

**Massachusetts Biographies:  
A Grade Three Research Project**

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# Massachusetts Body Biographies: A Grade Three Research Project

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# Massachusetts Body Biographies: A Grade Three Research Project

## Curriculum Context and Project Summary:

This five-to seven day lesson plan follows a Literature Study Unit on the classic novel *Little Women* and the Massachusetts author, Louisa May Alcott. Students will see how knowledge about the author can be used to create a biographical summary in the format of a body biography. Students will research a famous person from Massachusetts' history and complete their own, original body biographies. Students have had prior experience reading this genre.

## Essential Questions:

- What powerful experiences in a person's life can shape and determine how that individual will contribute to society?
- Which life accomplishments are significant enough to make a person notable or famous?

## Student Learning Outcomes:

### *Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework*

Standard 3.7: After reading a biography of a person from Massachusetts, students will summarize the person's life and achievements.

### *Massachusetts English Language Arts Framework*

Standard 3: Students will make oral presentations that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and the information to be conveyed. (Oral Presentation)

Standard 8: Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation. (Reading Comprehension)

Standard 23: Students will organize ideas in writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose. (Note Taking and Bio-Cube)

Standard 24: Students will gather information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions. (Research)

## Massachusetts Body Biographies

### Lesson 1 - Introduction

#### Student Objectives

- Students will choose a famous person from Massachusetts' history to research.
- Students will use three different sources for their research.
- Students will complete a note-taking guide as they read about their historical figure.

#### Key Questions

- What achievements made your person famous or notable in Massachusetts' history?
- What life experiences or events helped shape this person's life?
- What is the most important achievement we should remember about this person?

#### Materials

Collection of grade appropriate biographical texts on famous Massachusetts' natives

Collection of photographs and *Read About Me* blurbs on famous Massachusetts figures

Collection of short text Kids InfoBits biographical information on Massachusetts' natives

<http://gse.uml.edu/bartlett/lib/library.html>

Massachusetts Biographies Notetaking Guide

Sample of a completed body biography

#### Launch:

- Teacher introduces this unit on researching famous figures from Massachusetts' history. "We have just finished reading Little Women and learned many important facts about the author, Louisa May Alcott. When we research and write about a person's life we are creating a biography. During the next week, you will be researchers learning about other famous people from Massachusetts' history. As you read, you will have to decide which information is most important. What do you think is important to remember about Louisa May Alcott? What other kinds of information help us to understand why a person's life might be memorable to a large group of people?"
- Students are asked to brainstorm what makes some people more memorable than others. Teacher and students create a list of ways in which an individual's behavior can become notable over time. (Examples might include: heroic acts, being the first to do something, creating an invention, etc...) "As you read, remember to think about the important experiences and events which shaped your person's life and made them historically significant."
- Teacher will show students a completed body biography and a biocube of Louisa May Alcott and review each component of it. "The fun part of this project is showing what we learned in a different way. Each of you will create a body biography poster and a

*Bio-Cube highlighting important information which helped shape this person's life."*

- Teacher provides the project details below:

**Brain:** The thought bubble reflects what the person was interested in, his education, hopes or dreams.

**Eyes:** Pictures surrounding the head reflect what this person might have seen in their lifetime. The images should reflect important people, places, things, or events.

**Ears:** This ear bubble is an important statement of what this person might have heard in his lifetime.

**Mouth:** The speech bubble represents an important or memorable statement this person might have said, or actually said, in his/her lifetime.

**Heart:** The heart shaped text box on the chest represents what this individual cared about deeply.

**Hands:** Text written on the hands represent the kinds of important work this figure did as an adult.

**Feet:** The text written on the feet represent the places this person has been or traveled to in life.

**The Most Important Thing About...:** This is a statement about what made the individual famous or notable in history.

**Birthday Cake:** Text underneath notes the month, day and year of birth.

**Tombstone:** Text underneath notes the month, day and year of death.

### **Explore:**

- Teacher creates a carousel of biographical books around the classroom. Each book will have with it a picture of the person and a short promo "Read About Me...". *"Now it is time to explore which person you would like to learn more about."* Students spend time exploring the selections and identifying people they are interested in learning more about.

### **Summary:**

- Teacher brings students back together and asks them to identify who they would like

to research. Students who share the same interest can form research teams of 3-4.

