Web Unit Plan

Title: Roll the Presses

Description: Students investigate all aspects of the written word, from Johannes Gutenberg's 15th century invention of the printing press to protections and censorship that affect the exchange of ideas. Students then study expression on a broader scope, examining the American constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and how it has been protected or compromised over time.

At a Glance

Grade Level: 6-10
Subject sort (for Web site index): Social Studies
Subject(s): Social Studies, Language Arts
Topics: History, Writing, Civics
Higher-Order Thinking Skills: Decision Making, Synthesis, Analysis
Key Learnings: Printing Technologies through the Ages, Middle Ages Culture and Historical Legacy, Historical and Social Changes Related to Technology, First Amendment Rights and Responsibilities, Censorship and Freedom of the Press
Time Needed: 3 weeks, 5 hours per week
Background: From the Classroom in Oregon, United States

Unit Summary

Johannes Gutenberg's 15th century printing press touched off a social revolution, the repercussions of which are felt to this day. To appreciate the impact the printing press had on the power of the written word, students produce multiple copies of a document using tools of their own making from the pre-Gutenberg era. Next, students examine European life in the time of the invention of the printing press, and in the voice of an individual of those times, create diary entries and newsletters about the significance of the printed word in their immediate life. They then study expression on a broader scope, examining the American constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and how it has been protected or compromised over time. In a culminating activity, students analyze an instance of school newspaper censorship that was brought before the United States Supreme Court, and then create a slideshow presentation that expresses whether free speech should be protected or constrained.

Assessment Processes

View how a variety of student-centered assessments are used in the Roll the Presses Unit Plan. These assessments help students and teachers set goals; monitor student progress; provide feedback; assess thinking, processes, performances, and products; and reflect on learning throughout the learning cycle.

Curriculum-Framing Questions

- **Essential Question**
  How is information power?

- **Unit Questions**
  How has the printed word and the automation of printing changed the course of human events?
  Is censorship ever necessary?
- **Content Questions**
  What traditions did the written word replace?
  What were the changes in society that drove Gutenberg and others in their attempts to invent the printing press?

Instructional Procedures

Prior to Instruction

Gather as many examples of written communication as you can, such as Sumerian cuneiforms, Braille, pictures of cave paintings, illuminated manuscripts, and modern advertising. Consider using this [Timeline of the Written Word](#)* as a reference. Prepare batches of notes as described in the next section for the first exercise.

The Power of the Written Word: An Exercise

Begin with an exercise that demonstrates the power of the written word. To show students how both the ability to read and the desire to read can lead to good results, prepare three batches of notes. Prepare enough of the following three types of notes so each student gets only one type of note:

- Leave one batch of notes blank.
- On the second batch of notes write "Go to your teacher and say, "[supply different words here]," and you will get a piece of candy."
- On the third batch of notes write "Andare al suo insegnante. Indicare al suo gomito. Gli darà ingomma." (Portuguese for "Go to your teacher. Show her your elbow. She will give you gum.")

Pass the slips around, and ask students to do what each says. One third of the class will come to you for candy. After the activity is finished, discuss how each group of students felt during the activity. Ask students which group they think is in better shape among the students who did not get candy—the ones with the foreign writing or those with a blank note. Most students will probably express a desire to learn to read what is on the foreign language notes. Relate the problems the exercise brings up to problems of access to education that people have faced for centuries. Ask students the Essential Question, *How is information power?* Have students discuss how their experiences with the notes translate into real-life situations for groups of people in America.

As an outside assignment, challenge the class to learn what the foreign message states so they can follow its instructions. When this is accomplished, discuss how they got access to the information they needed to translate the foreign phrases. If they fail, guide them to simple [Web-Based Phrase Translation Applications](#)*.

Written Communication Through the Ages

As a class, have students brainstorm a list of written communication methods. Students' ideas might include, Paleolithic cave paintings in France, clay tablets (cuneiform), manuscript (*manu* means hand, and *script* means written), block printing, quill pens, and the printing press. Discuss the functions and limitations of each, and the writers and readers of each.

