Art Historian: Exploring the Middle Ages and the Renaissance

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, students will think like an art historian and create a digital archive that shows how art was changing during the Middle Ages and Renaissance and how art can tell us about what was happening in history.

Activity

Teacher notes:

- This activity is long and can be completed across multiple days.
- Each student (or pairs of students) will need a computer for this activity.
- You will need to set up 2 free accounts on two different websites before class. You will also need to set up a shared folder in Google Drive for all students to access. See Handout: Teacher Prep.

Step 1: Background on Archivists (5-10 minutes)

- Show Video: Exploring the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.
- As a class, discuss how art historians work with very important and valuable pieces of art. It is an art historians job to organize these pieces of art and put them in an archive. An archive is a location where art can be stored when it is not on display in a museum. Before the internet, documents were organized in physical archives (e.g., boxes of documents in a large room). However, digital archives now exist. A digital archive is a database that houses scanned images of artifacts and other important information.
- Ask students what would happen if art historians didn't organize art into digital or physical archives (e.g., pieces of art could be disorganized and professionals wouldn't be able to use them to understand history and make claims about what life was like in the past).
- Next, explain to students that physical and digital archives are typically created for professionals to use. For example, historians and economists can use the archives to find primary and secondary sources to use as part of research or to write a book. The problem is that students who are learning about art and other important historical pieces have a hard time using the archives! Show Handout: Examples of Archives.
- Extra Time? Go to other digital archives and have a class discussion about what features are complicated and what features are easy for students to use. Ask students what they would change or add to the archive to make it more student friendly. Discuss the following: how can the design or wording be changed to make it easier for students to search for information?

Step 2: Activity Set Up (5+ minutes)

- Explain to students that they will create their own digital archive for students to use. The archive will make a claim about how art was changing during the Middle Ages and Renaissance and how art can tell us about historical time periods. Students should pick 1-3 piece of art to include in the entry and back up their claim.
- Divide students into pairs or small groups. Provide students with Handout: Steps to Create a Student-Friendly Archive. As a class, read through the steps.
- Next, have students go to this website: http://bit.ly/middleageren. Explain to students that they should reference this handout while creating their archive. Feel free to print the handout as well.

Please contact Allison Bischoff, Director of Customer Service, at allison@rozzylearningcompany.com or 314-272-2560 with questions.

Step 3: Brainstorming Ideas and Creating Entries (30+ minutes)

- Have students complete Steps 1-3 on their handout.
- As students are working, ask the following questions:
    - How will you create your archive in a way that is student friendly?
    - What sources will you use to show how art was changing during the Middle Ages and Renaissance time period?
    - Why is it important for students to use archives in social studies class?
    - What features can you add to your archive to make it fun for students to use? (e.g., bitmojis, hashtags, videos)

Step 4: Creating QR Codes (10+ minutes)

- Have students complete Step 4 on the handout.
- Teacher note: you will need to email students the class Google Drive folder link so they can upload their QR code to the class folder. You can have students label the file with their names so you know which QR code belongs to which student.

Step 5: Presenting Archives (10+ minutes)

- Have students go into the class Google Drive folder and volunteer to share their QR code.
- Have a concluding discussion about how art can tell us about historical time periods

Materials List

Provided online:
- Video: Exploring the Middle Ages and the Renaissance
- Handout: Teacher Set Up
- Handout: Examples of Archives
- Handout: Steps to Create a Student-Friendly Archive
- Google Drive Link: http://bit.ly/middleageren (this link has the sources students will use to create their entries)

Not Provided Online:
- Each student or pair of students needs a computer

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