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Renaissance City-State Simulation

Chris Mullin, Brett Piersma

Grades 9-12: History/Social Science; Language Arts; Performing Arts

Business Partner: Kendall & Lloyd Mills; Rio-Vista Chevrolet



city-state wealth (gold coins), art, and prestige. The city-state with the highest value at the end wins!

WHY IT WORKS

Students buy in to the simulation primarily because it taps their creative and competitive energy. As students create maps and write-ups for trade, they familiarize themselves with and rewrite trade routes followed by silk merchants, Marco Polo and early shippers. Likewise, students enjoy boasting publicly about the virtues of their own real city-state, which requires students to familiarize themselves with the nature of towns such as Florence, Milan and Venice. Finally, as students boast proudly about the achievements of great individuals of their Renaissance town, referring to artists and writers such as Michelangelo Buonarroti and Dante Alighieri, students hone their public speaking and persuasive composition skills.

HOW IT WORKS

Student teams of four or five, each assigned the name of a city-state from Renaissance Italy, simulate the Italian Renaissance by competing as city-states against one another. City-states wage battles, embark on merchant journeys, and create and sell art at auctions, with the goal of acquiring the most gold coins. The city-state with the most gold coins and valuable art wins the simulation.

Team members receive one of the following roles and tasks: Condotierris (Warrior)—wages battles and gains riches for your city-state; Merchant—plans merchant journeys to foreign lands with specific trading goals; Artist—creates original pieces of art or sculpture for auction at the end of each round; Banker—keeps balance sheets of the city-state's finances and attend each transaction with other city-states; Patron—makes sure that all members complete their assignments and are present at all battles and merchant journeys.

For each round of the simulation, each student fulfills their assigned task, which gains their

THE STUDENTS

Approximately 85 Advanced Placement European History and 30 College Preparatory World Cultures students took part in this simulation recreating the artistic and culture achievements of the Italian Renaissance city-states. Five percent of these students were classified as ELL (English Language Learners).

WHAT YOU NEED

Because most work is done at home, required classroom materials are simply poster paper, markers, crayons, and dice. For work done at home, students need access either to computers or textbooks that cover the Renaissance. They will also need some art materials at home.

ADAPTATION TIPS

This unit is easily adaptable to a variety of historical time periods using the same simple materials. Teachers could change the Renaissance city-states to Imperialism era nation-states competing for colonies or American colonies competing for indentured servants (we have done this one!).

THE STAFF

Brett and Chris have worked informally as a team for three years, sharing lesson plans, ideas, and frustrations. The 2004-2005 school year is the first year in which they have team-taught Advanced Placement European History. Brett is in his fourth year teaching; Chris is in his eighth year.

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Renaissance City States Simulation
A Lesson Plan for the 10th Grade
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In the 2004-2005 school year, approximately 85 Advanced Placement European History and 30 College Preparatory World Cultures students took part in a simulation recreating the artistic and culture achievements of the Italian Renaissance city-states. Five percent of these students were classified as ELL (English Language Learners). Students work in mixed ability teams, which gave them the opportunity to help one another decode and make meaning of text. The use of art and posters provided students with the opportunity to interact with historical evidence.

What You Need

Because much of the work preparing for each day is done at home, there are very few materials needed in-class. Those materials are poster paper, markers and crayons, and dice. For work done at home, students need access either to computers or textbooks that cover the Renaissance. They will also need coloring materials at home.

Standards

Seventh Grade Social Science Standards

7.8 Students analyze the origins, accomplishments, and geographic diffusion of the Renaissance:

7.8.2 Explain the importance of Florence in the early stages of the Renaissance and the growth of independent trading cities (e.g., Venice), with emphasis on the cities' importance in the spread of Renaissance ideas;

7.8.3 Understand the effects of the reopening of the ancient "Silk Road" between Europe and China, including Marco Polo's travels and the location of his routes.

7.8.5 Detail advances made in literature, the arts, science, mathematics, cartography, engineering, and the understanding of human anatomy and astronomy (e.g., by Dante Alighieri, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo di Buonarroti Simoni, Johann Gutenberg, William Shakespeare).

Tenth Grade Social Science Standards

10.1 Students relate the moral and ethical principles in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, in Judaism, and in Christianity to the development of Western political thought

10.1.2 Trace the development of the Western political ideas of the rule of law and illegitimacy of tyranny, using selections from Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Politics.

Twelfth Grade Social Science Standards

12.1 Students understand common economic terms and concepts and economic reasoning.

12.1.1 Examine the causal relationship between scarcity and the need for choices.

12.1.2 Explain opportunity cost and marginal benefit and marginal cost.

12.1.3 Identify the difference between monetary and non-monetary incentives and how changes in incentives cause changes in behavior.

Seventh Grade English/Language Arts Standards: Writing

2.4 Write persuasive compositions:

a. State a clear position or perspective in support of a proposition or proposal.

b. Describe the points in support of the proposition, employing well-articulated evidence.

Seventh Grade English/Language Arts Standards: Listening and Speaking

2.1 Deliver narrative presentations:

- a. Establish a context, standard plot line.
- c. Use a range of appropriate strategies, including...movement, gestures, expressions.