Try Your Hand at It

Early writing methods were labor-intensive, and a need for multiple copies of decrees or pronouncements prompted the invention of printing (as opposed to writing) methods. Have students study printing methods from ancient China to the modern age. Introduce block printing as a method of making multiple copies of a document. Have students do a block-printing activity that teaches the relief printing method, which is similar to the method used in the mid-15th century to print emblem books, religious illustrations, and playing cards. The lessons can be abbreviated by giving students small 1" x 1" blocks in which they carve their initials or other short written message using 15th Century Lettering*.

After students finish the labor-intensive activity of printing various copies of a written message, ask them why they think there was a need for an automated way of printing written words. Ask students their thoughts about the Unit Question, *How has the printed word and the automation of printing changed the course of human events?* Encourage students to relate their experiences with the printing lab to the discussion.

A Universal Need

Using books, readings, Maps*, and films, teach about life in the period leading up to Gutenberg's time at the threshold of the European Renaissance. Include a general overview of class structure, feudal life, and the distribution of power between secular and religious power brokers in 15th century Europe. Have students read personal accounts and descriptions of life for members of the peasant, merchant, cleric, and aristocrat classes. Next, distribute fate cards with different identities (such as peasant, female, mother of six), and have students develop several diary entries written from the identity's point of view. The entries should depict real events and daily life during the time, and show the relevance of the printed word to the identity's life. After students are immersed in life of the pre-Gutenberg period, have each student create a one-page newsletter based on the diary entries, including one attributed graphic image. Hand out the newsletter scoring guide and review expectations. Students can use the scoring guide to guide them as they write their diaries and create their newsletters. Students may want to look at examples of newsletters or create a class list of the types of articles and features that are included in newsletters. Hold individual conferences to monitor student progress and answer any questions.

Meet Gutenberg

Introduce Johannes Gutenberg, and introduce the social issues and technological changes that factored into the invention and eventual success of the printing press. Some Web sites that you can incorporate into this introduction include Printing and Thinking*, Johannes Gutenberg, Encarta Encyclopedia*, and The Printing Press*.

Demonstrate the Impact of the Printed Word

Organize students into pairs or groups of three to prepare a 10-minute skit demonstrating the political, economic, or social impact the printing press had on one real and significant event. The skit should be limited to a brief introduction of the historical context, and then should focus directly on the historical event. (For example, William Tyndale, a Lutheran, translated the Bible to English, but was branded as a traitor and burned in 1536. His last prayer was "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." One year later, Bibles were being sold legally in England. Many people believe that the English or Puritan Revolution may have been hastened by the

widespread availability of the Bible.) Encourage students to ask questions of the actors and to keep track of the events portrayed on a timeline of their own making.

America and the First Amendment
Lead a discussion about the Bill of Rights* and the First Amendment. Emphasize that the First Amendment is based on the concept of freely shared ideas and a well-informed citizenry (see resources regarding Freedom of Information*).

Is There Ever a Place for Censorship?
Expect a lively debate during the following activities. Begin by asking the class, *Why do you think the founders of the United States made freedom of speech the very first amendment to the Constitution?* Capture ideas on paper, and develop the historical context relating to the freedom of expression and worship. Read the amendment out loud, and ask students if they believe the amendment protects a person's right to say absolutely anything without fear of reprisal. Ask students the Unit Question, *Is censorship ever necessary?* Expect controversial issues to come up, such as relating to libel, slander, and alarmist speech (such as falsely yelling, "Fire!"). The question of whether a person should be prosecuted for joking about weapons in an airport is a timely topic. Divide students into like-minded groups and have them present their reasoning to the class. Have students brainstorm other "gray area" examples that might require legal interpretation. Capture these on paper as well.

