



The Real Pocahontas?

Scenario

Many books and movies are based on historic events and the lives of real people. Disney has produced a movie called 'Pocahontas' which they say is based on the life of a real person who lived over 400 hundred years ago. Use skilful compare and contrast to decide, is she the real Pocahontas?



Our Flag Design

Parents' Quest Guide No.20

Dear Parents

We are about to start a new social science Quest called 'The Real Pocahontas?' This problem-based learning unit of work has been developed here at Birkdale Intermediate with the assistance of Dr Robert Swartz, Director of the National Centre for the Teaching of Thinking, Boston and Rebecca Reagan, reading specialist and consultant on teaching thinking, Lubbock, Texas Independent School District. Our students work in pairs to answer the question posed in the scenario.

They search the Internet, read books and articles to skilfully compare and contrast the Disney Pocahontas with the historic one. Comparing and contrasting the Disney movie with the historical sources allows our students and teachers to explore ideas around movies as pure entertainment or as entertainment combined with cultural discussion.

Ways in which you could support your child during this study:

- Visit your local library for books on Native American tribes. In the USA/Native Americans, in Canada/First Nations.
- Watch the movie:
 - 'The Last of the Mohicans' (1992) Directed by Michael Mann, with Daniel Day-Lewis, Madeleine Stowe, Russell Means.
 - 'The New World' (2005) Directed by Terrence Malick, with Colin Farrell, Christopher Plummer, Christian Bale, August Schellenberg, Wes Studi.

WARNING - please preview these movies if your children are also viewing as they contain violence.

- Discuss with your family this view by historian Dr Paul Halsal.

"Film is perhaps the most common way the modern American public is exposed to history, but many people still think that it is a waste of time to think seriously about movies, since, after all, movies are just entertainment. This position -- that film is primarily entertainment -- is often made by students. The position is wrong. Some films, it is true, are simply a matter of entertainment (American Pie II for instance), but many others use a particular artistic form to take part in a cultural discussion while also being entertaining. A large number of successful entertaining films have involved a good deal of political commentary, and entire genres are concerned with how we, as human beings, deal with pain and suffering. There is no reason that a film cannot be both entertaining and participate in the cultural conversation about the past that we call history." Dr Paul Halsall, Historian.
- Read the Teachers Guide for 'The Real Pocahontas' on our web site at www.bis.school.nz - Problem-Based Learning, particularly the skilful compare and contrast section.
- Talk to your child about times when you have used skilful compare and contrast e.g. purchasing a new car.

- Call into our library before or after school and ask your child to show you the interesting objects related to the Pocahontas story in our glass display case.



Trade Beads 1700s



Elizabeth I Silver Penny used by the settlers in Jamestown 1601.



Pocahontas pin, Disney movie memorabilia.

Quest Awards and Presentations



Online Learning Award
Recognizing creative teachers for their pioneering use of telecommunication networks to provide innovative learning opportunities for school-age students.



Presented at the National Education Computing Conference, New Orleans, United States of America.



Presented at the 13th International Conference on Thinking June 2007, Norrkoping, Sweden.



Presented at the National Centre for Teaching Thinking's Summer Institute held at Tufts University, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America.

Yours sincerely

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