Archivist: Navajo Code Talkers

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, students will think like an archivist and create database entries about the Navajo Code Talkers and their role in World War II.

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 Step 6. If students don't have computers, you can still complete Steps 1-5 of the activity.
- You will need to set up a free account on a QR generator website. You will also need to set up a shared folder in Google Drive for all students to access. See Handout: Teacher Prep for instructions.

Step 1: Background on Archivists and Navajo Code Talkers (5-10 minutes)

- Show Video: Navajo Code Talkers.
- As a class, discuss why the Navajo Code Talkers were so important during World War II. Discuss how the Code Talkers were a group of Navajo Indians who helped create a special language based on their traditional tribal language to send important messages in code.
- Next, explain to students that archivists are in charge of keeping historical documents organized and safe so that people can read them and learn from them for many years. One job of an archivist is to create databases of historical documents. The databases keep information about the historical documents, such as the date when the documents were created, who made them, and what information is provided.
- Explain to students that databases are typically created for professionals to use. For example, historians and anthropologists use databases to look up information about historical events. The problem is that these databases are not always easy for students to use! Show Handout: Examples of Databases.
- As as class, discuss reasons why these databases wouldn't be easy for students to use (e.g., big words, not a lot of pictures, not easy to figure out what you are clicking on, looks intimidating). Ask students what they would change or add to the databases to make them more student friendly. Discuss the following: how can the design or wording be changed to make it easier for students to search for information? If time permits, go through the steps of looking through the Library of Congress or National Archives database and discuss with students what they thought about these professional databases.

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SOCIAL STUDIES CAREER ADVENTURES

Step 2: Activity Set Up (5+ minutes)
- Explain to students that the class will create their own database about the importance of Navajo Code Talkers during World War II. Each student will create one entry, or page, for the database. Students will create a database entry on a piece of paper and then take a picture of their database entry using a phone or tablet. Then, the picture will be linked to a QR code. A QR code is a symbol that can be used to access information. All of the QR codes will go in a Google folder that will be the database! People will be able to access each database entry by clicking on the link for the Google folder and then clicking on each QR code.
- Show Handout: Example QR Code. As as class, go through the steps of accessing a database entry by using a QR code. Then, look at the database entry that is linked to QR code. Explain that a middle school student made this database entry.
- Divide students into pairs. Provide each pair with the following:
  - Copy of Handout: Navajo Code Talkers Sources
  - Copy of Handout: Steps to Make a Database Entry (you will read through this handout out loud with students in the next step)

Step 3: Understanding Requirements for a Database Entry (10+ minutes)
- As a class, read through Step 1 on Handout: Steps to Make a Database Entry. Discuss all five things that are required to be in students' database entries.
- Teacher notes:
  - Students will be making a claim. If students have not made a claim before, explain that a claim is an argument that is backed up by evidence. An example of a claim is, "Women were very important during the American Revolution even though they didn't fight in war." Evidence includes pictures and stories about women who were nurses and spies who helped during the war.
  - Students should use sources from Handout: Navajo Code Talkers Sources as evidence to back up their claims.

Step 4: Brainstorming Ideas (10-15 minutes)
- Have students complete Step 2 on the handout.
- As students are working, discuss the following:
  - Having a clear name for an entry is important so people can know what the entry is about.
  - It is important to have more than 1 piece of evidence to back up a claim. Without evidence, people may not believe your claim.
  - What hashtags can use come up with that represent your entry?
  - Why is it important to learn about Navajo Code Talkers?

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Step 5: Creating an Entry (10-15 minutes)

- For Step 3, explain to students that they will now design their entry. Have students complete Step 3 on the handout. Provide students with markers or colored pencils.
- Explain to students that they can cut out images from the handout if they want to tape or glue these sources on their database entry.
- As students are working, ask the following:
  - How will your database entry be student friendly?
  - How will students easily access information and not be intimidated by your entry?
  - Where will you put your sources/evidence?

Step 6: Creating QR Codes (15+ minutes)

- Explain to students that they will now create their QR codes. Give students Handout: Examples QR Codes.
- As a class, read through Step 4.
- Students can either complete steps independently or you can have the entire class complete each step together.
- 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 7: Class Discussion and Presentation (10+ minutes)

- Have students go into the class Google Drive folder and volunteer to share their QR code.
- Have a concluding discussion about the Navajo Code Talkers and their importance in World War II and American history.

Materials List

Provided online:

- Handout: Teacher Prep
- Video: Navajo Code Talkers
- Handout: Examples of Databases
- Handout: Example QR Code
- Handout: Navajo Code Talkers Sources
- Handout: Steps to Make a Database Entry

Not provided:

- A computer
- Markers and colored pencils
- Glue or tape

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