

Interpreting History Effectively in the SCA

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What Makes a Class Great?

Objectives

Classes will be:

- Engaging
- Educational
- Hands-on experience
- Done within the allotted time (including clean-up!)

Methods

Introduction - *Purpose is to give a foundation with a 2-3 sentence introduction - no more than 5 minutes.*

- Introduce yourself to students (and chaperones, if applicable)
- Explain what your goals are for the allotted time.
- Ask what students may have studied before in relation to your material.
- Make connections between “now” and “then”
- State your expectations. (Depending on ages this could be manners, sharing of tools or the like.)

Activity/Content

- Use the senses whenever possible. (Sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste)
- Use open ended questions to encourage participation.
- Get them into the activity ASAP - after the short introduction.
- Students should be responsible for helping clean up the space.

Wrap-Up

- Summarize key points.
- Ask students if they have any questions.

****When dealing with parents/chaperones****

- Be sure to introduce yourself and get their names.
- Give them a task! Make them part of the group!
- Engage them in your discussion. Just because it is a class geared towards the younger populace, they should feel excluded.
- Encourage them to let the students do the activity - help only when asked, or necessary.

Age Level Characteristics & Tips for Teaching History

Preschool & Kindergarten (Ages 3 to 6)

Cognitive: Think concretely and literally; things are as they appear to be. Young children stick to their own language rules. Enjoy pleasing adults by getting the right answers, but don't necessarily comprehend the meaning of the words. Learn with their whole bodies; love to taste, touch, move, Explore, show, watch. Concept of time is limited but expanding. Long ago time is mythological.

Affective: Play patterns reflect social class, gender, age. Gender difference in toy preferences and play activities are served in kindergarten. Are blissfully egocentric, maybe develop mentally incapable of understanding another perspective. Developing pattern of sharing, but golden rule it's a tough concept. Being 1st and winning is important to come taking turns as hard. Are self-centered but significantly influenced by others, especially significant adults (e.g. mom, dad, teachers) Express emotions freely and openly come up often with bursts of anger.

Physical: Large muscle control established in comparison to small muscle control and hand-eye coordination. Extremely energetic but need frequent rest periods. May be accident-prone, but they are flexible and resilient.

TEACHING TIPS: Keep it simple, concrete, literal. Ask questions that encourage them to observe and name. Do and share things that appeal to all the senses - smell this, listen to this, etcetera. Use storytelling and play along with pretending; if they are having fun, go with it and look for teachable moments, but recognize when they pass.

Primary Grades 1 to 3 (Ages 6-9)

Cognitive: Short attention spans, shift easily from one activity to another. Enjoy collecting objects, see similarities and differences. Are interested in stories of animals, people, fact and fantasy and fairy stories. Can only hold one perspective at a time summary: cannot compare prospective simultaneously period do not have clear concepts of time, but are taking first steps to respect and control.

Affective: Are growing in ability to participate and interact with small groups. Have stronger same-sex friendships. Are emotionally sensitive, need approval from adults and peers and eager to please. Are competitive. Boasting may be common. Are developing concept of right and wrong. Enjoy organised games in small groups, but maybe overly concerned with rules and sense of fair play. Frequently argue over fairness in games.

Physical: Rapid, uneven development of large muscles makes them restless and in need of activity. Small muscle coordination is developing. Girls are ahead of boys at the stage of development. May have difficulty focusing on small print or objects because their eyes do not fully accommodate until they are 8 years old. Have slowly developing hand-eye coordination. Can work diligently for longer periods but maybe impatient with delays or their own slowness.

TEACHING TIPS: Use activities that involve use of small muscle coordination, such as craft, writing, drawing, etc.. Give clear, specific instructions and allow them independence in preparing materials. Encourage active participation in learning situations with concrete objects. Offer some responsibilities without pressure and without being required to make complicated decisions or meet rigidly set standards. Except that work at their own level of development. Use storytelling with concrete objects in pictures to illustrate what you are talking about but avoid symbolism. Encourage performance through praise more than criticism. If you set rules, stick to them for everyone.

