

Handout for:

Walk A Mile In My Shoes: Exploring Culture and Humanity Through Software

Ann Orr/Warren Buckleitner, *Children's Software Revue*

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These seven programs offer windows into many worlds and experiences.

American Memory Primary Sources

Classroom Connect, www.classroom.com, 800-638-1639, ages 10-up, grades 4-12, Windows— This is a collection of four CDs from the Library of Congress, organized into the following social studies units: Identity, Power, Environment and Culture. Each CD contains video clips, passages and other information on the topics, with links to appropriate web sites. The Power CD examines the theme of Power as it relates to women and the right to vote, the African American struggle for equality, and the United States as a world power. With the Identity CD, students immerse themselves in the ideas, events, words, and images that are cornerstones of the American identity, from colonial times through the Civil War. The Environment CD lets students explore how the environment has affected Americans and how Americans have sought to shape their surroundings, from the settling of the West and growth of cities, to the rise of industry. And finally, the Culture CD shows how popular entertainment, folk music, theater, and sports in the first half of the twentieth century not only reflected the time in history but also served as a catalyst for change. Sometimes the product's approach seems somewhat disjointed as it tries to tie in seemingly unrelated events and issues, but the easy to follow lessons in the teacher's guide offer a thought-provoking look at important issues. Also handy are the timelines, atlases, Internet links and glossaries.

Anne Frank House

Softmachine, www.softmachine.com, ages 10-up, grades 5-12, Win/Mac—This captivating CD-ROM contains - among other things - a virtual tour of the Anne Frank House, as it was during the time that Anne was in hiding. You can look in all directions (360°), and also move through the building. Doors open and information can be requested about all kinds of objects and locations. For example, it is possible to experience opening the famous revolving bookcase, or view a slideshow about that bookcase.

Hidden throughout the house are personal details of all the people involved in the story of Anne Frank, including narratives of the everyday lives of those in hiding, a three-dimensional model of the House for navigation, and a series of timelines that connect Anne Frank's life to the history of the premises and the events of the Holocaust. Content includes 316 slideshows and 17 video clips, including the only surviving video of Anne Frank. An explanatory list of words and a comprehensive help function complete the product and make it an easy-to-use yet powerful experience for children and adults alike. Available online at cinogram.com.

Land of the Inuit-An Exploration of the Arctic v.1.1

Ingenuity Works, Inc., www.ingenuityworks.com, 800-665-0667, ages 9-up, grades 4-12, Win/Mac OS—With this impressive program, students explore the realities and legends of the Arctic. An Inuit shaman serves as guide as kids listen to, watch and read stories about early Arctic Explorations, including the lost Franklin expedition. Inuit culture, religion, and government are all intimately portrayed through photos, drawings, text and narration. There are 12 interactive challenges that test students' content knowledge— for instance, kids can try their luck at harpooning a seal, or they can construct a snowhouse. Although the software can be confusing to navigate at times, it has many classroom-friendly features. The program is keyword searchable, all text can be printed, and you can adjust text size for easier reading. This is an outstanding resource. Available online at bestsellerdirect.ca.

Microsoft Encarta Africana Third Edition

Microsoft Corp., www.encarta.msn.com, 800-426-9400, ages 10-up, grades 5-12, Windows — Now in its third edition, this CD-ROM encyclopedia of African history and culture is rich with text, pictures, audio clips and videos. Content includes a video by Colin Powell on the history of African-American service in the US military, slave narratives, poetry and other works written between 1773 and 1918. You also find a fascinating civil rights chronology, footage of historic sites in Africa from the PBS/BBC television series featuring Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and (our favorite) a music timeline with an excellent sampling of music. This version offers closed captioning and text to speech, so that any highlighted text can be read back.

