Friends from Far Away (Pen Pal Class)

By: Jordan Kochevar

Subject: Social Studies/Language Arts

Topic: Cultural History (Pen Pals)

Grade: 2-6

Lesson Length:

Day One: 45 Minutes

Day Two: 20 Minutes

Day Three: 20 Minutes

Day Four: 20 Minutes

Day Five: 45 Minutes

Learner Outline (Objectives)

1. Social Studies: *People, Cultures and Changes Over Time* **2.4.2.4.1** Students will explore the differences and similarities of cultures around the world and attribute them to their origins and histories, and interactions with other cultures around the world.
2. Social Studies: *People, Cultures, and Changes Over Time* **2.4.2.4.2** Students will explore the differences and similarities of cultures around the world are attributable to their diverse origins and histories, and interactions with other cultures throughout time.
3. Reading: *Key Ideas and Details* **2.1.2.2** Students will recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, to determine their central message, lesson, and moral.

Lesson Preview: This is a five-day lesson that will be completed as a class. Students will work together as a class to right a pen pal letter to an Hmong/Asian School. In the first day of the lesson, we will talk about where these people are located, and find them on a map. After that, we will work together as a class to generate a letter to a classroom of a Hmong culture. In the letter, we will share 5 interesting facts about our classroom and country, and will ask them what their classroom looks like, and what it is like to be a kid there. Day 2-4 are days that we will spend reading and responding to our letters, and Day 5, we will summarize what we learned. At the end of the lesson, the students will have to write down five things they learned about being a Hmong child in school or in the community.

Procedure:

* Show students this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqTKicSSSE4>. Ask the students if there is anything in the video we do in our country.
* Ask: Is there anything we want to know about in this culture?
* Talk about the definition of a Pen Pal, and how the pen pal system works. Explain that it is designed to help us learn more about another person or group, and for them to learn more about us. Also tell the students we will be writing to a class of students of Hmong Culture.
* Write down 5 interesting things about our classroom on the white board. The students will raise their hands to be called on. Some suggestions might be: What time do we start school? How long is our school day? What different specialists do we have in our school (Art, Music, Etc.)
* Come up with 5 Questions we can ask them about their classroom? One question needs to be related to length of the school day, or subjects they learn about at their school. We also could ask what life is like where they live.
* Have the class come to the front of the room. Take a class photo (Make sure it is ok for everyone to be videotaped). This will be included with the Pen Pal Class letter.
* As a class, compose an introduction for the letter to our pen pal class. Write the letter as a class inserting the questions after the introduction. It would be best to pick the best writer in the class to copy it to paper, or just write it down yourself (Teacher writes it down).
* The 2nd Day of this lesson will occur when our Pen Pal class writes back to us. We will then respond accordingly as a class. This will happen for times 3 and 4 as well. The lesson will be concluded on Day 5. That day will be a reflection to look back at what we learned from our pen pals, and how we can make students from their culture more welcomed in our school.
* At the end of Day 5, students will write down 5 things they learned from the pen pal class assignment.

Assessment: **75 Points Possible (5 Bonus Points Possible)**

* 50 Points for Participation in the Pen Pal Activity as a class.
* 25 Points for Final Reflection
* 5 Bonus Points for Writing an additional letter to our Pen Pal Class (Individually, Teacher will mail).

Citations:

1) Hmong kid song (YouTube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqTKicSSSE4>

**Hmong Culture (Friends From Far Away Activity)**

*By: Jordan Kochevar*

I was very happy to see that this is one of the groups that we had to research for this class. To be honest, I knew nothing about the Hmong culture, customs, or beliefs. I also didn’t know of the rough history they had to endure in their homeland. One of the greatest difficulties is being so far away from their country, and dealing with being with new culture and change.

One thing I learned is how important family is to the Hmong peoples. They are very protective of their families, and most of the time they live together with extended families. When Hmong’s got married it was usually at age 14 in their home countries. They had children at young ages, which was a conflict when they immigrated to the United States. Money was also exchanged when couples got married. They had “worth”

Lastly, I was shocked to read the section about property rights. The communist rule in Laos changed the concept of the wilderness belonging to everyone, as the culture previously believed.

The Spirit Catches you and you fall down talked of the medical situation that exists between the two cultures. The interaction of the Hmong and American in the medical field, and what it can mean for survival on a level, is shocking.

Citations:

<https://bemidjistate.ims.mnscu.edu/d2l/le/content/2477660/viewContent/20512741/View>

Fadiman, A. (1997). *The spirit catches you and you fall down: A Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.