Elementary Grades 4 to 6 (Ages 9-12)

Cognitive: Reason logically but concretely. Are curious about almost everything. They dry collections, and can sort unlike objects into logical sequences and categorical Crips wear before it was on single factors and surf official attributes such as color. Can perform multiple classification tasks. Accept rules and codes as suggested courses of action rather than absolute dictums. Concept of time develops with a sense of contiguity of past with present. Interest in history focuses on concrete things in activities that build a picture of a past time period less interested in fantasy and fairy tales, more interested in stories of their community and country and in other countries and peoples. Things are valued because of their age and authenticity becomes more important.

Affective: Influence of the peer group grows to shape interests and behavior. Interests of boys and girls become more divergent. Teen games become popular, does not want to stand alone in competition. Desire to become independent, still need guidance and support. Peer groups norms start to replace adult norms.

Physical: Are skilled in fine motor coordination (Girls are more flexible, have better balance in rhythmic motor skills, and boys have better general motor skills) are entering into a period uneven growth and maturation.

TEACHING TIPS: Give lots of opportunity for talking, question, and discussing. Give guidance that does not discourage the child's efforts in becoming a thinking, self-directed person. Offer training and skills but without pressure. Offer reasonable explanations without talking down. Use books and reading to connect to history. Use visual aids and concrete tools to introduce abstract ideas. Introduce historical figures with solutions to their significance.

Jr. High Grades 7 and 8 (Ages 12 to 14)

Cognitive: Reason logically but concretely. Tend to take things at face value. Beginning to deal with abstract concepts and develop stronger sense of time. Can perceive relationships, but subtle relationships are not picked up easily. Interest in history attached to the social development. Can imagine themselves as characters around which a historical milieu is built; less focused on objects and activities as on feelings, motivations and relationships. Are starting to master probabilistic thinking using evidence. Attention span is lengthening affected by motives, teacher, and environment.

Affective: Influence of peers begins to replace adults as major source of behavioral standards and norms. Self-concept is based on comparing oneself with peers. Desire to become independent, but still need guidance and support. Team games become popular. Boys and girls interests diverge, and sex roles gain importance. Girls often exhibit more social amenities than boys, who can be boisterous. Maybe frightened by new settings, or new teacher. Self conscious and less sure of themselves; don't want to be wrong especially in front of others.

Physical: Are skilled in fine motor coordination (girls are more flexible, have better balance, rhythmic motor skills, and boys have better general motor skills). Entering in to a period of uneven growth and maturation. The interests of boys and girls become more divergent. Great differences in physical development at similar ages; average age of puberty: girls, 10.5 yrs.; boys, 13.5 yrs.)

TEACHING TIPS: Use characters, biographies or stories of real people to introduce historical concepts for period lifeways. Organized realistic details, activities, an object into a historical framework to help them form a sense of one person's life or period. Asked questions such as colon do you remember? Did you ever feel that way? Would you want to? If you were a boy or a girl in this village would you? Questions to ask them to recall to self acknowledged. Better to say how long ago then Farm dates for example 1600's and 16th century are commonly confused at this age. Avoid sarcasm or teasing in front of their peers.

High School (Ages 14 to 18)

Cognitive: They are voluntary visitors who have action over their own time and need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction. Look for immediate gratification, want real attention-getters right away. Often have a clear sense of what they want to achieve and desire to know the benefits of an experience before they enter into it. Most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their job or personal life. Most effective adult learning is problem-centered rather than content oriented. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for learning activities. Have well developed cognitive styles, areas of knowledge, and interests. May see learning as a give and take and desire to share information as well as receive it.

Affective: Seek entertainment in their leisure time. Have varied life and work experiences. Include social interaction among the motivations for seeking learning environments. May organize cultural and educational experiences to initiate, build, or strengthen social ties.

Physical: They differ widely in maturity and have tremendous energy fluctuation. They may exhibit alternating alertness, irritability, and fatigue. They may demonstrate poor muscular control. They are approaching adult development in hand-eye coordination, hand skills and in speech, visual acuity and auditory ability.