How It Works

Student teams of four or five simulate the Italian Renaissance by competing as city-states against one another. City-states wage battles, embark on merchant journeys, and create and sell art at auctions with the goal of acquiring the most gold coins. The city-state with the most gold coins and valuable art wins the simulation.

The teacher assigns mixed ability teams of four to six students each the name of an Italian city-state (such as Florence, Siena, or Milan). Team members then receive one of the following roles: *Condotierri*—Responsibilities include creating old-looking maps of Europe and designing plans of attack against other city-states. Condotierri must have a new battle plan for each round of the simulation with a half-page description of who they are attacking and why as well as strategies and goals of the battle. When a Condotierri approaches the teacher and indicates that they wish to attack another city-state, the teacher evaluates their map and battle plan and decides whether it is “high-quality” or “average-quality.” The designation of high- or average-quality affects the risk and reward of the battle (see attached Handout). Thus there is an incentive to produce a high-quality and unique map with a well-written battle plan in order to secure the best odds for victory. The teacher calls up the defending city-state and then roles the dice to decide who wins the battle. *Merchant*—Merchants must create old-looking maps of the world and plan merchant journeys to foreign lands with specific trading goals. Merchants must have a new journey prepared at each round with a half-page description of where they are going and what goods they hope to obtain. The success of the journey is also decided by the quality of the write-up and the role of a dice (see attached Handout). *Artist*—Artists are responsible for creating original pieces of art or sculpture for each day of the simulation. The value of the art is determined by its quality and a role of the dice. Later in each round, each piece of art is sold at a public auction to another city-state and thus makes money for the artist’s city-state. *Banker*—Bankers are responsible for keeping balance sheets of their city-state’s finances. They attend every transaction and add or subtract gold coins from their accounts. *Patron*—Patrons make sure that that all members complete their assignments and are present at all battles and merchant journeys. They also fill in for absent members and give the first-day presentation.

Once these roles are determined, the team must then create the following artifacts for their city-state: *Poster*—Members must work together to create a poster with the name of and a scene from their city-state (such as a fountain, garden, Renaissance-style building or architecture, etc.). Students research their city-state and base their poster on actual locations. *Book*—In order to teach students about the rebirth of ancient cultures during the Renaissance, students must creatively demonstrate that their city-state has acquired an original book from ancient Greece or Rome (such as Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Politics*, etc.). They can do this by either drawing a 3-D book or by taking an old book and recovering it to make it look like an ancient book. *Art*—To prove the cultural sophistication of their city-state, students must create a piece of art or sculpture. They can either reproduce a painting or sculpture from the Renaissance, or produce art in the style of Renaissance artists. *Presentation*—The following day, students present to the class their poster, book, and artwork and boast of the people, achievements, and cultures of their city-state. This presentation is brief, but must include historical facts.

On the second day, the teacher ranks the teams’ presentations from first to last based on quality of artwork, depth of historical research, and creativity of presentation. The teacher awards 1,500 “gold coins” for the best presentation, 1,200 for the second best, 1,000 for the third, 800 for the fourth, and 600 for all other teams. Then, round one of three begins. For each round, each city-state must do each of the following: mount a battle, make a merchant journey, and have a piece of art appraised. At the end of each round, the teacher runs an art auction during which city-states may buy each other’s art. Finally, each

student individually writes a journal entry in the voice of their character explaining what their character accomplished and how they feel about the success of their city-state during that round.

Other sources: We were inspired by the methodologies we learned at UCSB in the Teacher's Education Program. This lesson is based on constructivist pedagogy that focuses on the "learn by doing" theory. We would also like to give credit to the South Coast Writers Project and the California History-Social Science Project, in which we have participated and facilitated, for guiding our love of innovative pedagogy.

Why It Works

Standards: *Social Studies*—Before creating maps and write-ups for trade, students familiarize themselves with and rewrite trade routes followed by silk merchants, Marco Polo and early shippers (7.8.3). Likewise, to boast publicly about the virtues of their own real city-state as well as the negative attributes or rival city-states, students must familiarize themselves with the nature of towns such as Florence, Milan and Venice (7.8.2). In order to successfully complete the assignment students have to boast proudly about the achievements of great individuals of their Renaissance town, referring to artists and writers such as Michelangelo Buonarroti and Dante Alighieri (7.8.5). Students also familiarize themselves with important works by classical writers such as Aristotle and Plato (10.1.2). The simulation works well as a teaching tool for economics as well. Students realize quickly the opportunity costs and risks involved in funneling available money into specific enterprises. Whereas attacking a rival is fun, there are far greater rewards in establishing trade routes or investing in art. (12.1.1, 12.1.2, 12.1.3).

