

Strategy: TRADING CARDS

Overview:

Students of all ages love trading cards and collectible, customizable card games like Magic, Digimon and Pokemon. Having students create their own trading cards is a perfect culminating activity for almost any lesson. Additionally, successful completion of trading card sets proves useful as a formative assessment and can be used as study aids (think flashcards) for follow-up summative assessments. When students construct their trading card sets in groups, this strategy conveys learning targets to interpersonal, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learners. To add in a technological component, have students design and print their cards with computers. The activities below are strategies for utilizing “trading cards.”

Instructional Strategies:

Build excitement in this strategy ahead of time by designating a start date when students can bring in their favorite trading cards. If they ask why they will be allowed to bring in their cards, just tell them “we’ll see.” When the designated date arrives ask students to share a little about their favorite trading cards. What do they like about these cards? Is there anything about the cards they don’t like? What would they change? Finally, what would they do if they could make their own trading cards? Record their answers on the board. Although the activity below uses this instructional strategy to help students learn all about the American Civil War, the possibilities are almost endless. Students can create space exploration and astronauts trading cards, mythology trading cards, ancient civilizations trading cards, famous authors trading cards, vertebrates and invertebrates trading cards, and so on!

You are ready to TeachItNow! Here’s how you can use “Trading Cards” to teach the students about the American Civil War. A learning target, Instructional activity, and assessment technique are provided.

Learning Target:

Students will be able to explain the reasons for the American Civil War and identify the key concepts, people, locations, dates and battles of the American Civil War.

Instructional Activity:

Teach the American Civil War with the “TRADING CARD” Strategy

Activate prior knowledge by leading your class in a discussion of the American Civil War. Ask students why the American Civil War was fought and what its outcome was. Who were some of the central figures of the American Civil War? What were some of the battles? Record their answers on the board. Now allow your students (individually or in groups) to complete internet searches to find more of these answers. After students have found more answers on the internet, bring the groups back together and write their ideas on the board and discuss.

Inform students that they can get out the trading cards that you already said they could bring to class. Carry out the trading card discussion as presented in the **Instructional Strategies** section above. Now inform students that they will create their own Civil War trading cards.

Divide students into 4 groups. One group will research and create cards about key concepts of the Civil War (i.e. slavery, states' rights, secession, Emancipation Proclamation, Underground Railroad, Abolition, Calvary, Artillery, Infantry, Repeating Rifles, etc.). The second group will research and create cards about key Union figures (Lincoln, John Brown, Meade, McClellan, Burnside, Grant, Chamberlain, Hancock, Sherman, Custer, etc.). The third group will research and create cards about key Confederate figures (Davis, Lee, Jackson, P.G.T. Beauregard, J.E.B. Stuart, Nathan Bedford Forrest, John Wilkes Booth, etc.). The final group will research and create cards about locations and battles (Washington D.C., Richmond, Fort Sumter, Chickamauga, Chancellorsville, First and Second Bull Run/Manassas, Antietam, Gettysburg, Arlington, etc.).

Some ideas to pass along to your students include: Have a picture on one side of the card and facts on the other (important dates, key figures' birthdays, date and cause of death, and occupation after the war if survived, battles should have locations, beginning and ending dates, number of casualties and whether it was considered a Union or Confederate victory). Have each group make 15 individual cards, for a total of 60 cards. Have students create and save these cards on the computer. Allow them to print enough cards so that each student in the class can have his/her own set of 60. For added durability, print cards on cardstock and laminate.

Assessment:

After the cards have been printed and every student has his or her set of 60 cards, allow the groups to give a presentation with their cards. Students can explain what they learned and what they found most interesting about their research. Explain that students can use these cards to study for an additional pencil-and-paper summative assessment.