

Learning to Give: Too Big a Task

Subject: Social Studies: Agriculture: Language Arts: Agriculture

Grade Level: 5th

McRel Standards: US History Era #10 Contemporary United States

Benchmark: Understands economic, social, and cultural development in the contemporary United States

Iowa Model Core Literacy: Writing: Uses writing as a tool for learning

Curriculum: Uses an effective writing process
 Uses knowledge of purpose, audience formant,
 and medium in developing written
 communication.

Purpose: Learners will compare and contrast the act of philanthropy over two periods in time.

Objective: The learner will compare and contrast an historical example of philanthropy with a modern example.

Materials: Information about Habitat for Humanity—perhaps have a guest speaker come in, explain the work of the group, and provide examples of what they do.

 Provide information about Make A Difference Day—focuses on community service.

 Pictures of blueprints of a large barn.

 Pictures of people working on a Habitat for Humanity Job Site.

 The story “Too Big A Task”

Anticipatory Set: Ask the students “What do you think it feels like to wake up in the morning and know that this is the day something very special to you and your family will occur? Has that ever happened to you?”

Teaching to the Objective:

1. Ask learners what it takes to build a house today. After going through the steps that home building requires, ask students if they think it could be done alone, without help. Then ask learners what they think it was like when a family decided

- to build a barn one hundred and fifty years ago. What things were different about building then? Could the barn have been built alone?
- Perhaps one of the learners will bring up the idea that there were special occasions called “barn raisings.” When these occurred, the entire community came together and put up the barn in a short time. Have learners discuss what they already know about barn raisings. Discuss the importance of community in such a situation.
 - Read the story that accompanies this lesson (“*Too Big a Task—Then and Now*,” Attachment One) of two boys in very different times and very different places. Ask learners to analyze and compare the boys’ feelings. Tying in the last lesson, ask them if there are differences in the way each boy reacted.
 - Draw two intersecting circles (Venn diagram). In the middle section will be those characteristics in both stories that were the same (*compare*). The two outside circles will represent the differences (*contrast*). Let the left outside circle represent Thaddeus’ story and the right outside circle represent Chad’s story. Discuss what the philanthropic acts were in the story and ask learners if they were similar even though the stories cover very different periods of time. Were there clues in the story that hinted that this was not the first time each of these acts of philanthropy was done?
 - After learners have noticed the similarities and differences in the stories, ask them to develop a list of analogies from the story.
Examples might include:
Breeches are to jeans
as rooster is to alarm clock
as barn raising is to Habitat for Humanity.
 - Divide the class into teams of two. Give each team one sheet of paper. Cut each paper in half lengthwise and ask each member of the team to draw a cover for one of the two stories that make up “Too Big a Task--Then and Now.” Be careful to be authentic in the illustrations. When each team is finished, tape the two halves together again to represent the completed book cover.

Assessment:

Have each student complete the eight questions related to philanthropy using the story studied in this lesson. Answer the eight philanthropy questions for both parts of the story.

1. What is the need?
2. Who has the need?
3. Who is in the community?
4. Who fills the need?
5. What talent or treasure was given or shared? What did it cost to fill the need?
6. What goodness does the community experience from that giving or sharing?

7. What is the reward for the one who shared?
8. What would have happened if the need had not been met?

Extension:

1. Have the students try to determine a philanthropic activity that they could do as a class. What would be some places that could use their assistance—their time and talents? Devise a timeline to complete the selected project.
2. Write a newspaper article reporting a philanthropic deed in history. The article should have the word “philanthropy” in it as well as the concept “private action for the common good.”
3. Set up a peer learning session for students in the same grade or with younger students to help students learn about the historic tradition of barn raising. Learners can assist the younger learners to actually construct a barn using popsicle sticks.
4. Have learners make “Books on Tape.” They would read books and tape them for those who would like to listen to the stories.
5. Research important Americans who have helped with philanthropic projects. Learners may write a thank-you to a character in literature or history, thanking them for the philanthropic deed. The note should include philanthropy in its text.

Example:

Dear Clara Barton,

Thank you for meeting the needs of the soldiers. Because of you we now have the Red Cross.

6. Make a ***Timeline of Philanthropic Deeds in History***. As an alternative, students can make a timeline of their own personal acts of philanthropy.

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Too Big a Task—Then and Now

THEN

1. Thaddeus opened one eye wide. The dawn was just spreading its light over the fields. He knew Red Crow the rooster would shortly sing his praises to the sun, and the day would officially begin. This was the day for which he had waited these many weeks. It was going to be a glorious day!

NOW

Chad turned over in his cot thinking, I'm going to lie here just a few more minutes. The traffic noise outside their window was still muffled and soft. Slowly a thought crept into his thinking and made him sit right up. The alarm clock by his mom was set to go off in just five minutes. Wow, he thought. Today is the day. This day will be awesome!