Language Arts—In the opening round of city-state boasting and prior to each battle, students are required to publicly and confidently declaim about their skill, acumen and intentions. By bellowing aloud about attack plans, expected plunder or the superior attributes and histories of their city-state, students hone their public speaking skills (Speaking Applications 2.1.a, 2.1.c). Beyond tackling public speaking skills, students must also complete a series of persuasive compositions. Using their knowledge of period geography, trade, art and warfare students create write-ups explaining why each of their various ventures will be successful (Writing 7.2.4.a, 7.2.4.b). Once students complete explanatory write-ups, the teacher decides whether the written piece is of high- or only average-quality. The odds of financial success are increased substantially for teams who complete clear and well-articulated written declarations.

Assessment: Using the attached rubric, the teacher grades the quality of the opening oral group presentation. Students are graded independently for their "end-of-year" journals, in which they creatively detail their year's activities. Finally, students receive an individual grade for how well they fulfilled their own role (soldier, merchant, artist, etc).

Mastery of Skills: There are a variety of ways that the teacher can assess mastery of the content, both formally and informally. Formally, in required writing samples students reflected on their activity as a fictitious character living in the Renaissance. We discovered through the quality of writing how much students had gleaned from the process. Informally, we were constantly interacting with students as they wrote and revised battle plans and merchant trips. Their grades proved their level of buy-in and learning as all but two of the students completed the grading expectations (see attached rubric) with a grade of 75% or higher.

What Others Say: This is one of the most successful lesson plans we have implemented. Students ranging from Advanced Placement to College Prep embrace this lesson because it is both informative and team building. It is not uncommon for students to speak fondly about their city-state two years later.

Adaptation Tips

This unit is easily adaptable to a variety of historical time periods using the same simple materials. Teachers could change the Renaissance city-states to Imperialism era nation-states competing for colonies or American colonies competing for indentured servants (we have done this one!).

Materials: There are no special materials needed for this project. Poster paper may be purchased at a craft store along with coloring supplies. Most Social Studies textbooks have adequate information about the Renaissance to run this simulation.

Rationale

This lesson comes immediately following a lesson introducing the Italian Renaissance. Students have learned basic facts about the Renaissance through class lectures and very thorough textbook reading.

Day One

Time (Min)	Activity
30	<p>INTRODUCE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE SIMULATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain to the class that the class will be simulating the Italian Renaissance (see above explanation of simulation). • Pass out packet with descriptions and responsibilities of each role (Condotierri, Merchant, etc.) and review each role. It might take several minutes to describe each role and field questions. • Divide class into mixed ability teams of 5 students. Each group should divide up the roles one per person (Condotierri, Merchant, Banker, Artist, Patron). • Using descriptions above, explain the teams' first assignment (poster, book, art, presentation). Members can divide up these responsibilities as they see fit but must work together. These are due the following day. • Tell the class that each group will be responsible for a "bragging session" presentation. During this time they must tout the achievements of their city-state using their poster, book and art as well as any other creative presentation format they choose. Explain to students that the teacher will be awarding gold coins based on how well students have completed the assignments as well as how enthusiastic students are about their city state.
25	<p>CLASSWORK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may be given the remainder of the period to begin work on the first assignment since there will probably be many questions surrounding it. Students may also be provided with poster paper and crayons/markers for the artistic components.
<p><i>Homework: Each group member is responsible to satisfy their role and complete their assignment for the following day.</i></p>	

Day Two

Time (Min)	Activity
10 30	<p>PRESENTATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the second day, student teams are given 10 minutes to organize their presentation. • As student teams present, the teacher ranks the teams' presentations from first to last based on quality of artwork, depth of historical research, and creativity of presentation. The teacher awards 1,500 "gold coins" for the best presentation, 1,200 for the second best, 1,000 for the third, 800 for the fourth, and 600 for all other teams. • Explain to students that for the remainder of the period, students must prepare for their role in the first round of competition (eg. Condotierri make battle plans, Merchants make merchant journey plans, Artists make artwork). Bankers are free to assist other members during this time as their role will become more labor-intensive as the dice-rolling begins. Likewise, Patrons are responsible for filling in for any absent students and for ensuring that every member gets their work done.
<p><i>Homework: Team members must prepare for Round One</i></p>	

Day Three, Four, and Five

Time (Min)	Activity
50	<p data-bbox="240 289 654 317">ROUND ONE, TWO AND THREE</p> <ul data-bbox="240 323 1398 646" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="240 323 1398 384">• Round one of three begins. For each round, each city-state must do each of the following: mount a battle, make a merchant journey, and have a piece of art appraised and auctioned.<li data-bbox="240 390 1398 552">• At the end of each round, the teacher runs an art auction during which city-states may use the gold coins they have won during the round to buy each other's art. Buying art is beneficial to your city-state because the art doubles or triples in value as soon as it is purchased (by a roll of the dice). The city-state banker must deduct the amount of gold coins paid for the art, but can add the new value to an "assets" column.<li data-bbox="240 558 1398 646">• Finally, each student individually writes a journal entry in the voice of their character explaining what their character accomplished and how they feel about the success of their city-state during that round.
	<p data-bbox="240 663 297 690">END</p> <ul data-bbox="240 697 1352 753" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="240 697 1352 753">• At the end of the game, the winning team is determined by having each city-state add up total gold coins AND appraised art. They are then awarded extra credit.