- Teacher creates a list of research teams and provides each group with the corresponding *Kids InfoBits* biographical handout.
- Teacher explains that the students must use at least three different resources for their research: A short biographical text, the *Kids InfoBits* handout, and an internet source.
- Students will be required to complete the Massachusetts Biographies Notetaking Guide as they conduct their research.
- Students may read their texts during Independent Reading time or as part of their homework.

**Massachusetts Body Biographies**  
**Lesson 2- Researching a Person from Massachusetts:**  
**Classroom Readings**

**Student Objectives**

- Students will use multiple resources to research a famous person from Massachusetts.

**Key Questions**

- What achievements made your person famous or notable in Massachusetts' history?
- What life experiences or events helped shape this person's life?
- What is the most important achievement we should remember about this person?

**Materials**

Collection of grade appropriate biographical texts on famous Massachusetts' natives

Collection of photographs and *Read About Me* blurbs on famous Massachusetts figures

Collection of short text Kids InfoBits biographical information on Massachusetts' native

<http://gse.uml.edu/bartlett/lib/library.html>

Sample of a completed body biography

Massachusetts Biographies Notetaking Guide

**Vocabulary**

*Biography*

*Autobiography*

*Research*

**Launch:**

- Connect to Lesson 1: *"Students, yesterday we divided into groups and chose a famous person from Massachusetts that would be interesting to research. Let's review which person each of the groups chose."* Teacher asks each group the person they selected and why they selected that person.
- *"Today we are going to begin learning about the person you chose in depth. Can someone tell me what it means to do research? When would a person need to research something or someone?"* Teacher should ensure all students understand the meaning of researching a topic.
- *"Each group should have a book written about the life of the person they chose. Does anyone remember what you call a book that is written about a person's life?"* Teacher should review the difference between a biography and an autobiography.

- *For this project, you are going to need at least 3 sources of information about their person. The first source will be the biography book. The second source you will need to find when we go to the computer lab because each group will need at least one website with biographical information about your person. The third source will be from the library data base called KidsInfoBits, which I will give to you."*
- *"In order to help make this project more organized, you will be responsible for completing the Massachusetts Biography Notetaking Guide. On the guide, each part of the Body Biography is separated so that you can take notes about what you want to include in your poster and present to your audience. Let's look at each section of the notetaking together."* Teacher should spend ample time explaining exactly what each section should include for notes and answer any questions students may have. Teacher should also explain that a completed notetaking guide is going to contribute to the overall group project grade.

### **Explore:**

- Students will need several days to complete the research necessary for this project.
- *"Now that you understand how you will be gathering information for your Body Biography poster, let's begin our research!"*

### **Summary:**

- Once the groups have completed the in-class reading research, they can identify which areas they need more information. "Students, you have will have an opportunity to go to the computer lab tomorrow and continue researching your famous person from Massachusetts."
- Now that this part of the project is completed, we will use the information gathered to create a miniature biography called a BioCube."

**Massachusetts Body Biographies**  
**Lesson 3- Researching a Person from Massachusetts:**  
**Internet Research**

**Student Objectives**

- Students will use multiple resources to research a famous person from Massachusetts.

**Key Questions**

- What achievements made your person famous or notable in Massachusetts' history?
- What life experiences or events helped shape this person's life?
- What is the most important achievement we should remember about this person?

**Materials**

Internet Access

**Launch:**

- Classroom Teacher or Instructional Technology Specialist reviews the key questions with students, emphasizing the importance of finding important background information that contributed to making this person notable. Students are also asked to find and print a picture of their person as an adult. They will use the picture as a reference when they create the image of their historical figure. During this period, students will also search for images they could use to depict what their person might have seen in their lifetime.

**Explore:**

- Students research their Massachusetts' person and print information and pictures.
- Teacher and ITS circulate and help students as needed.

**Summary:**

Teacher concludes the lesson by checking the status of the class, noting which groups may need additional lab time to complete this component of the research. Research groups meet to share new information. If all students have completed their note-taking guides, the class is ready to return to the lab the next day to create a BioCube.

**Massachusetts Body Biographies**  
**Lesson 4-Creating a BioCube**

**Student Objectives**

- Students will use their biography research to create a BioCube.

**Key Questions**

- What made the person you researched significant in Massachusetts's history?
- What obstacles did the person face?

