



1900-1924

Notable Nebraskan Father Edward J. Flanagan, Founder of Boys Town

lesson plan

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L1

LESSON PLAN

What Was He Thinking? Mind Notes

grade level

4 8 HS

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Resources

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Nebraska Department of Education
Content Area Standards

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LESSON PLAN

What Was He Thinking? Mind Notes

Activity Grade Level

4 8 HS

This lesson plan was funded in part by the Cooper Foundation, Abel Foundation, and the Nebraska Humanities Council.

Lesson Objectives

1. Students will locate electronic sources on Father Flanagan.
2. Students will identify personal information and accomplishments associated with Father Flanagan.
3. Students will analyze sources to express Father Flanagan's ideas in a series of "mind notes".

Introduction

Have you ever heard someone say "What were they thinking?" Sometimes it's emphasized as "*What* were they thinking?" or "What *were* they thinking?" or even "What were they *thinking*?" These phrases may imply the idea that the person being mentioned did not know what they were doing, did not understand the situation, or simply did not pay attention to the possible consequences of their actions. This lesson requires students to look at this phrase in a different way, with none of these negative connotations. In this lesson students will consider the question "What was he thinking?" in an effort to learn about a notable Nebraskan who recognized a need, did what he could to solve the problem, and clearly understood the impact his efforts could have. His hard work and desire to help eventually led to the creation of an organization that benefits individuals who in turn benefit all of Nebraska and beyond. How does one undertake the creation of such an organization? Try to discover the answer by considering "What was he thinking?"

The "he" is Father Edward Flanagan, a great Nebraskan who was known for his efforts in helping boys and young men. Father Flanagan, a Catholic priest who came to America from Ireland in the 1910s, had his first parish assignment in O'Neill, Nebraska before he was sent to Omaha. In Omaha, Flanagan positively impacted the lives of thousands of boys by assisting them in their journey into adulthood through an organization that continues to expand its capacity to benefit children today. It is simply impossible to tell where his influence ends.

In this lesson, students will search the NebraskaStudies.org Web site to discover information about Father Flanagan's life and accomplishments. Students will consider "What was he thinking?" at several stops along the way.

The Task

Using a variety of online sources, students will gather information about the life of Father Edward Flanagan, and use this information to complete the "mind notes" on the student handout located in the Resources section at the end of this document. These notes will encourage students to analyze the information in an effort to imagine what Flanagan was thinking along the way as he was building what is known today as Girls and Boys Town.

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The Resources

The teacher will need to review the information available on and related websites and print a copy for each student of the Mind Notes handout located in the Resources section at the end of this document. This handout contains a picture of Father Flanagan and a list of prompts. Students will need to draw in “thought bubbles” (like those used to contain the thoughts of cartoon characters) to express Flanagan’s ideas in response to each prompt. If time allows a day of research, each student may also need a sheet of paper for research notes.

Internet Resources

Library of Congress Local Legacies: Boys Town
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/legacies/NE/200003285.html>

The Process

The teacher should prepare for this lesson by becoming familiar with all phases of the lesson and website, determining procedures best for the situation, setting up and making resources available in the classroom and/or computer lab, and by obtaining copies of the handout for each student.

Then guide students through the following steps:

1. Introduce the lesson. Read and discuss the information noted in the “Introduction” and “The Task” section of this lesson. Give each pupil a copy of the Mind Notes student handout (located in the Resources section at the end of this document), and direct their attention to the picture and the prompts. Instruct students to look for ideas that would help them complete the prompts and record these ideas in their notes or directly on the handout. Discuss:
 - Why would someone choose to devote their life to helping others?
 - How does someone build an idea into an organization like today’s Girls and Boys Town?
2. Read the biographical information given at this website. Use the information to take notes on Flanagan’s personal life and accomplishments. Pay special attention to information that will help to complete the prompts on the student handout.
3. Instruct students how to navigate to related Internet sites to get more information, and complete their notes.
4. Allow time for the students to locate and read through several sources. At some point during this research time, stop and discuss where students are finding the most interesting or most useful information. In pairs, in roundabout groups, or as a class, exchange information and add to notes.
5. As a class or individually, synthesize information, and then allow each student to determine the best way to complete each of the Mind Notes.

