Great Lake Stories

Fourth Grade Writing, Social Studies 65 minutes
Standards: W.4.3, W.4.3.A, W.4.3.D

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Natural landmarks are a source of wonder and fascination, and they encourage people’s imaginations. Students will get a chance to use those dreams in this lesson where social studies and writing combine.

Learning Objectives
Students will be able write a narrative in which they develop an imagined experience using effective technique and descriptive details.

Materials and Preparation
- *The Great Lakes* by Kathy Henderson
- United States Map
- Chart paper
- Lined paper
- Pens and pencils

Lesson

Introduction (5 minutes)
- Call students together around a map of the United States. Tell students that today they will be studying the Great Lake States.
- Ask students what states they believe would be included in a region called the Great Lakes region and why.
- After students have made their guesses, reveal that the Great Lake States are Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- Have students locate these states on the map.

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Explicit Instruction/Teacher Modeling (15 minutes)

- Do a read aloud of *The Great Lakes* by Kathy Henderson.
- While reading, focus students’ attention on details about what life is like living near a Great Lake and about the Great Lakes themselves.
- After finishing the book, have students think about their favorite Great Lake.
- Hold a discussion focusing around the questions of what life is like around a lake (or body of water) and what the special qualities of each Great Lake are. For example, Lake Superior is the coldest, deepest, and largest of the Great Lakes.
- Record key facts from student responses onto chart paper that will remain posted during the writing time.

Guided Practice/Interactive Modeling (10 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will be writing stories about what it would be like to live near one of the Great Lakes.
- Have the class choose a sample Great Lake to write about.
- Demonstrate to students how they can use the facts on the chart paper to help them with their writing. For example, they might notice that people near the Great Lakes can go fishing, so they might want to write a story from the viewpoint of a fisherman. Or, they might like thinking about the big ships that transport cargo across the lakes, so they might want to write about being the captain of one of those ships.
- Once students have chosen a perspective, encourage them to include facts about the lake in their story. For example, perhaps the rocky shore will make it difficult for the captain to safely land his ship!
- After writing a paragraph or so as a class, ask if students have any questions before they head back to their desks to work on their own stories.

Independent Working Time (15 minutes)

- Instruct your students to write their stories.
- If students finish before others, encourage them to continue researching or illustrate their work.
Extend

Differentiation

- **Enrichment:** For students who need a greater challenge, write a compare/contrast piece considering what life would be like living near different Great Lakes, near the ocean versus a Great Lake, or on one of the Great Lakes versus on the shore of the Great Lake.
- **Support:** For students struggling to express themselves in writing, ask them to first orally describe, draw, or somehow create their vision of living by a Great Lake.

Technology Integration

- Ask your students to search online to research, find videos, and even find audio of the Great Lakes to help them imagine what living near one would be like.

Review

Assessment *(5 minutes)*

- Make sure that each student includes at least two details about life near water and two details about the Great Lakes.

Review and Closing *(15 minutes)*

- Call students together to share their stories.
- Group students by lake to share with one another.
- As sharing is concluding, remind students that the Great Lake States are Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- Also remind them that these are the states around Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, and Lake Erie.

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