Developing empathy through a lesson in History

By Sriparna Tamhane | Jul 30, 2012

Empathy is the ability to understand the world from another person's point of view, to appreciate how a person feels in a given situation. Developing empathy for a historical character is a crucial step that enhances the student's ability to understand people in the context of the times they lived in. Empathizing can also be used to bring out different perspectives while discussing an event or a person from the past.

Duration:
01 hours 00 mins

Introduction:

Empathy is the ability to understand the world from another person’s point of view, to appreciate how a person feels in a given situation. Developing empathy for a historical character is a crucial step that enhances the student's ability to understand people in the context of the times they lived in. Empathizing can also be used to bring out different perspectives while discussing an event or a person from the past.

Steps:

Support Material

Any textbook of ancient Indian history which has a chapter on the early humans

Steps

Ask the students to refer to their text books and find out about the lives of the early men/women with reference to their food, homes, clothes, work, tools, skills, art, recreation or any other detail. Ask them to imagine they are the early men/women. Ask each student to write about an imaginary day in the life of an early man/woman. (It could be either the description of a day or the description of a particular event that changed their lives significantly, like the discovery of fire, the invention of the wheel or the discovery of farming).

Notes to the teacher:

Encourage some students to write as the early man and some as the woman so that they can see how two different groups of people can experience the same time period in different ways.

Draw the attention of the students to the fact that much of our knowledge about the early men, who didn’t know how to write, is based partly on evidence in the form of paintings or artifacts and partly on imagination and hypothesis based on this evidence, which might change at a later time with new evidence.

Assessment:

The activity is an alternative method of evaluating students' knowledge of the topic. Here the students are being encouraged to use their knowledge to capture the details of the lives of the early men/women through creative writing.

Notes to the teacher: You can adapt the idea for any other topic you are teaching. Students can be asked to step into the shoes of any character from History and write
about the particular historical period he/she belongs to, from the perspective of the character. While teaching the history of the British period in India for example, the students can be asked to imagine to be the Governor General introducing a reform or a freedom fighter and write about an event from his/her perspective. If you try the idea in class, do share the details with us!

Objective:

The students will be able to express empathy with the early man/woman through creative writing based on their knowledge of the History of the time they lived in.

Category:
Classroom Resources
Subject: Social Studies
Board: All boards
Grade/Standard: Class 6-8
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