THEN

2. The cool water from the wash bowl made Thaddeus fully awake. Quickly he forced his legs through his breeches, slipped on his work shirt, and scrambled downstairs and outside to use the privy. The air was cool, and the morning dew washed his feet as he scrambled through the grass. Now his whole family was stirring, soon to assemble at the breakfast table for sustenance to meet the day ahead.

NOW

The men's bathroom in the shelter where Chad lived was down the hall. Usually Chad had to wait his turn to wash and take a shower. This morning he was lucky because he beat the rush. No one but Mr. Freeman was up yet. Chad quickly showered and put on his jeans and his treasured Chicago Bulls tee shirt. Mom was now awake and trying to convince Sally, his sister, that she did want to get up this morning.

THEN

3. Before Mother and Elizabeth had cleared the breakfast dishes, Mr. Neely and Mr. Ott had led their horse drawn wagons into the carriage lane. The massive bodies of the workhorses exhibited the fact they had the strength to equal the task that would be required of them. Father greeted the men and started lining out the area where the barn would stand. All three men paced together like a trio of soldiers in battle formation. The task had begun.

NOW

After breakfast Sally, Mom, and Chad piled into their Chevy Nova. Mom was so proud of this car because she had saved enough money from her salary to pay the monthly payments and the other related expenses of having a car. Good ol' mom! She had saved some money for this morning so that Chad could run down the street to the Bake Shop and get those wonderful gooey fat balls they loved. He could taste them now. Sometimes the breakfast in the dining hall was just not enough. Mom knew they needed that extra energy today to "Go For It!"

They pulled up to the vacant lot Habitat for Humanity had designated for their house. The volunteer workers were driving up from all directions grabbing their toolboxes as they climbed out of their trucks and cars.

THEN

4. The gathering of men and their families was swelling in front of the house. Everyone warmly greeted each other and caught up with family news. The Filmores had a new baby boy named Moriah; the Stanton's sheep had finished lambing; and all the Champions were well and strong after their bout with chicken pox. The men were exclaiming what a good crop they had so far, underlining the need for a good barn to store the harvest, while the women made plans to finish the wedding ring quilt they had started at the last barn raising.

NOW

Harry Brown was the foreman of the crew. His muscled, tan arms revealed the fact this was not the first time he had worked on a project like this. As he called out the names of the workers, each one said a little something about themselves so that everyone could get acquainted with each other. Mr. Shaw was a teacher from a suburb, Ms. Bard was a bank cashier, Mr. and Mrs. Moses were a retired couple ready to give of their time before their trip to the Orient.

THEN

5. By mid morning the hand-hewn timbers for the first long wall were in place. With the help of the workhorses, the men were able to align the beams to ready them for fitting in a tongue and groove manner. The wooden pegs were deftly hammered in to strengthen the joint.

Thaddeus counted forty men working on their barn. He was ready to fetch anything they called him to retrieve. What an accumulation of strength and power! How would they ever do it without these willing, helping hands? It was too big a task to do alone.

NOW

Harry Brown knew how to build a house. The two by sixes he had ordered were straight and strong. Several men were already hammering away at what would be the front of the house. Chad watched as the workers aimed four strong blows at each nail head target sinking it in squarely.

Thirty people had come to frame their house, and Chad loved every one of them. He was alert to keep an eye out to be the "Chief Gopher" and really appreciated the chance to take part. He knew that his family could never do this alone. He knew it was too big a task.

THEN

6. After a very ample lunch provided by the women (Mrs. Young's blackberry pie was heavenly), the men were back at work preparing to hoist up the first wall. Man and horse were in place. Father nervously checked about like an expectant father to make certain the raising was successful. The men were ready and knew that at the count of three they would exert their strength as one body to raise the wall. Thaddeus took his place by Mr. Ott. He wanted to feel with his own hands the force that comes with such cooperation.

NOW

The nearby deli donated a yummy lunch for the workers. (The double chocolate chip bars were out of this world.) Without wasting much time, everyone was back to work ready to raise the front wall. Chad had a great time figuring out where the windows and doors would be in the front of his house. "His house"... the words nicely rolled around his head. He had never used that phrase before. Mr. Brown called out for everyone to take his or her places. Chad's heart raced a little as he stood by Mr. Freeman placing his own hands on the rough wood.

THEN

7. "One, two, three," father shouted. The grunts and groans of man and beast turned into a joyous shout as the wall was hoisted into place. This will be a good barn thought Thaddeus. **This will be a good barn.**

NOW

"Listen up," shouted Mr. Brown. "At the count of three, everyone lift your part of the wall." Shouts of "yes!" came from all over the yard as the front wall was anchored in place. This will be a good house thought Chad. **This will be a good house.**