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6. Direct students to write a response to each prompt and then draw a “thought bubble” around the response. Number each written response to correspond to the prompt addressed by the response. If time permits, encourage students to add color or further illustrate the handout.

7. Have each student trade his or her handout with a partner. Have the pairs find the statements that are most similar and those that are most different. Discuss the items that are different and use information in notes or on the website to try to convince the other person that one statement is more accurate. If one partner convinces the other that their statement is more reflective of the data, allow students to change their minds and their Mind Notes if they desire to do so.

8. Debrief the class by discussing the projects. Ask whether or not Father Flanagan started out wanting to create the Girls and Boys Town complex that exists today.

- If this was not his goal, how did it happen?
- What would Father Flanagan think about all the services Girl’s and Boy’s Town provides today? Explain why it is nearly impossible to trace the limits of Father Flanagan’s positive influence.

Learning Advice

Teachers should take care to make sure students understand directions and should monitor successful completion of the project.

Teachers may also need to adjust this lesson to suit the amount of available time or the abilities of the learners. Some suggestions for adjusting include:

1. Students can work in pairs from the beginning of the project. Have students simply work together or assign each student a part of the assignment. For example, have only one or two people in the class find out about Girls and Boys Town today and report their findings to the class. Groups or pairs of students could be assigned one, two, or three prompts to complete, and then share with the rest of the class.
2. To control the amount of time spent on this lesson, teachers may set a certain amount of time for research. When this time is up, have students share their answers with others who researched the same categories.
3. To extend the lesson, have students identify skills and/or character traits that they believe most important to Flanagan’s success. Give specific examples of Flanagan’s actions that represent these traits.
4. To add interest, ask students to consider how helping one person might also benefit other people. Compare and contrast this idea with the plot of the book, *Pay It Forward* by Catherine Ryan Hyde. This book was adapted for the movie, also named *Pay It Forward*, which starred Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt, and Haley Joel Osment. These are not recommended for 4th grade students, but the teacher may enjoy them and then share the theme with the students.

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5. Just for fun, see the Academy Award winning movie Boys Town starring Spencer Tracy as Father Flanagan. Discuss whether or not Tracy's portrayal of Flanagan was consistent with what you learned about him. It is not necessary to do this during instructional time. Students could see the movie at home or it could be shown after school hours as a student activity. You might want to have more advanced students fill out the National Archives *Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet* in the Resources section at the end of this document. *This is not recommended for 4th grade students.*

6. Write a paragraph or short essay entitled, "Father Edward Flanagan's Legacy".

Conclusion

To conclude this lesson, complete Steps 7 and 8 listed in the Process section. Ask students to consider the most important thing they learned about Father Edward Flanagan, and how they could apply this knowledge to creating their own life.

Assessment Activity

To assess this lesson, simply note the completion of Lesson Objectives and the handout activity. Noting completion on a class roster can do this. Grading the handout is not recommended. If a grade for the activity is deemed important, consider having the students fill out the Generalizations handout in the Resources Section at the end of this document.



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Nebraska Department of Education Academic Standards

<https://www.education.ne.gov/contentareastandards/>

Nebraska Department of Education Social Studies and History Standards

<https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Nebraska-Social-Studies-Standards-Final-11-2019.pdf>

National Archives <http://www.archives.gov/index.html>

Library of Congress Learning Page Lesson Plans

<https://www.loc.gov/search/?in=&q=lesson+plans&new=true&st=>

What Was He Thinking? Mind Notes

Name _____ Period No. _____

Prompts

1. What did I learn from working with Omaha's orphaned boys?
2. What do boys need most to become good adult men?
3. How can I help more people?
4. How can I finance expansion and new programs?
5. What should be required of the boys who come to Boys Town to live?
6. What should be provided for the boys who come to Boys Town to live?



resources

What Was He Thinking? Generalizations

Name _____ Period No. _____

Father Flanagan is a notable Nebraskan because:

Father Flanagan's greatest achievement was:

The most important thing I learned from researching Father Flanagan was:

Something I learned from studying Father Flanagan that I want to remember or use in my own life is:

I admire Father Flanagan because:

Analyze a Video

Anticipate.