Paris: Promenades & History

Montparnasse Multimedia, www.montparnasse.net, ages 12-up, grades 6-12, Win/Mac— What do most people want to do in Paris? Stroll the city, naturally, and take in all the history and ambiance that makes the French city so spectacular. This program lets us desktop travelers do all that and more. Content features over 2000 pictures of sites, monuments and people, plus 30 panoramic views from the top of important sites, like the Eiffel Tower. There are 3D rotating models of the major monuments, 50 pieces of background music and both historical and present-day maps. We especially enjoyed the section of the program called Itinerary, which takes you on narrated slideshow journeys into Paris. You can, for instance, drop yourself into the city in 1939 to see what life was like during the German occupation. Or, you can visit the cafés where artists like Matisse and Picasso spent their leisure hours. This is truly a rich CD. There is no keyword searching, but a detailed index is a fairly good substitute. The program is perfect for high school geography, history and French classes, or for those planning a trip. Available online at sastore.com.

Relate for Kids

Ripple Effects, www.rippleeffects.com, 888-259-6618, ages 8-11, grades 3-5, Win/Mac—Geared for elementary-aged students, this social skills software promotes empathy, self-esteem, cooperation and a host of other positives. At the same time, the program addresses issues like talking back, fighting, drugs, alcohol and impulse control. Its primary purpose is to solve behavior problems, hopefully before they even begin. Through videos of real kids (of all ethnicities and socio-economic status), role plays, animations, games and activities, the software both teaches and entertains. For instance, in the section that deals with stereotypes, the program explains what these are, gives strategies for avoiding them, and relates a true story about a girl dealing with stereotypes. There's also a game that helps kids identify stereotypes and suggestions for follow-up activities that would make great classroom assignments and discussion starters. And that's only one topic area— stereotypes. There are 35 in total including bullying, tobacco, peer pressure, teasing, etc. Records are kept of children's progress are kept, and the software is easy to use, interesting and will appeal to upper elementary students. Teachers can let kids go through the software individually, or they can use the program for large group instruction. Note that the program is customizable; teachers can block access to topics they don't want their class exposed to. Our one criticism? The price is extremely high, but if purchased by a media center for school-wide use, it's worth every penny.

Relate for Teens 2.0

Ripple Effects, www.rippleeffects.com, 888-259-6618, ages 12-up, grades 6-12, Win/Mac— Designed for students in grades six through ten, this upgraded social skills program offers a wealth of frank information on more than 350 topics of keen interest to teens. Subjects covered include violence prevention, substance abuse, racial conflict, depression, sexual orientation, HIV, AIDS, truancy and discipline. Through videos of real kids (of all ethnicities, cultural and economic circumstances), true stories, animations and games, students are able to explore these topics. Each topic area is introduced, defined and explained. Coping strategies are outlined and resources for further help are given if warranted. Activities and games check comprehension of material. Themes running throughout the program include making good decisions, tolerance, impulse control and the importance of community. The program is well done, and its style and presentation will appeal to teens. Adults can customize the software by restricting access to any areas they don't feel are appropriate for their particular student group. Teachers can use the program in many ways, in large group instruction or for individual student assignments. This upgrade allows you to install the program entirely on your computer or run it from two CDs (requiring swapping). It's extremely expensive, but an excellent use of the medium and potentially very effective at providing information and improving skills.

Seeds of Peace

Seeds of Peace, www.seedspeace.org, 212-573-8040, ages 12-up, grades 6-12, Windows— What do you think might happen if a group of Israeli teens and a group of Palestinian teens all went to camp together in Maine? This fascinating CD-ROM chronicles what happens when these kids get to know one another as humans, not enemies. Designed for school use, the CD uses video and onscreen activities to introduce the kids, their lives, their thoughts and emotions. Videos of the teens in their homelands, at their schools and homes, and at camp help students better understand the two cultures and their struggles. This is an ideal companion to a geography/social studies unit on the Middle East. Basic prior knowledge of the conflict is helpful. Activities include timeline making, journal writing and lots of video watching. The many film clips are very interesting. Projects that students complete online (i.e., the timelines, etc.) can be posted on a web page. Weaknesses of the CD are few— we wished for larger video display, for instance. The bottom line? This is a must-have program for all high schools. Note that 15 CDs are available for \$199, so that students can take the program home.

These and other reviews can be found online at www.childrenssoftware.com. Use the temporary password given in the workshop for unlimited searching.