

The Best of the Fair

Lesson 5: Letter from the Fair

Focus Questions

Why was the World's Fair an important part of Chicago and world history? What were some of the groundbreaking innovations showcased for the first time in Chicago in 1893?

Core Understandings

Students will understand that the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition helped secure Chicago's status as a major city and cultural center after the Great Fire of 1871. Chicago's geographic location and features attracted people from diverse places, making it a trade and transportation hub.

Knowledge

Students will know that the World's Columbian Exposition was a significant historical event—locally, nationally, and internationally. They will gain an understanding of how Chicago evolved in the geographic area represented in the narrative.

Skills

Students will be able to express new information orally and in writing. They will use language arts skills to interpret the past.

Common Core ELA Standards

CCSSR1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSSR7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.W.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.W.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

ISBE Social Science Standards

Goal 15: Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the US, and other nations.

In This Lesson

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition was an awesome historical event that made permanent impressions on American architecture, design, art, entertainment, transportation, farming, and industry while creating lifelong memories for visitors.

Students will make personal connections with this history and develop empathy for the people of the past by writing a letter from the fair circa 1893. The story element of resolution is addressed. This lesson was researched and written by Beatrice Quatrok.



Activity

Have students imagine they are Lily or Joseph and have just arrived home from an exciting day at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Before they forget all the incredible things they saw, have them write a letter to a friend or relative detailing their three most exciting discoveries that day. What did they find most thrilling? Why? Drawings of the attractions can enhance the letter. Have students finish with a summary that reflects an understanding of the fair's historical importance to Chicago and the world. A grading rubric follows at the end of this lesson.

Lesson 5 Home Connection

Have students write three paragraphs about a contemporary fair, show, exhibit, or attraction where they discovered or experienced something new. It could be as wide-ranging as seeing their first I-Max movie or taking a trip to the Apple Store. What did they find most exciting about this new experience? Why?

Materials & Resources

- **Printouts of *The Best of the Fair* narrative:**

http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/pdf/story/The_Best_of_the_Fair_by_Kris_Nesbitt.pdf

- **Printouts of *The Best of the Fair* artifact images:**

http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/pdf/artifacts/artifacts_fair.pdf

Instructional Notes

Students should have their first drafts proofread by three different students before recopying the final letter. Provide dictionaries and proofreading checklists for students in the classroom.

Extension Activities

Have students read *The Great Wheel* by Robert Lawson (Viking Press, 1957) and/or *Fair Weather* by Richard Peck (Scholastic Inc., 2002).

Teacher Supplement: Letter from the Fair Rubric

Grade	Content	Illustration (optional)	Presentation
A	Message denotes understanding of historical event and includes more than two observations.	Pictures reflect the World's Fair of 1893.	Neat, organized, and easy to read.
B	Message denotes understanding of historical event and includes only two observations.	Pictures reflect the period but not specific detail of the World's Fair of 1893.	Readable, however lacks neatness.
C	Message denotes understanding of historical event and includes only one observation.	Pictures have weak connection to the World's Fair of 1893.	Readable, but lacks organization and neatness.
D	Message lacks understanding of historical event and does not include any observations.	Pictures do not reflect period or World's Fair of 1893.	Not readable, organized, or neat.

Incomplete work would receive an F grade, and student would be requested to complete assignment.