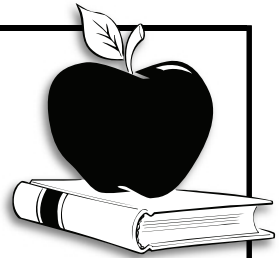


CLASS TIME: two class periods

MATERIALS: pictures and other light items that will represent Illinois; mailing materials; map of sister country; name and address of a teacher in sister country; funds to cover the cost of a reply

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: English language arts
MS Writing 4, MS Writing 8, MS Writing 9, MS Reading 1,
MS Reading 10

TEACHER'S GUIDE



ACTIVITY

Cultural Exchange

OVERVIEW

Students send a cultural exchange packet representing aspects of life in Illinois to a class in a Latin American school.

CONCEPTS

- People in Latin America and North America have similar needs.
- People can act to help conserve Neotropical migratory bird populations and their forest homes.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to: 1) communicate with students in Latin America; and 2) observe commonalities between themselves and their Latin American neighbors.

KEY POINTS

- People in Latin America are similar to people in Illinois in many ways.
- Some of the difficulties in this activity reflect difficulties people encounter in trying to solve global environmental problems.

TEACHER BACKGROUND

Just as birds can fly across borders, so can our thoughts and feelings, building a people-to-people bridge between Latin America and Illinois, creating empathy and showing that we share concern for the environment.

Your class will prepare a cultural exchange package to send to a class in Latin America. While you may receive a letter or package from your partner class, you should reduce the expectation of a response to minimize disappointment if there is none. Explain to the students that it is less a part of many Latin American cultures to respond than it is of North American cultures.

Spanish is the primary language in most of Latin America. It is possible that no one in your exchange

school can translate English into Spanish. To explain the cultural exchange idea to the partner class, be sure to enclose the Spanish cover letter provided following this activity. An English version is also provided. Be sure to sign the letter and include your return address. You may wish to build a cooperative agreement with a Spanish teacher to aid in translating any written items you plan to send or hope to receive.

Because packages sometimes are not delivered intact in Latin America, it is advisable that the package consist of those items that can fit flatly in a manila envelope.

We suggest you send visual images, such as drawings and photos, examples of school work, a class photo, the music to a song, maps of the United States and Illinois, pictures from calendars or posters to decorate classroom walls, a paper snowflake, postcards, a picture of agricultural activities, sample forest products that would be useful, such as some pencils and paper, a local newspaper clipping with pictures or a picture of a Neotropical migrant.

Exercise care in sending international packages. We don't want to send any microscopic organisms in plants or soil that might be damaging to Latin American ecosystems or agriculture. If you have any questions about what is acceptable to send, contact the U.S. Postal Service.

The school year is different in many Latin American countries than it is in Illinois. Many school years begin in March and end in December. You may find that your class and its partner class will be in school at the same time only from March to May or from September to December. Students here in September will not likely be together in the same class they were in the previous May. Likewise, the students in Latin America will not be together in the same class in March that they were in just three months previously. The window for communicating class to class is very narrow.

The mail service between Illinois and Latin America may be slow. Explore partnerships with organizations that could carry a package to your partner country. It can take weeks for an exchange package to reach its destination. Plan to send your package early. If a return package arrives after the *One Bird—Two Habitats* activities are completed, it is still important to follow up so that students can see the rewards of their efforts.

Mail service is expensive relative to income in most of Latin America, where many of the people are struggling with poverty. Classes may not send a reply package unless the money to do so is included. If each student contributes \$1.00, the cost of sending a large envelope should be covered. If the class prefers a fund-raising project to cover the costs, the fund-raising should be accomplished before the unit. The U.S. Postal Service recommends sending an international money order, which can be obtained at any bank. They also recommend sending the package by registered mail, with a return receipt requested (which will add several dollars to the mailing cost but will add greatly to its chances of reaching its destination). In the event the money order is lost or stolen, the current maximum amount you can receive back from insurance is limited and may be less than the actual value.

PROCEDURE

1. Tell students that they are going to send a cultural exchange packet to a class in Latin America to describe our lives in Illinois. Have students research Latin American countries and make oral and written presentations. Students should make a map of the country selected.
2. Select one country to become the class partner country. Conduct further research about the country and discuss how living there might be different than living in Illinois. What more would we like to know about students there? What might they like to know about our lives?
3. Explore selection of a partner school in the country. Use the Internet and contacts through the Illinois State Board of Education to help you find a school. Have the class brainstorm categories of items to send to their partner school. Some examples are:
 - Illinois forests and the ways people use forest products;
 - photographs of a Neotropical migrant that nests here and winters there;
 - a description of school and the subjects we study;
 - what we like to do in our free time;
 - a description and photograph of our town and what it's like to live here.
 - Make sure a category related to birds is included.

