**‘Quick Hit’ Curriculum Ideas for History Classes**

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Below are a series of ‘quick hit’ ideas that can be used in online history classrooms. None of these are connected to any specific content, but rather can be converted to use on almost any historical topic. Students should be able to do these at home by themselves, with other classmates, or with family, through various social media outlets. Many of these can also be turned in for evaluation, which should be beneficial to teachers. As mentioned earlier, since these are not content specific strategies, the answers will probably be a bit more generic. Typically, they are great for showing that a student understands the topic being studied or are useful for reviewing material that has just been covered.

**1. A Historical Recipe**

Tell students they have to create a ‘Historical Recipe’ for a specific event, such as the Cold War, the Great Depression, Imperialism, etc. Show them the simple cake recipe below and explain that they need to come up with the necessary ingredients and directions that were needed to “make” that specific historical event. Years ago I had a student who did one on the Cold War in which she the recipe need the following: 1 can of Socialism, 1 can of Capitalism, that Socialism needed to be kept contained in a separate pan, you had to ‘heat it’ up with spices from Korea, Cuba and Vietnam, and it had to be chilled for over 50 years.

**Baking a Cake**

Ingredient Checklist

* 1 cup white sugar
* ½ cup butter
* 2 eggs
* 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
* 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
* 1 ¾ teaspoons baking powder
* ½ cup milk

**Directions**

Instructions Checklist

* **Step 1**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease and flour a 9x9 inch pan or line a muffin pan with paper liners.

* **Step 2**

In a medium bowl, cream together the sugar and butter. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then stir in the vanilla. Combine flour and baking powder, add to the creamed mixture and mix well. Finally stir in the milk until batter is smooth. Pour or spoon batter into the prepared pan.

* **Step 3**

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes in the preheated oven. For cupcakes, bake 20 to 25 minutes. Cake is done when it springs back to the touch.

**2. The Roadside Historical Marker**

Ask students if they have ever seen signs at historical places, or along roadsides, which briefly tell the story of what happened at that place. These markers usually must follow strict guidelines, so tell students that they have to write a paragraph depicting what took place at this particular site in \_\_\_\_ amount of words. This has to be written so as to catch people’s eye and it needs to reflect all sides of the story. This can be used for either major, well known events, or minor instances that are not usually covered in history classes.

**3. The Historical Dinner Party**

This has been used in various formats over the years, but it is useful in the sense that it forces students to consider various perspectives that individual historical characters may have held. Tell students they are hosting a dinner party for 8 historical figures, from a specific time (i.e. Cold War, World War II, French Revolution, etc.). You will then give them more than they can invite, forcing them to explain who did not get invited, and why. Make sure to give them a shape for the table that they will all be sitting at (i.e. oval, square, circle, etc.), because they will also have to figure out who is going to sit next to whom at this event. Finally, since your student is going to be a great host, they must decide on at least 2-3 topics of conversation that this group will be able to discuss.

In the past I have used this for the Cold War and watched students debate 1) who are the most important characters during that time, 2) why you cannot sit some people next to others and 3) why the shape of the table hinders/helps with the seating assignments, and 4) what topics can be brought up (related to that specific time period) that are interesting and encourage the most discussion.

**4. Hall of Fame Nominations**

Explain to your students that the brand new History Hall of Fame is inducting a new batch of inductees this year and as a committee member, they have to write up a list of their top 3 (any number can work here) people who should be in the initial class. Then, give them the historical event or time period (i.e. Civil Rights, Industrial Age, Reformation, etc.) and a list of key people that they must choose from. You will want to give them more people than spots open, so they will have to debate or make decisions on who makes the cut. Students can turn these in by themselves, of if possible, contact other classmates and make themselves the Selection Committee. Each student/group must than come up with a rationale as to why they picked those specific people and rejected others. It is possible to also use historical events in this same scenario.

**5. My Family History**

With so many students at home with their families, this might be a great time to have them do their family history and connect it to modern U.S. History. There are numerous free Family Tree templates, but the outline for these are also simple enough that a student could write one up themselves. For examples, students can go to <https://freefamilytreetemplates.com/>

Once they have the Family Tree the teacher should give them a series of topics that the class has covered or will cover so each student can interview family members to see if their family was connected to these events. Topics that I have had students ask their families about are things such as the Great Depression, World War II, life in the 1950s, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, voting for Presidents, Civil Rights, pop culture/fashion in various time periods, etc., etc. The goal for this project is to have students come away with a sense that history has impacted their families lives.

A bit of a disclaimer. Having used this assignment numerous times there are things that you will need to consider and address. Talk to your students about how they want to discuss divorce and remarriage in their family. Things like adoption and stepfamilies needs to be considered. In some situations, students may not want to discuss certain family members, or even whole sides of families as well. In the end, I always tell them that they need to put down what they consider family and that the assignment isn’t about having a perfect family tree, but rather it is to show how their family has interacted with historical events over the years.

**6. Stepping into Cause and Effect**

Ask your students to trace both of their feet (or shoes) onto a piece of paper. Once they have done that, on approximately 5-8 sheets, ask them to cut out each foot/shoe.

Students are then given a historical topic and asked to find out what were the causes and effects of this event. In my classroom I would typically put the name of the event on a piece of paper (i.e. The American Revolution, Civil Rights, Women’s Suffrage, etc.) in the middle of the room, and on each individual footprint students would write one cause or one effect. Then, they can take each footprint and put them in chronological order, or order of importance, and ‘walk’ them to the event and away from the event (causes going in, effects going away). Finally, since they are online, they should either record or take a picture of this and send it to their teacher for review.

**7. Teaching the Family**

With everyone at home many parents are being thrown into the role of educator and are probably going to find themselves overwhelmed and worried about not being able to explain things to their own children. My suggestion is that we flip the roles and rather than forcing parents/guardians to try and teach their children about all these topics, that instead we ask our students to take on the role of teacher and give their families 20 minute mini-lessons on what they are learning about. Students can do a brief lecture on the topic, show their family the reading assignments, or even have them watch the documentary that you had them watch for this subject. Then, at the end, they can lead a discussion with their family about the key points they were trying to get across. The student’s evaluation could even be done by the parents who can quickly explain if they feel their child did a good enough job explaining the material to them.

**8. I was at…**

This activity gives students the prompt “I was at…” with the teacher filling in the historical event. Students are then asked to create a fictional character and explain what they felt, witnessed and did during this specific event.

As the teacher, you do not need to evaluate this quick one-page assignment on anything but their comments related to the historical events that were occurring at this time. Did they mention the right people, did they understand the cause and effects, did they place it in the right geographic and chronological places, etc. Too often students get caught up in the fictional account and forget about the actual historical event that they need to discuss, so make sure to emphasize what exactly you are looking for in this assignment.

**9. The Public Relations Firm**

Tell students the following:

A local museum/historical group wants more attention for what they represent historically. They feel that their story has been ignored nationally and want to gain more attention brought to this great person, group and/or event. This groups goal is to get a national textbook publisher to include more about this person, group and/or event so they are no longer ignored and will get more people to the museum, reading books about it and even creating more movies/documentaries related to this topic. They have hired your students, who work for a major public relations firm, to help re-write this story and begin promoting it nationally.

Students will have to research this topic and write up a brief proposal explaining why history textbooks should cover it in more detail. They should demonstrate how it is connected to the bigger story and why more Americans should know about this story.

Topics I have used in the past:

-Philippine-American War

-Battle of Vincennes, 1779

-Norway and the Holocaust

-William Henry Harrison

-U.S.-Dakota War, 1862