

Is History Carved in Stone?

Creating the Headstone of a Historical Figure to Understand Their Character and Achievements

Introduction

Students need to critically examine the ways of life of British and European immigrants by exploring and reflecting on what their stories tell us about their presence in Canada. Not all of the Mavericks were saintly and they may be judged differently as time goes on. How were these people viewed when they passed away? How do we view them now?

Project Explanation

In this project, students will develop an appreciation of the accomplishments of the “Fur Trade & Uninvited Guests” Mavericks and how European immigrants shaped ways of life in Western Canada. They will research and write an epitaph for a Maverick and then plan and create a headstone to remember them by.

Materials and Resources Needed

- [Mavericks: An Incorrigeble History of Alberta](#)
- Tombstone Examples
<http://www.austinexplorer.com/Cemeteries/Decker/>
- Google Images
<https://www.google.ca/imghp?hl=en&tab=ri&authuser=0&ogbl>
- Epitaph Browser – find examples of headstone writing
<http://www.alsirat.com/epitaphs/>
- City of the Silent – Cemetery Symbolism
<http://www.alsirat.com/symbols/index.html>
- The Hidden Meanings of Common Gravestone Symbol
<https://www.familytreemagazine.com/cemeteries/hidden-meanings-gravestone-symbols/>
- Photo Gallery of Cemetery Symbols and Icons
<https://www.thoughtco.com/photo-gallery-of-cemetery-symbolism-4123061#:~:text=Seen%20as%20an%20important%20symbol,clasping%2C%20pointing%2C%20and%20praying.>
- Gravestone Symbols and Carvings – Meaning and Inspiration
<https://stoneletters.com/blog/gravestone-symbols>

Procedures

Students will research and create a headstone for one of the “Fur Trade and Uninvited Guests” Mavericks from the *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* site. Teachers may introduce the project by asking students about cemeteries and their purpose.

- What is a cemetery?
- Why do we have cemeteries?
- What is the purpose of a gravestone?
- What is an epitaph?

The websites listed above can be used to show students some examples of tombstones and epitaphs that have been used for real markers. When examining the headstones, have the students infer what we can learn about the person from observing the epitaph (written inscription), the size and shape, and any carvings or symbols.

Students will then choose and research a Maverick to create a headstone for using the *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* site. They should write a short personal history of the Maverick they chose, including key events and accomplishments. They will then write up an historically accurate epitaph, including any pertinent information like year of birth, year of death, great accomplishments or failures, proud moments, quotes, poems, etc. They can decide if they want to have symbols or decoration indicative of the Maverick’s life on the headstone, and use the sites above to find out their meaning. They can also look at different fonts and choose the style of text they would like to have.

Once the epitaph is written and planned, students will sketch the headstone and label the size, including length, width, and height. They will need to make sure at this point that the headstone truly portrays the image and personality they would like it to depict.

Once a full drawing has been created, students could make a three-dimensional representation using clay or papier-mâché. When finished, the models (or the 2-D sketches) may be displayed along with the Maverick’s personal history.

Assessment and Evaluation

- Students and their teacher should develop their own rubric by identifying evaluation criteria for the project that will match their own learner outcomes. This allows students to understand the expectations for their work and to have input into the ongoing evaluation process.

- Students may evaluate themselves and their peers using their project rubric, examining each other's project for historical accuracy, detail, and creativity.
- A project journal may be used for information gathering as well as for reflective writing as the process is taking place. Students can pose questions, vent frustrations, synthesize their work, examine their process, and even wonder about what they are missing or what is still needed for their project. This may be completed as a group or individually.

Ideas to Enrich this Project

- Students may examine their finished headstones using mathematical measurement. The area and volume of the headstone could be calculated. They could even find out the costs for certain types of stone and calculate how much their headstone would cost to have made.
- Students could examine changes to burial practices such as headstones throughout time. How have these changed?
- Students could examine how burial practices are different among distinct cultures. For example, how did First Nations people deal with their dead?