Censorship and School Newspapers
Introduce the issue of free speech in a particular instance, namely the censorship of a high school newspaper. Discuss the case of Hazelwood School District vs. Kuhlmeier, using this case study worksheet (with case abstract) for background. Do not divulge the court's ruling at this point, but have students debate the case and its outcome among themselves, and then poll the group for their preliminary opinions. Next, set the class to work researching all facets of the issue, and take notes on what they learn about the case and issue. Have each student create a slideshow that explains the student's point of view. Hand out the presentation rubric and review guidelines for the project and answer questions. Explain that slideshows will be evaluated based on the logical presentation of ideas, depth of thinking, and degree to which opinions are supported. Students should also include a slide that addresses the Essential Question, *How is information power?* Students should answer this question in regards to their research of the topic. Have students present their slideshows to the class. Have at least one peer give feedback to each presenter using the peer feedback form. Allow time for questions after each presentation. After discussing the opinions and arguments put forth, read Written Opinions of the Court* from Hazelwood School District vs. Kuhlmeier.

Optional Presentation Format: You may want to couch these presentations in a series of debates or a mock trial.

Each slideshow should include slides that provide the following information:
- Title
- Summary of the case
- Summary of the court decisions
- Student's opinion of the case study
- Student's response to the Essential Question, *How is information power*?

Prerequisite Skills

- Basic multimedia and publishing software skills
- Basic Internet research skills
- Basic presentation software skills

Differentiated Instruction

Resource Student
- Make modifications as described in the student's individualized education plan (IEP)
- Make thoughtful, supportive group assignments
- Provide highlighted lecture notes or notes in graphic form
- Get academic support from specialists in areas such as tutoring, previewing and reviewing assignments, editing, and so forth

Gifted Student
- Provide opportunities for the student to study related topics of interest, such as other Supreme Court opinions, abuse of information in history, and so forth
- Encourage the student to develop a presentation in the medium of choice, such as public speaking, Web page development, performance, music, or another medium
- Consider having that student research other School Freedom of Expression Cases*

English Language Learner
- Modify vocabulary activities
- Get academic support from specialists in areas such as translation, tutoring, previewing and reviewing assignments, editing, and so forth
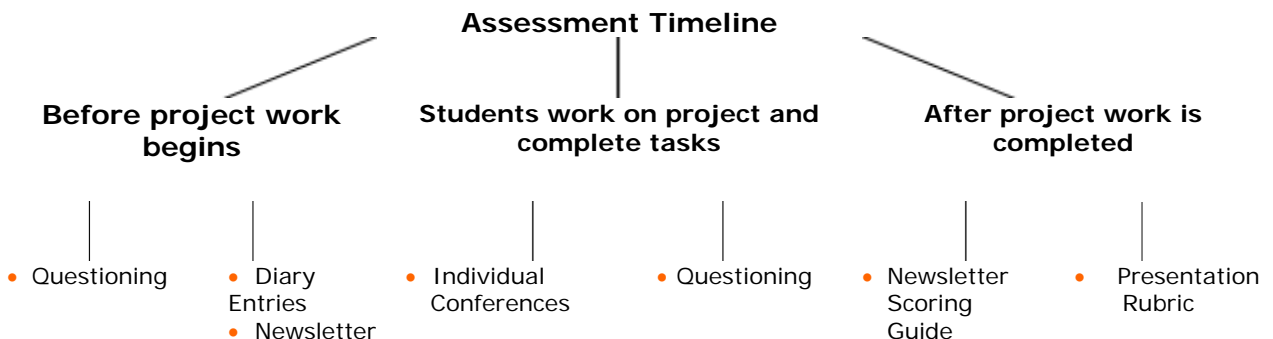
Credits

Linda Waagen participated in the Intel® Teach Program, which resulted in this idea for a classroom project. A team of teachers expanded the plan into the example you see here.

THINGS YOU NEED (highlight box)

The following **sections** are listed in the Things You Need highlight box (Assessment, Standards, Resources) and are linked to pages that contain that section's content.

Assessment Plan

Assessment Timeline

Before project work begins	Students work on project and complete tasks	After project work is completed
• Questioning • Diary Entries • Newsletter	• Individual Conferences • Questioning	• Newsletter Scoring Guide • Presentation Rubric

Scoring
Guide

- Peer
  Feedback
  Form

Questioning is used throughout the unit to help students develop their higher-order thinking skills and process content. Individual conferences are used to help monitor progress and answer any questions. Ask students to use both the newsletter scoring guide and presentation rubric to help them self-assess work prior to completion. Use this same scoring guide and rubric to assess and grade the newsletter and final presentation. Have students use the peer feedback form to assess their own understanding and to offer feedback to peers as they give their presentations.

Standards and Objectives

Targeted Oregon Content Standards and Benchmarks
Social Studies

- Understand the political, economic, and social characteristics and impact of early civilizations and eras on world development.
- Understand the causes, characteristics, and impact of political, economic, and social developments in U.S. history.
- Understand the purposes of government as stated in the Constitution and specific provisions that limit the power of government in order to protect the rights of individuals.
- Understand how the Bill of Rights offers protection of individual rights and how rights are limited for the benefit of the common good.
- Explain how laws are developed and applied to provide order, set limits, protect basic rights, and promote the common good.
- Describe personal, political, and economic rights of citizens in the United States.
- Clarify key aspects of an event, issue, or problem through inquiry and research.
- Consider two or more outcomes, responses, or solutions, identify their strengths and weaknesses, then conclude and justify which is the best.
- Compare and contrast ways of life in various times and cultures from world history, noting change and continuity over time.

National Education Technology Standards (NETS)
Technology

- Apply productivity/multimedia tools and peripherals to support personal productivity, group collaboration, and learning throughout the curriculum.
- Design, develop, publish, and present products (such as Web pages or videotapes) using technology resources that demonstrate and communicate curriculum concepts to audiences inside and outside the classroom.
- Select and use appropriate tools and technology resources to accomplish a variety of tasks and solve problems.

Student Objectives

Students will be able to:
- Interpret historical events through the lens of a different identity
- Evaluate the importance of the written word throughout history
- Develop an argument about a topic related to freedom of expression
- Generate examples to prove a point
- Present an argument in front of an audience

Technology and Resources

Video

Chariot Productions (Producer). (1994). *Exploring the Renaissance (1350-1650)* [VHS]. Evanston, IL: United Learning.

Books

Man, J. (2002). *Gutenberg: How one man remade the world with words*. New York: Wiley Publishers.

Supplies

- Block linoleum
- Linoleum knives
- Rubber brayer
- Printing ink
- Letter stamps
- Letter stamp holders
- Stamping ink
- Polystyrene blocks
- Colored pencils

Internet Resources
- New Mexico State University: Information Literacy
  http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/lsc311/beck/03notes.html*
  Brief history of written language
- The European Middle Ages
  www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/MA/CONTENTS.HTM*
  Middle Ages reference guide
- FindLaw
  http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?navby=case&court=US&vol=484&invol=260*
  Supreme Court opinion about HAZELWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT vs. KUHLMEIER, 484 U.S. 260 (1988)
- Renaissance: Printing and Thinking
  www.learner.org/exhibits/renaissance/printing.html*
  Summarizes the printing presses impact on thinking
- Johannes Gutenberg, Encarta Encyclopedia
  http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761564055/Gutenberg_Johannes.html*

       Brief biography of Johannes Gutenberg
- The History Guide: The Printing Press
  www.historyguide.org/intellect/press.html*
  History of the printing press
- Time-Table
  www.xs4all.nl/~knops/timetab.html*
  Offers a timeline of the written word
- Language Translation
  http://translation.langenberg.com*
  Web-based phrase translation applications
- Euratlas
  www.euratlas.com/big/big1500.htm*
  A full map of Europe in year 1500
- Medieval Letterin
  www.retrokat.com/medieval/le15.htm*
  15th century lettering
- The National Archives
  www.archives.gov/national-archives-
  experience/charters/bill_of_rights.html*
  Bill of Rights
- National Freedom of Information Coalition
  www.nfoic.org/web*
  A guide to obtaining state and federal resources

Technology—Hardware

- Computer for conducting research, creating documents, and creating presentations
- Internet connection so students can research, participate in collaborative work, and access Web sites used for teacher instruction
- Printer for printing documents
- Projector for displaying presentations
- Scanner for adding images to presentations and newsletters

Technology—Software

- Encyclopedia on CD-ROM for researching and basic knowledge definitions
- Internet Web browser to access the Internet for researching
- Multimedia program for creating documents and presentations
- Word processing to create presentation documents and newsletters
- Presentation program for creating slideshow presentations