

Social Studies/Language Arts

Ancient Wales – Mini-Research Project

Greetings, historians!

Your task is to become an expert on a specific aspect of Ancient Wales, specifically during the Middle Ages, also known as the Medieval Period (extending from approximately 500 – 1500 CE), and then share this knowledge with the class. Our purpose is to pool our resources so that we will all emerge with a broad knowledge base with which to further appreciate the novels we will explore together as a part of our Reading program this term; so, individual responsibility toward a group goal.

You will be given a research topic, based on the preferences you indicated on your introduction sheet. Some of you will be working individually; others will be working in pairs. Regardless, you will be responsible for the following:

1. Researching your topic with (at least a good attempt toward) depth and complexity.
2. Sharing with me the notes you take during your research.
3. Presenting your findings, in your choice of format, to the class, focusing on clarity of communication.
4. Submitting a hard copy of your work, so that we can create a class document for all to re-read and learn from.

Please note the use of the words “mini” and “quick” to describe this project. It is very different from the larger, term-long kinds of projects we will get to later. This is about working quickly and efficiently to discover the essential information in your topic and then figuring out the most effective way to share that information with the class. If your topic becomes a passion, that is fantastic, but don't feel you have to tell us *everything* about it – you will not have time to research or report in that kind of depth. Continue your exploration after we are done, but remember your goal and the deadline.

Research and Notes

I will assess your notes by conferencing with you during the research portion of your work. I will be looking for the following key aspects (as detailed below): a variety of sources (not just on-line), organization, written in your own words, written with the least possible words to capture relevant information.

- Our novels are set in the middle-ish Medieval Period, approximately 1100-1200, so if you can, try to focus your research there. If that proves too difficult, extend your work into the entire Medieval Period.

- Notes should be taken from a variety of media: on-line, print, and video. I encourage you to only use Wikipedia as a starting point.
- Ancient Wales is a specialty topic, so you may have to dig deep in order to find relevant information. This means going past the first few hits on Google. It also means doing things like looking at the citations at the bottom of a Wikipedia page and then exploring those sources. It also means taking a trip to your local library and asking the librarians to help guide your search.
- Notes should be in your own words, not just cut and paste from on-line sources.
- Notes should be taken with the fewest possible words in order to capture the important information. Your job is to record the Big Ideas and Important Details, and then reread your notes and figure out how *you* would put all the pieces together.
- Notes can be in any form: bullet form, web, sketchnoting, or any other form you have learned in past classes. What you should avoid is full sentences and/or paragraphs. Regardless of form, notes should be organized and easy to read, and you should keep track of your sources (I will not be asking for a formal bibliography, but I will be looking to see where you are getting your information from). It's important to keep track of your sources in case you want to go back to look for more or specific information.
- Use the Depth and Complexity Icons to help you extend your thinking. I suggest taking one or two of the icons (beyond Big Ideas and Important Details) and trying to go deep with those, rather than trying to tackle all eleven.
- If you are in a partnership, you will need to keep track of who has contributed what to your notes.

Presentation

- Your presentation should be brief but thorough – that's the challenge! What is the vital information we need to know in order to have an understanding of your topic? This doesn't mean rushing through your presentation in order to cram in a lot of information; it means carefully sifting through your research to distill the essential ideas. Aim for a minimum of two minutes and a maximum of three minutes.
- Your presentation can be in any form you wish, but it needs to involve speaking. Ideas include: a PowerPoint, an essay, a drawing or painting, a song, a skit, a model, a booklet or pamphlet, a (literal or abstract) map with a legend, a poem, a diorama, charts/tables, or anything else that strikes your fancy. However, you will only have about two weeks to prepare, so think about what you can reasonably accomplish in that time. **Do not bite off more than you can reasonably chew.**

- You may want to check out www.ignitetalks.io to gain inspiration for this quick presentation format.
- During your presentation you should:
 - Introduce your topic
 - Present your information
 - Explain how your information is important to an understanding of Medieval Wales
 - Highlight how you are bringing depth and complexity to your work
- If you are in a partnership, both of you will need to share the speaking portion of your presentation equally.

You will be assessed both on your content and your delivery – see the attached oral language rubric and marking sheet.

Submission of Hard Copy

After you have given your presentation, please submit to me a hard copy of your work. Please include a cover page with your name(s) and a title indicating the aspect of Ancient Wales that you were focused on. I will then compile all of the submissions into a document that will be shared with the class. Please take pride in your work: this means submitting a final product that you are happy for others to view.

The challenge with this project is two-fold: how do you go deep in two weeks, and how do you present your findings with thoroughness and clarity, given the 2-3 minute time constraint. It will be a juggling act.

Tips for Success

- You do not want to stress yourself out by trying to accomplish too much, but you also need to be active and on-task. You will have time to work in class, but you will also need to be making this work part of your nightly routine. Aim for about 30 minutes a night. Anything more is probably too much (unless you are super inspired), and anything less will probably leave you in a last-minute crunch.
- Make effective use of your class time. Find where in the room you best focus and who helps you focus and who you are easily distracted by. The more work you do in class, the less you have to do at home. Obvious, but easy to forget.

- Share good resources with the class. If you find a good website, let me know and I will put it on the board and/or post it on the blog. If you find a good book, bring it in and share it with those around you. If everyone is generous in this way, it will make work easier for all.
- Think back over your previous years in school and try to remember what the most effective homework routine was for you. Some people like to do it right after they get home from school to get it out of the way; some people like to do it during their after-school care program; some people need to take a break in order to clear their minds and then do their work after dinner. What works best for you? And *where* works best for you? Do you have a certain room or chair that helps you focus and remain focused? If you are not sure, actively experiment with this.
- If the idea of public speaking stresses you out (and even if it doesn't), try to reframe the idea in your head. The presentation is not about proving to me or to others how much you know; it is about helping us gain an understanding of your topic so that we can better enjoy the books we will be reading. It is an act of generosity. You will not be judged because everyone is in the same boat and we are all working to help each other.
- Practice your presentation. I cannot stress this enough. Don't think you can just stand up and wing it; instead, write down your script, even if just in note form, and then practice with your teddy bear, practice with your dog, practice with your family members. There is a direct correlation between practice and confidence.
- If you are working with a partner, please be very clear with each other about when and how you will communicate in out-of-school hours. Try not to leave each other hanging with vague commitments like, "I'll text you later tonight." Set a time and a mode of communication.
- Allow your interest to guide and fuel you, but also keep one eye on the purpose of this task: building our group understanding of this topic, in a meaningful and useful way.

And away you go...!