

Postcards from the Past

Grade Level:

- Grades 3 to 5
- Grades 6 to 12

Subjects:

- Social Studies
- Reading and Language Arts
- The Fine Arts



Overview:

This activity can accompany any social studies topic for history and/or geography. This project aligns to the *Oklahoma Academic Standards*' Process and Literacy Skills for all grades and is useable with all content skills. It is important for students learning about history and geography to put themselves in the shoes of those who were there or who live in another geographic locale. This activity helps students imagine being in another time, place, culture, climate, etc. by writing about a moment in time and location

Essential Questions

What would it have been like to be a young person living through this time or in this place?
What would she or he have experienced?

Materials

- Post card template
- Student Writing Prompts

Task

Using the postcards template provided, have students write a message using one of the writing prompts. Their messages will tell about a key event/person or place.



Step 1

Students choose a key event/person or a geographic place to write about. Depending on the time, resources available and grade level, students can do further research on the event and history from that time and place.

Step 2

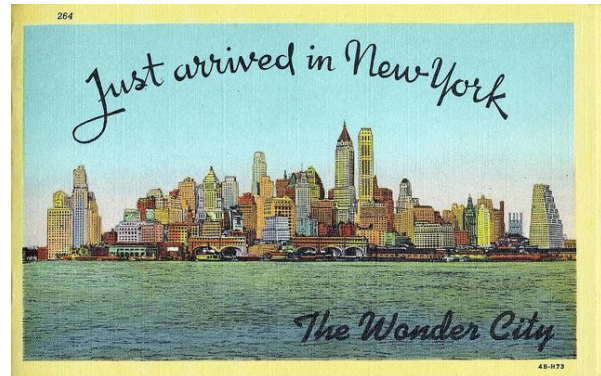
Students choose a role and audience for their postcard writing. There are five suggested prompts for students'

writing. Each prompt includes suggestions for differentiation to accommodate a range of grade and readiness levels (mild, medium, spicy).

Step 3

Students write rough drafts of their message and receive peer and teacher input and editing. Final drafts are written onto postcard template. Students should use the interrogative approach to history/writing.

- **Who** is it about?
- **What** happened?
- **When** did it take place?
- **Where** did it take place?
- **Why** did it happen?
- **How** did it happen



Each question should have a factual answer — facts necessary to include for the post card to be considered complete. Importantly, none of these questions can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no".

Step 4

Students share what they've written by passing their postcards around the room or taking turns reading them aloud to the class. Allow discussion if students have questions for each other.



This lesson is adapted from Teaching Tolerance. The original lesson can be accessed at <http://www.tolerance.org/toolkit/postcards-past>. Teaching Tolerance was accessed on August 16, 2013. The lesson was adapted by Kelly Curtright, Director of Social Studies Education, Oklahoma State Department of Education. Contact information: Phone: 405-522-3523; Email: Kelly.Curtright@sde.ok.gov.

Postcards from the Past

Choose a role and audience for your postcard writing. Below are five suggested prompts. Each prompt includes suggestions to accommodate a range of interests and readiness levels (mild, medium, spicy). Choose only one of the three range choices (mild, medium, spicy).

Prompt A: Postcards from the Past to a Friend or Relative

Imagine you are a young person growing up in _____ (a different place and time). Write a postcard to a friend or relative living in another part of the country during that time.

Mild

What is happening in your state and how do you feel about it? What might you ask your friend or relative about what is happening where he/she is living?

Medium

What is happening in your state and how do you feel about it? Include historically accurate facts or details about that event. What help might you ask for from your friend or relative?

Spicy

What is happening in your state and how do you feel about it? Make a connection to something that has happened in your friend or relative's state during that same time period. Include historically accurate facts or details.

Prompt B: Postcards to Your Present-day Self

Imagine you have traveled back to _____ (a different place and time). Write a postcard from that place and time to your present-day self.

Mild

What did you witness and how did you feel about it? Describe the people, places and events you saw.

Medium

What did you witness and how did you feel about it? Share how you think things have changed since this time in American history.

Spicy

What did you witness and how did you feel about it? Connect an issue from today to a person or event you witnessed on your trip to the past.

Prompt C: Anonymous Postcards from the Past

Imagine you have opened your mailbox and found a postcard from the past. A person your age from _____ (a different place and time) has written to you.

Mild

What does the person from the past tell you about the events happening in her state? What does he/she want to know about the future?

Medium

What is that person's opinion of the events happening in his state? What concerns does she express about the future? What advice does he give to you based on what she experienced?

Spicy

What is that person's perspective on the events happening in his state? What questions and concerns would she express about the future? What request does he make of you and your generation?

Prompt D: Postcards to the Future

Imagine you are a young person growing up in _____ (a different place and time). Write a postcard to your grandchildren living in the future.

Mild

What do you want your grandchildren to learn about this time in history?

Medium

What do you ask your grandchildren to remember? What lessons can you offer to them for their lifetime?

Spicy

What do you want your grandchildren to learn and remember about this time in history? What wisdom do you offer them? What is their inherited responsibility from the struggle for bettering the "general welfare" of citizens living in the United States?

Prompt E: Postcards to Civic Officials

Imagine you are a young person growing up in _____ (a different place and time). Write a postcard to a public official living at that time, such as community figures, mayor, governor, judge, the President, a U.S. Congressman/Senator, etc. How would you advise them to handle an issue the official was dealing with in the past?

Mild

What do you think they should do to help the people in your state?

Medium

What is the main problem facing your state and what solution would you suggest?

Spicy

What specific action would you like to see leadership take in response to the problems happening in your state? How would you convince them?

Post Card Template

Post Card

Place
Stamp
Here

Message:

Summarize
the event,
person,
location, etc.
using –
Who?
What?
Where?
When?
How?
Why?

Addressee

Front:

Illustrate the
event,
person,
place, or
location. This
can be hand
drawn or
done using
Media Arts.