Experiential Learning Script

**SLIDE 1:** This presentation is entitled “Experiential Learning: The Bubonic Plague.”

**SLIDE 2:** Although typically defined as an adult learning strategy, experiential learning theory can be an effective learning strategy for children. This presentation provides an example application of the experiential learning theory in a middle school history lesson on the Bubonic Plague (also known as the Black Death) as it follows the six essential steps of the theory.

**SLIDE 3:** In this 6-step process, Step 1 is to introduce the topic and essential background information. In this example application, students first journal and then have a think-pair-share discussion on the prompt to begin the process of assimilating knowledge of diseases. For this lesson it is by telling about a time that she or he got sick and how people reacted.

**SLIDE 4:** Through prewriting, students have developed a connection to the topic. Now, it’s time to provide them with some background knowledge on this period in history. A 5-minute long Brain Pop video is a great option because it introduces the topic, presents necessary background information, and highlights the severity of the disease in a short timeframe. You can click on the provided link to view the Brain Pop video.

**SLIDE 5:** We now move onto Step 2 in our 6-step process, which engages the learner in a realistic experience. For this example application, Part A of the realistic experience is a bean simulation where student groups are given dice and a travel itinerary. Groups travel along their mock itinerary route to various European “cities” (which are labeled paper bags around the classroom) that experienced the plague. The bags are filled with a few red beans (representing contraction of the plague) and many black beans (representing health). Each group rolls dice and blindly selects the number of beans that matches the number on the dice from the city’s bag.

**SLIDE 6:** Students use bean colors and their itineraries to track exposure to the plague and probability of contracting the disease. Here you see an example of a paper bag which represents a European city on the left hand side, and a sample view of inside of bag with bean varieties on the right hand side. If you click on the provided link, you can view a sample of bean activity with directions and example itineraries.

**SLIDE 7:** Here is a snapshot of one example itinerary used in the bean activity. On the chart the students record the number of nights, which is the number rolled with the dice and whether or not the group contracted the disease.

**SLIDE 8:** Part B of the realistic experience for students is a skit. Each group is given a scenario related to living during the time of the Black Death, and each student is given a role.
that reflects a person of that time. *For example*, Group 1 has the scenario of living in a small rural town outside of London city center where a father and his daughter approach and say they are from London. Since no one in the town knows what is causing the plague or how it spreads, superstitions run high. Students decide whether to allow in this family seeking refuge and demonstrate their decision through a short skit.

**SLIDE 9**: Each group is given a scenario related to living during the time of the Black Death, and each student is given a role that reflects a person of that time. The skits showcase emotions felt by those living in the era, and present outcomes and decisions. The emotions from playing the bean game translate into the skit, and make for great discussion.

**SLIDE 10**: The third step in the experiential learning theory is the discussion of the realistic experience. In this example application, a student-led discussion at the end of the skits includes the students sharing how they would feel about the outcome if they lived in that time. The reactions will vary depending on student experience in the bean simulation and the role played in the skit.

**SLIDE 11**: In step 4 of the 6-step process, the class discusses concepts and hypotheses through reflection and discussion. The class as a whole to create a list of 3 different possible outcomes from those presented in the skits. Students draw on prior knowledge and emotional experiences to justify different endings to the scenario.

**SLIDE 12**: In Step 5 students experiment with new concepts and experiences. For this example application, students compare the new outcomes with the original outcome of the skit by answering questions such as:

–Do the decisions of the townspeople reflect the very limited knowledge and desperation of the people living during the plague years? How or how not?
–Do the townspeople show compassion? Why or why not?
–Do the townspeople demonstrate the uncertainty and fear of the time? Why or why not?

**SLIDE 13**: Lastly, step 6 is a reflection and experimentation. During this step in our example, students write a blog entry on the class website or in the class learning management system describing which outcome to the skit scenario they most support and why. Students must post an initial reaction and must respond to at least 2 peers’ initial posts. This will help the teacher to assess whether or not students fully grasped the concept of the lesson.

Thank you for watching our presentation! We hope you found this application of experiential learning helpful.