

The Great Mail Race and The United States Postal Service

Background Information

- Students will know how to write a friendly letter.
- Students understand how to accurately research a given topic.

Standards

- **W.5.4.** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **W.5.7.** Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- **W.5.8.** Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

Materials

- Great Mail Race directions letters
- Great Mail Race templates
- Blank Questionnaires
- Research Project Rubric
- Access to computers and internet

Overview of Projects

- The Great Mail Race
 - Students research the 50 states, one student per two states.
 - Students choose favorite facts found on assigned states.
 - Students write letters to each assigned state.
 - Teacher and students complete a class copy of questionnaire -- emailing school staff for unknown answers, i.e. enrollment, etc.
 - Students and teacher fill envelopes with student letter, GMR direction letter, blank questionnaire, and completed questionnaire.
 - Students address envelopes to chosen school in assigned state.
 - As students receive letters back from other schools, share with class, put on display, celebrate, etc.
- USPS Research Project
 - Students participate in “Socratic Seminar” about why we might still need the postal service in our technology driven world -- Sit in circle, each student has 2 talking chips, teacher gives topic, students take turns commenting/responding to others. Teacher monitors, but leaves it to students to discuss.
 - Teacher reviews thoughts discussed in Socratic Seminar.

- Using <http://www.usps.com/postalhistory/welcome.htm>, teacher shares overview of the USPS.
- Students form groups to work with, and choose a topic on the USPS that interests the group.
- Teacher shares rubric for project, making sure students understand what is expected of them.
- Students may also be given the option to choose the way to display the group's research, and go through the entire publishing process.

Once both projects are complete, make copies for each book to be put together.

Create a Letter from the Editor, explaining the projects.

Give students the opportunity to help create the Table of Contents, About the Authors page, Special Thanks page, etc.

Each student will create own book cover and title page.

Model putting the book together, and assist students while they put their books together. Pre-stapling pages together might help in speeding up the completion process of the books.

Dear Fourth Grade Class,

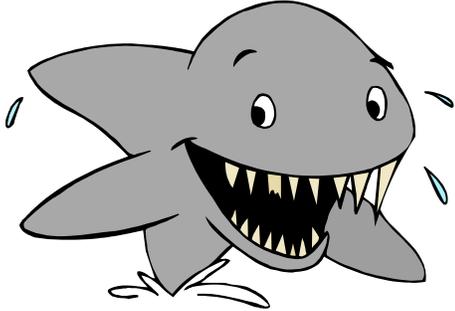
Our class is participating in the "Great Mail Race." We think it is a neat idea and hope that you do too! The idea is to write to a class in each of the fifty states, so that your class can find out information about your grade in each of the states.

Here are the directions:

1. Make copies of the enclosed questionnaire before you fill it out to use for mailings.
2. Fill out the questionnaire with your class and mail it back to us.
3. Assign each state, or states, to a student in the class.
4. Each student picks a city or town in the state and uses the Internet to find addresses and zip codes for schools.
(www.50states.com or www.greatschools.net are good websites to use.)
5. Letters are addressed as follows:
Any Fourth Grade Class
Name of School
City, State, Zip Code
6. Develop a class letter or allow each student to write a letter to be used.
7. Make a copy of this instruction letter for the students to include.
8. Each student writes to the town they have selected and encloses the questionnaire and instructions.
9. Draw a large map of the United States. Put the names of the towns and schools that you have written to and color each state as you receive a reply.

We hope that you will join us in the "Great Mail Race." We hope to hear from you soon. Please fill out the questionnaire and return it to us even if you decide to not join the race. We are eagerly awaiting your response.

Sincerely,



Imagine School at North Port

1000 Innovation Avenue

North Port, FL 34289

Dear Fifth Grade,

My class has joined the Great Mail Race. I want to challenge your class to join us! We hope to hear from all 50 states. Your class might want to join the race so that you can learn about all 50 states, too! You might even make a pen pal in the meantime! I am enclosing a survey for you and your class to complete and return to my class. We are excited to learn about you and your school!

My name is (first name only). I am (something about yourself). I chose to write to (the name of the state you are writing to), because (reasons you chose that state/interesting facts about the state that you discovered). Florida (or North Port) is (something cool about our town or state). Our specials at Imagine School are (or something else about Imagine). Hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

(Your First Name Only)

P.S. My class is also working on a research project on the U.S. Postal Service. If your class can, could you please send us a picture of your town or city's post office? Thanks! ☺

I chose to write to Connecticut because I was born there! I began to research the state, and learned some cool new facts. One thing that interested me was _____.

The Great Mail Race Questionnaire

What is the name of your school? _____

What city and state are you in? _____

What grades do you have in your school? _____

How many students do you have in your school? _____

What is your school mascot? _____

How many students are in your class? _____

What months does your school year begin and end? _____

How long is your school day? _____ From _____ To _____

Do 5th graders change classes? If yes, for what subjects? _____

What special classes do 5th graders have? _____

How many 5th grades are in your school? _____

Are there extra-curricular activities for 5th graders? If yes, what are they?

What kind of field trips do you take? _____

What is your state most famous for? _____

What are some interesting tourist attractions in your city or state? _____

What major landforms or waterways are in your area? _____

What is your climate like? _____

Describe your community. Circle one: Urban Rural Suburban

What large cities do you live close to? _____

What are the favorite foods of the students in your class? _____

Favorite book? _____ Favorite candy? _____

Favorite subject? _____ Favorite sport? _____

Please fill out and return it to the school you received it from. Thank you! Our school address is: