

## Web Unit Plan

**Title:** Flat Stanley

**Description:** By sending a flat friend on vacation, children learn about life in other countries and get an opportunity to host flat travelers from around the world.

### At a Glance

**Grade Level:** 3-5

**Subject sort (for Web site index):** Social Studies

**Subject(s):** Social Studies, Language Arts, Health and Nutrition, Interdisciplinary

**Topics:** Personal Writing, Local History, World Geography

**Key Learnings:** Communication, Cultures

**Higher-Order Thinking Skills:** Synthesis, Analysis

**Time Needed:** 2 weeks (then ongoing)

**Background:** [Odyssey Story](#) from Kilworth, County Cork, Ireland

### Unit Summary

The Flat Stanley Project grew out of a classic children's book by the same name, written by Jeff Brown. In the story, Stanley, a regular boy, is squashed flat by a falling bulletin board. On the bright side, he discovers that his parents can slip him into an envelope and mail him to visit friends in faraway places. In real life, students in thousands of classrooms around the world participate in the Flat Stanley Project. Each class makes its own cardboard flat friend and creates a life story for him. Then, through e-mail or regular mail, students send their friend on vacation with classmates in other countries. When a flat visitor arrives, host children treat him as an honored guest. They take him along on outings, snap travel photos, and keep a journal of their activities and meals, giving insight into life in their part of the world.

### Curriculum-Framing Questions

- **Essential Question**  
Are we really so different from others?
- **Unit Questions**  
How are other kids like me?  
What is special about our history, the characteristics of the land around us, and our weather?
- **Content Questions**  
How does our friend spend his time while visiting other countries?  
How far does our friend travel?  
What types of fruits, vegetables, breads, and meats does our friend eat during his stay?

### Assessment Processes

View how a variety of student-centered [assessments](#) are used in the Flat Stanley 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.

## Instructional Procedures

### Before You Begin

Visit the [Flat Stanley Web site](#)\* and register your class to receive flat people guests from around the world. Learn about participating classes, and choose classrooms in different countries where you would like to send your own flat person. The Flat Stanley Web site has tips on sending your flat person to other countries, and offers project ideas from classrooms worldwide. You have the option of sending your flat person through regular mail or through e-mail. If you choose to use e-mail, set up an e-mail account on [Yahoo](#)\* specifically for this project, or use another free e-mail provider.

### Getting Started

To begin the unit, engage students in a class discussion around the Essential Question, *Are we really so different from others?* Elicit student responses and examples, and chart a list of ideas brainstormed during the discussion. Keep this list posted throughout the unit.

### Make a New Friend

Read the book *Flat Stanley* by Jeff Brown and discuss the project ahead. Present an art lesson where each student makes a flat person. The Flat Stanley Web site has suggestions for size and composition, and even offers a template. You may suggest that students adorn their flat person with little clues to their personality. For instance, a bird-watching flat person might have a pair of binoculars drawn around his neck.

Have each student create an autobiography and fact file for the character, to be included in the front of the flat person's travel journal. If students provide engaging information about their flat people, they are more likely to get good responses back when they send their friends on a visit. Encourage students to be creative and invent a character with a unique personality, interests, food preferences, and background story. For example, a bird-watching flat person's autobiography might include descriptions and sketches of the birds he has "seen" in your locality. This sets the stage for a bird-watching trip with a host class and interesting additions to the journal.

Plan a drama lesson where children assume the identity of their flat people and introduce themselves to the class.

Send the flat people home with their creators, and have students complete journal entries about several shared adventures, written from the point of view of the flat person. Have students read their entries in class, and discuss the qualities of effective journal writing.

In class, have students participate in peer conferences to get feedback on their journal entries. Go over the [journal checklist](#) beforehand and have students use the checklist as they discuss the entries. Students can make necessary revisions and think about future entries based on the peer's feedback.

Next, send flat people home with various members of the class. Encourage students to draw and take photographs of the places they visit with their flat guests and write journal accounts, again from the point of view of the flat visitor. Have students read entries in class. Make sure students address the Unit Question, *What is special about our history, the characteristics of the land around us, and our weather?* in their journals. To accomplish this, the students should include interesting facts and stories

about their country's or family's history, any special characteristics about the land around them, and what the weather is like in their country. Explain to the students that this information will be interesting to Stanley's hosts after he is sent traveling with this journal.

Repeat home visits until students are writing clear and effective journal entries. When they are skilled in journal writing, students can turn their attention to sending out and hosting flat people.

### **Send a Friend on Vacation**

Together, choose which classes will host your flat people. Send the flat people, along with their journals, through regular mail or e-mail. Include a questionnaire that clearly addresses how other kids spend their time, what they eat, how their land and weather is unique, and something interesting in their country's history. The questionnaire given to the host class will provide you with comparative information you will collect for all the countries your flat people visit.

The first time you participate, focus on daily journal writing. As the project moves forward, shift the focus to cultural geography themes for students to write and ask about. Encourage students to contribute themes for the class to study. Being in charge of one's own learning is greatly motivating.

Set aside time for students to discuss and explore their interests, and work those interests into the project. Watch for opportunities for collaborative learning and for natural project extensions. When you have established themes you want to explore with other classes worldwide, set the class to work researching the same themes for their own locality. When they become experts on their own area, they are ready to trade and compare their local information with other classes. Refer the students back to the Unit Question, *How are other kids like me?* and talk about this in a whole class discussion.

### **Keep Up with Your Traveling Friends**

Consider sending flat people out in cycles of five. Maintain a record of all traveling flat people. Have students use a spreadsheet to create a chart that lists travelers on the vertical axis, and lists locations and departure and arrival information on the horizontal axis.

The project has potential for great extensions involving maps, globes, and atlases. You might have students find geographic coordinates of visited classes, or have them calculate directions or miles traveled using a travel site, such as [MapQuest](#)\*.

Create a class database containing a list of the travelers along with fields for each food group. Fill the database with the types of foods the travelers eat during their visits. Have students compare these foods to the foods they eat at home.

Make sure students consider all the data collected during their journal writing periods. Have them include in their writings how they are different or similar to Flat Stanley's hosts. Students may also consider how their own country is different or similar to Stanley's hosts by comparing weather and land characteristics.

### **Use Technology**

Thanks to technology, children get an opportunity to sample life in other countries through the eyes of their flat traveler. Children gain firsthand experience in sending

and receiving e-mails, attaching files to e-mails, printing material, using a digital camera, scanning material, and saving information on a computer. Word processing skills are developed as the children engage in journal writing. Spreadsheet skills are strengthened as the students create charts from the data collected. Database skills are practiced as the students complete database fields with the foods eaten by their flat friends. In fact, the sky is the limit, depending on the ability of the class. Consider having the class record their voices and music, and send this to other schools, as in this example of an Irish classroom recording of "[The Britches Full of Stitches](#)" (mp3 player required). Compile a CD of flat people pictures to send home. Consider exploring the possibilities of using a webcam.

### Present Learning

As the class creates and collects flat people memories, compile them into a multimedia presentation or publication to share with others. This class newspaper, [The Stanley Post](#), shows many good ideas for items to include in a presentation or publication, including journal entries, pictures, maps, and poetry. Schedule teacher-student conferences to monitor progress, give feedback, and ensure that students understand project requirements.

After all projects are shared, end the unit with the students revisiting the Essential Question, *Are we really so different from others?* On a whiteboard, create a Venn diagram consisting of three circles—two outer circles representing two of the countries Stanley visited, and the center circle representing the students' and Stanley's home country. Invite the students to fill in the diagram with cultural facts that are unique to each country as well as facts that each country might have in common. Allow students to share their opinions and final thoughts on whether they feel we are so different from others.

### Prerequisite Skills

- Basic computer skills, including word processing, creating a chart with a spreadsheet application, developing a new database, and using e-mail
- Journal writing experience

### Differentiated Instruction

#### Resource Student

- Create templates
- Limit the amount of text required
- Organize mixed ability groups
- Take student ability into consideration when assigning tasks
- Delegate tasks according to strengths and weaknesses
- Make access to sources of information easier
- Encourage students to work in pairs, to support one another
- Because journal writing is personal and at a student's level, have the resource student contribute on an equal footing with peers by helping the student redraft work and use the spell checker and grammar tool while using the word processor

### Gifted Student

- Encourage the exceptionally able to engage in further research, making the assignment more challenging and resulting in more detailed or advanced publications and presentations
- Assign leadership and helping roles
- Ask students to record and graph information received from other countries and present a synthesis of this to the class
- Use Flat Stanley as a motivation tool or a means of finding out information from many parts of the world on whatever topic fires the imagination of the gifted student

### English Language Learner

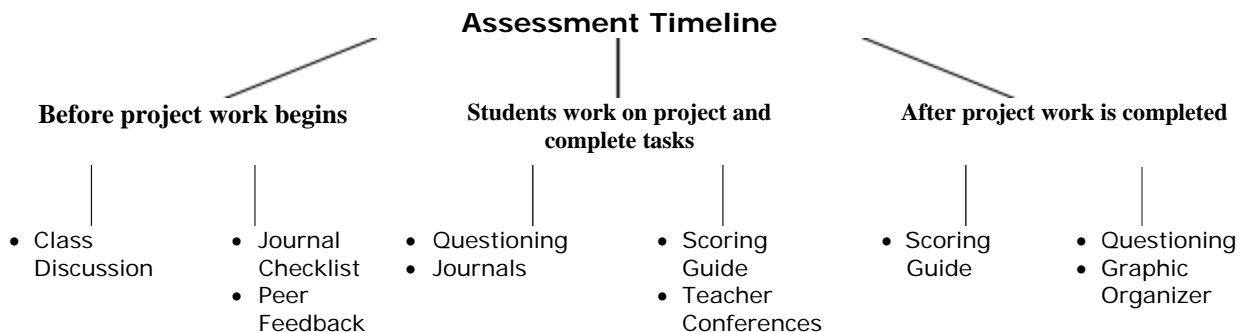
- Engage in journal writing with an older class; students would have the skills to decipher the basic English being written and similarly be challenged to create and return a journal that they wrote using simple and clear everyday language.
- Send a flat person to a country whose first language is that of the student's first language

### Credits

Imelda Fouhy is a third-grade teacher in Kilworth, County Cork, Ireland. Her class was featured in *An Innovation Odyssey*, a collection of stories of technology in the classroom, Story 93: [Tin Whistles Go Worldwide](#).

## THINGS YOU NEED (highlight box)

### Assessment Plan



Students use the [scoring guide](#) to help guide their learning, stay on track, and self-assess their progress. This scoring guide is also used by the teacher to assess student work. Questioning and conferences are used throughout the unit to help students develop their higher-order thinking skills and process content. A [journal checklist](#) is used during peer conferences to help guide feedback on journal entries and use for future entries. A final graphic organizer is used to assess learning.

## Content Standards and Objectives

### Targeted Content Standards and Benchmarks

#### Process and Technology Skills

Students will be able to:

- Practice the processes of journal writing
- Express experiences in writing
- Develop word processing skills
- Develop spreadsheet skills
- Develop database skills
- Locate, read, sort, compare, synthesize, and evaluate information
- Develop information technology skills, including using e-mail, scanning, desktop publishing, printing, and digital photography

#### Student Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Convey the history and geography of their local area to people from other countries
- Frame questions to gain information about other parts of the world
- Record and compare information from various countries
- Appreciate differences among nations, races, languages, customs, and environments
- Locate countries and cities on world maps, atlases, and globes

## Resources

### Materials and Resources

#### Printed Materials

- Brown, J. (1992). *Flat Stanley*. New York: Harper Collins.

#### Supplies

- Maps and atlases
- Publications describing local area

#### Internet Resources

- Flat Stanley Web site  
<http://flatstanley.enoreo.on.ca>\*  
Register your class, get helpful insights into how the project operates, and see a list of all the classes involved worldwide

#### Technology—Hardware

- Internet connection to send and receive e-mail, access mapping activities, and register the class at the Flat Stanley Web site
- Digital camera to take pictures of Stanley on his visits
- Scanner to scan pictures of Stanley on his visits
- Printer to print newsletters to distribute

#### Technology—Software

- Database and spreadsheet for graphing activities
- Desktop publishing software to publish multimedia presentation
- Database application for compilation of data
- E-mail address (there are many free e-mail services available, such as Hotmail, Yahoo, and so forth) for communications between classes