo and I have printed a copy of it.

Paragraph Hamburger Helper

Topic: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Concluding Sentence: _____

This “Paragraph Hamburger Helper” tool was used when it was time for students to turn their 10 facts into a cohesive article. I explained the purpose of adding detail to sentences and making sure the ideas flowed nicely one after the other. The students loved this tool and referred to it when writing other stories.



Name: _____

RUBRIC: Morgan Arboretum Response (GROUP WORK)

	Observable Indicators			
	4	3	2	1
Group Work	✓ All students contribute to decision-making.	✓ Most students contribute to decision-making.	✓ Some students contribute to decision-making.	✓ One person dominates decision-making.
	✓ Students respect and encourage views of others. Students ask questions or clarification. Students build on others' comments.	✓ Body and/or verbal response indicate active listening . Most students ask questions and build on others' comments.	✓ Students pay attention to the group discussion. Some students ask questions and build on others' comments.	✓ Students frequently interrupt and/or put down the views of others. Students do not ask questions or clarifications.
Behaviour	✓ Students exhibit on-task behaviour consistently .	✓ Most students exhibit on-task behaviour most of the time .	✓ Students exhibit on-task behaviour some of the time .	✓ Students exhibit on-task behaviour inconsistently .
Writing Process	✓ Consistently uses descriptive/appropriate vocabulary.	✓ Generally uses descriptive/appropriate vocabulary.	✓ Occasionally uses descriptive/appropriate vocabulary.	✓ Attempts to include appropriate vocabulary.
	✓ Develops ideas that clearly relate to the question.	✓ Develops ideas so that they relate to the question.	✓ Develops ideas that usually relate to the question.	✓ Many ideas do not relate to the question.
	✓ Facts are covered with exceptional detail . (10-15 facts).	✓ Facts are covered with sufficient detail . (10 facts).	✓ Facts are covered with some detail . (8-9 facts).	✓ Details are missing or lacking direction. (Less than 8 facts).
	✓ Revisions improve overall quality of work. Effective editing.	✓ Much evidence of revision. Much attempt at editing.	✓ Some evidence of revision. Some attempt at editing.	✓ Little evidence of revision. Little attempt at editing.

Comments: _____