What is the title?

What do you think you will see?

Meet the video.

Type (check all that apply):

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animation | <input type="checkbox"/> Propaganda | <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional | <input type="checkbox"/> Training film | <input type="checkbox"/> Combat film |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsreel | <input type="checkbox"/> News report | <input type="checkbox"/> Informational | <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | | | |

Elements (check all that apply):

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Live action | <input type="checkbox"/> Narration | <input type="checkbox"/> Special effects | <input type="checkbox"/> Background noise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Color | <input type="checkbox"/> Black and White | <input type="checkbox"/> Animation | <input type="checkbox"/> Dramatizations | |

What is the mood or tone?

Observe its parts.

List the people, objects and activities you see.

PEOPLE	PLACES	ACTIVITIES

Write one sentence summarizing this video.

Try to make sense of it.

When is this video from?

What was happening at the time in history it was created?

Who made it?

Who do you think is the intended audience?

How do you think the creator wanted the audience to respond? List evidence from the video or your knowledge about who made it that led you to your conclusion.

Use it as historical evidence.

What did you find out from this video that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?



Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Social Studies Standards

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SS 4.4.2 Analyze and explain multiple perspectives of events in Nebraska, including historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 4.4.3 Analyze past and current events throughout Nebraska history.

SS 4.4.4 Develop historical inquiry and research skills.

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SS 8.4.1 Analyze patterns of continuity and change over time in the United States history.

SS 8.4.2 Use multiple perspectives to evaluate the historical, social, and cultural context of past and current events.

SS 8.4.3 Examine historical events from the perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 8.4.4 Evaluate and interpret sources for perspective and historical context.

HS

SS HS.4.1 Analyze and evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time in history.

SS HS.4.2 Analyze the complexity of the interaction of multiple perspectives to investigate causes and effects of significant events in the development of history.

SS HS.4.3 Examine historical events from the perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS HS.4.4 Evaluate sources for perspective, limitations, accuracy, and historical context.

SS HS.4.5 Apply the inquiry process to construct and answer historical questions.

Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Language Arts Standards

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LA 4.1 Reading: Students will learn and apply reading skills and strategies to comprehend text.

LA 4.1.6 Comprehension: Students will construct meaning by using prior knowledge and text information while reading grade-level literary and informational text.

LA 4.1.6.e Determine main ideas and supporting details from informational text and/or media.

LA 4.1.6.f Use text features to locate information and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of print and digital text.

LA 4.1.6.i Construct and/or answer literal, inferential, and critical questions and support answers with explicit evidence from the text or additional sources.

LA 4.2.1 Writing Process: Students will apply the writing process to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish writing using correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, and other conventions of standard English appropriate for grade-level.

LA 4.2.1.c Gather and use relevant information and evidence from multiple authoritative print and/or digital sources to support claims or theses.

LA 4.2.2 Writing Modes: Students will write in multiple modes for a variety of purposes and audiences across disciplines.

LA 4.2.2.a Communicate information and ideas effectively in analytic, descriptive, informative, narrative, poetic, persuasive, and reflective modes to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.

LA 4.2.2.b Provide evidence from literary or informational text to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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LA 8.1.6 Comprehension: Students will construct meaning by applying prior knowledge, using text information, and monitoring comprehension while reading increasingly complex grade-level literary and informational text.

LA 8.2.1 Writing Process: Students will apply the writing process to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish writing using correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, and other conventions of standard English appropriate for grade-level.

LA 8.2.2 Writing Modes: Students will write in multiple modes for a variety of purposes and audiences across disciplines.