**Internet Resource**

[http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/bio\\_cube](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/bio_cube)

**Materials**

Bio-Cube Planning Sheet

Completed Bio-Cube

**Vocabulary**

*Significance*

*Obstacle*

*Quotation*

*Personality traits*

**Launch:**

- "*Students, now that you have finished researching and have completed your notetaking guides, you are going to use what you have learned to create a BioCube.*" Teacher should have a completed BioCube ready to show as an example. The example cube should be about a person the students know well (i.e. the teacher, a student in the class, or a celebrity from a movie or TV show.)
- "*To create the cubes, we are going to the computer lab. On the website, you will be asked to type information about your famous Massachusetts person. Each side of the cube will have different information about the person you chose. In order to decide what information you want to include, you will first complete the BioCube Planning Sheet.*" Teacher should show the planning sheet created for the example cube and discuss what each portion of the cube should include. The lesson vocabulary will need to be discussed in order to ensure students understand what each category means. (Planning Sheet should be printed from the website in advance.)

### **Explore:**

- Students work in their selected groups to complete the BioCube Planning Sheet. Students will likely need assistance narrowing down information to include. This can be done before going to the lab or during lab time.
- Once Planning Sheets are completed, students use the website to create and print their BioCubes. (Each student in the group should print so that the BioCubes can be brought home.)
- After printing, follow instructions on the website to cut and create a 3-D BioCube.
- Teacher should circulate and assist when necessary.

### **Summary:**

- Teacher brings students back together and asks for volunteers to share what they have created. *"Would anyone like to share the information on their BioCube?"* Allowing students to discuss this information will help prepare them for the Body Biography presentations.
- *"The next step in our project is to begin creating the Body Biography posters that you will use in your final presentations."*

## Massachusetts Body Biographies

### Lesson 5- Creating the Biography Body

*(In class or during an art period, may take multiple sessions to complete.)*

#### Student Objectives

- Students will create a mock representation of their historical figure.

#### Key Questions

- What was the typical dress of people during this time period?
- What type of clothing would this person be likely to wear as an adult?

#### Materials:

Butcher paper cut in five-foot sections, one for each figure

Construction paper

Paints

Crayons

Yarn

Glue Sticks

Scissors

Photographs or paintings of the historical figures

#### Launch:

- Teacher will instruct students to cluster together in research groups. The largest student in each group will lay down on top of the paper and the other members will trace the body shape in pencil. As the body is dressed, students may need to erase and/or alter their body. Students will use their picture to determine how they will dress their figure.

#### Explore:

- Students will work cooperatively in groups outlining and dressing their bodies.
- Classroom teacher and art teacher will circulate and help students as needed.

#### Summary:

- Students will share their progress with the class, noting the features of clothing and hairstyles that are representative of the time period. Completed bodies will be tacked to bulletin boards or stored rolled up ready for biographical assembly.

## Massachusetts Body Biographies

### Final Presentations

#### Student Objectives

- Student groups will present their biographical summaries to the class.

#### Key Questions

- What life experiences or events helped shape this person's life?
- What is the most important achievement we should remember about this person?

#### Vocabulary

*Rubric*

*Presentation*

#### Launch:

- *"Students, now that you have completed your research, BioCube, and Body Biography poster, you will be presenting what you have learned to the class. But before you begin the presentations, I want to make sure that you know how you will be graded."*
- *"Can someone tell me how your voice should sound when you are talking to a group of people? Should you have an outside voice? Should you speak very quickly?"* Teacher should call on students to describe how they think a voice should sound when presenting to a group. Have a student stand up and demonstrate appropriate volume and speed. *"That was excellent! It is important that everyone can hear you when you are presenting information about your person today."*
- *"Part of your grade for this biography project is that each member of the group has a role in the presentation, and that each member speaks clearly with appropriate volume."* Teacher should answer any questions students have about this portion of their project grade.
- *"However, even if the presenters have the perfect volume and are speaking clearly, will we be able to hear and learn about their person if students in the audience are being disruptive? How should each member of the audience act when they are listening to the presentations?"* Create a brief list of expectations for how the audience should behave during the presentations.

#### Explore:

- *"Now that we are all clear about presenting and being an audience, let's begin learning about these famous people from Massachusetts!"*
- Each group should present each of the 10 aspects of their Body Biography poster. As students present, the teacher should mark the rubric and make any notes. Time should be allotted for the audience to ask questions after each presentation.

**Summary:**

- *"Now that we have finished the presentations, I want to let you know how impressed I am with your hard work! You should all feel proud of what you have accomplished. Does anyone want to share how they felt about doing this project?"*
- *"Now that the posters have been completed, we are going to hang them in the hallway so that other people in our building can learn about famous people from Massachusetts."*