

**Teacher's Notes:****The Message Tree****Background to the eGold Educational Activities**

This is a series of activities designed for upper primary school students, to bring the content and concepts of the eGold website to life. Student activities are designed to facilitate self-exploration and empathy with the concepts presented.

Timing & resources

This lesson is designed to take place amongst other work in two or three periods, spread across several days. If it is successful, it is possible that the activities become a feature of the classroom for the duration of the term.

Objectives

At the conclusion of this learning activity students will have demonstrated the ability to;

- Complete a creative activity demonstrating an awareness of the methods of communication and engagement employed in the past, specifically on the goldfields.
- Engage with others in the class and with their work to understand and empathise with different points of view.

Overview

The message tree was a feature of many early goldfields communities. In the absence of post offices and a formal postal system, it was the way that news was communicated between diggers. People would hang or tie messages on the message tree, for others to come and collect.

A very well known message tree was in the market square in Castlemaine where diggers would come and go and exchange the news of the day to one another.

Classroom Activities

The following classroom activities are all variations of the same concept, which is to build a message tree in the classroom for the students to use. This enables the students to understand how difficult and innovative communication was before mobile phones and emails existed. The tree can simply be a blank classroom wall or the students could spend some time drawing a large tree on butcher's paper or making a tree as part of art class.

Once the location and form of the tree is established, there are several different activities that may need modification depending upon the individual classroom circumstance and the students' levels of engagement with the project.

Activity A

This first activity provides more guidance to the students to help orient them to the concept of the message tree in practice.

Each participating students' name is to be placed in a hat and then one name drawn by each student. Whomever the student draws is to be the recipient of the message. In each message, the sender should tell the recipient something about themselves, and also ask a question of the recipient. It is important that all messages are signed and addressed.

Once all messages have been posted, the students are then to retrieve the messages left for them, and if inspired write a response.

Example

Hi Daniel

How are you? I have three pets, one is a cat and two are fish. My pets are really nice. Do you have any pets?

From Sarah

Activity B

This second activity requires the students have a clear understanding of the message tree, and will work better with a smaller number of students.

Each student is to post a message with which they are looking for someone that has the same interest or ideas as them. For example they may look for someone who likes the same sport, lives in the same suburb as them, or likes the same computer games.

Once all messages have been posted, the students are then to retrieve a message appropriate to them and write a response.

This activity will need to be monitored quite carefully with an emphasis on broad messages and some pre-written messages to ensure inclusiveness.

Example

Hello

I like playing soccer at lunchtime and after school. Sometimes I play with my brother on the weekend too. Soccer's awesome.

From Michelle

Activity C

This final activity requires the students have not only understood the message tree concept, but to have embraced it.

At the beginning of the week ask the students to spend a week leaving messages on the message tree for one another instead of calling, texting or emailing their classmates. At the end of the week spend 5 minutes discussing how the students found the experience; whether they have a preferred method of communicating with their friends, the advantages and disadvantages of the message tree, what communication on the goldfields would have been like using a message tree and what problems it may have caused, what might have changed on the goldfields had the miners and soldiers had mobile phones or internet access, and whether they appreciate the way technology has changed how we communicate.