TEACHING TIPS: Introduce dilemmas and choices in history that lead to questions of how things might have been different, how events in one place affected those in another, what moral or political implications were in play, etc. Allow them to identify their own problem or goal and then provide them the tools to solve or achieve it. Pay attention to group dynamics, and recognize the social aspect of learning. Engage groups in activities that require teamwork, problem-solving, and perhaps a little competition. Be prepared for some criticism or ridicule; don't take it personally. When working with individuals, focus on advancing skills, physical or mental.

Adults

Cognitive: They are voluntary visitors who have action over their own time and need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction. Look for immediate gratification, want real attention-getters right away. Often have a clear sense of what they want to achieve and desire to know the benefits of an experience before they enter into it. Most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their job or personal life. Most effective adult learning is problem-centered rather than content oriented. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for learning activities. Have well developed cognitive styles, areas of knowledge, and interests. May see learning as a give and take and desire to share information as well as receive it.

Affective: Seek entertainment in their leisure time. Have varied life and work experiences. Include social interaction among the motivations for seeking learning environments. May organize cultural and educational experiences to initiate, build, or strengthen social ties.

Physical: Older adults may have physical/sensory limitations. May get fatigued.

TEACHING TIPS: Find out who they are and what they hope to get out of a learning experience, in order to help them focus on areas that will be most rewarding. Give them time to tell you what they know or have experienced and engage in dialogue using their points of reference. Describe what will be taught and explain why specific things are being taught/demonstrated. Allow learners to discover things for themselves, providing guidance and help when mistakes are made. Acknowledge the social agendas of adult learners - to connect with family members or to engage in dialogue or activities with others - as a strong factor in activity selection, and allow them to share their focus. Avoid distractions such as noise, crowds, and information overload.

Basic Tips & Guidelines for Inquiry-based Teaching

Tips that are, by and large, common sense but can help your class management. Most of these tips are geared towards people teaching children. Please note that not all of these will be applicable to every age group.

Make your initial contact with each student a positive one. Say “Good Morning!” or “How are you?”

Connect to and engage your students immediately:

- Introduce yourself. “And who are you?” Where are they from and what grade/age are they?
- Introduce your class. “Have you done _____ before?” See if you can make connections between what they know and what you will be teaching.

Connect to and engage chaperones (if applicable) immediately:

- “Hi, Welcome! THanks for staying. Your child may need help with _____.”

General Practices

- Be prepared. Know your audience. Lay out materials for appropriate age level activity.
- Say please and thank you every chance you get.
- Have a back up activity for unexpected situations.
- Have something for students to do if they complete assignments early.
- Tell students that you appreciate their efforts and class contributions.
- Provide step-by-step instruction with a demonstration. Make sure your students (and chaperones!) know what to do before they start.

Inquiry-Based Teaching Guidelines

- Remember that teaching is also a learning process.
- Value and encourage responses and, when these responses convey misconceptions, effectively explore the causes and appropriately guide the learner.
- Be alert to learning obstacles and guide learners when necessary.
- Ask questions that encourage divergent thinking that leads to more questions.
- Ask questions that are **answerable** - does the information exist, does the student have access to it, or can the student develop relevant and defensible opinions and hypotheses.
- Ask questions that reach beyond what is already known; recall of information is not the same as exploration and thinking through to an answer.
- Ask questions that have some objective basis for an answer; value judgements. “What evidence do you see that object A was more desirable than object B?”
- Avoid questions that are too personal. “Why do I want to live in the 1500’s” may inspire internal exploration, but doesn’t help students to develop research and inquiry skills they need to advance.
- Be persistent and keep posing questions until you find what works for different students.
- DON’t get discouraged. When working with younger, shy, or alienated kids and with those unused to this sort of approach, you may have to ask leading questions or even “spoon feed” the questions to get started.
- Keep your eyes and ears open for ways to connect to what kids might know. The inquiry-based approach acknowledges that children, especially those from minority and disadvantaged communities, have experience and knowledge that is often ignored my traditional curricula. An inquiry-based approach can validate what all kids can bring to the learning process.