4. Divide the class into groups and assign a category to each group. Tell groups to decide among themselves what kinds of pictures or lightweight items they could send to represent their category and help a student in the partner school better understand life here. Have each group decide on the best items to send.
5. The next day, have student groups share the materials they selected and discuss what images of our culture and environment these items will convey. Compose a brief class letter that contains what the items represent. If possible, find someone to translate the letter into Spanish. Be sure to include your return address.
6. Discuss how people in North America can work together with people in Latin America on problems (such as the declining populations of Neotropical migratory birds) that affect us both. Make the point that some of the obstacles (language barriers, slow mail service, poor transportation, limited telephone service, lack of money, different goals) that we must overcome to successfully complete a cultural exchange with a class must also be overcome by people working to solve global environmental problems.
7. Discuss how each group functioned. Did everyone participate?

DISCUSSION

1. How will the items selected for the exchange packet reflect life in Illinois? What kinds of things do you think might represent life in the partner country? How might these representations be similar or different from each other? How could people in the two countries work together to conserve Neotropical migratory birds?
2. If the class receives a response from the partner school, discuss the commonalities and differences between our culture and theirs. Collaborate with a Spanish teacher for translations.

EXTENSION

1. If some of the students speak Spanish or are studying it, or if a Spanish teacher or more experienced class will help, write letters, poems and stories for the exchange package in Spanish.

ASSESSMENT

1. Write a paragraph describing commonalities between the two countries.
2. Provide an appropriate item to be considered for inclusion in the packet and a rationale for its inclusion.
3. Explain what items were included in the packet and what each represents.

Dear Sir or Madam:

We are a middle school class from your sister state, Illinois. We are writing to share a little bit about ourselves and life in Illinois, and hope that you can tell us something about your lives in return.

This year our class is studying about birds that migrate from Illinois to Latin America. Some of the birds that build nests and raise young in Illinois fly south before the cold winter here. From October to April, they live in your country and then return to Illinois again. An example of one of these birds is the red-eyed vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*), named for its red eye. This bird is like an ambassador that travels back and forth from our country to yours.

We are learning that many of these migratory birds are in trouble. Because of changes in the land and the way it's used in the United States and in Latin America, there is less and less suitable space for these birds to live. Many of their populations are declining.

Because this is a problem that affects people in Illinois and your country, we want to learn more about your country and teach you more about us. We need to work together to conserve birds and the environment. We hope that this package will help you learn more about our lives in Illinois.

In Illinois, most people go to school from kindergarten through 12th grade. Middle school usually refers to grades six to eight. We usually have a vacation from school during our summer, June, July and August. Illinois has much agricultural land, grassland and forests. It is a very green state, except during our winter when everything freezes and there is often a lot of snow. We are known as the "prairie state" because of the prairies that originally covered our state. Most of the people live in towns or cities. Springfield is our state capital, and Chicago is our biggest city.

We would like to receive a letter from your class that tells us about your lives. We hope you will send a response to the address at the top of this letter. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Estimado (a) Señor o Señora;

Somos un grupo de escuela intermedia de su hermano estado de Illinois. Les escribimos para compartir un poco con ustedes sobre nosotros y nuestra vida en Illinois. Esperamos que ustedes, a cambio, nos relaten algo sobre su vida en Puerto Rico.

Este año nuestra clase está estudiando aves que migran desde Illinois hacia América Latina. Algunas de las aves que construyen nidos y crían sus polluelos en Illinois, vuelan al sur antes de que llegue el invierno. Estas aves viven en tu país desde octubre hasta abril y regresando nuevamente a Illinois. Un ejemplo de una de estas aves es el “Julián Chiví Migratorio” (*Vireo olivaceus*). Este pájaro es como un embajador que viaja de un lado para el otro desde nuestro país al tuyo.

Estamos aprendiendo que muchas de estas aves migratorias están en dificultades. Debido a los usos y cambios en el terreno en los Estados Unidos y Latinoamérica, cada vez hay menos lugares adecuados para que estas aves puedan vivir. Muchas de las poblaciones están disminuyendo. Debido a que este problema nos afecta tanto en Illinois como en tu país, queremos aprender más acerca de tu país, así como también enseñarte más sobre nosotros.

Necesitamos trabajar juntos para conservar las aves y el ambiente. Esperamos que este paquete que enviamos les ayude a conocer más sobre nuestra vida en Illinois.

La mayoría de las personas de Illinois van a la escuela desde kindergarten (jardín de infantes) hasta el 12mo. grado. A los grados del 6to. al 8vo. son los que llamamos “middle school.” Por lo general, tenemos unas vacaciones cortas en invierno al final de diciembre y una más larga durante los meses de verano, junio, julio y agosto. Illinois tiene mucho terreno agrícola, pastos y bosques. En un estado bien verde, excepto en invierno, cuando todo se congela y a menudo hay mucha nieve. Nos conocen como el “estado de las praderas” debido a las praderas que cubrían nuestro estado originalmente. La mayoría de las personas viven en pueblos o ciudades. Springfield es nuestra capital y Chicago es nuestra ciudad más grande.

Nos gustaría recibir una carta de tu clase que nos relate algo sobre sus vidas. Esperamos que nos envíe la respuesta a la dirección que aparece en la parte superior de esta carta. Muchas gracias.

Atentamente,