

L-S Chemistry Times

September 16, 2000

Sudbury, Massachusetts, U. S. A.

Chem Students Get Project Assignment

The students in Mr. Damelin's Chemistry classes today received their assignment for their first quarter project. Each pair of students drew the name of some important scientist from the past. During the next month they will read up on this famous person and learn what that person contributed to the advancement of science and humankind. The final report will be in the form of a newspaper. There will be articles on the person's biography, on the person's scientific accomplishments and how these discoveries relate to the time and place in which they occurred. (See related stories.)



Details Released on Project Assignment

The L-S Chemistry Times has secured a complete copy of the assignment as distributed to chemistry students. Here is what we found.

Scientists will be assigned randomly, with each student drawing a name "out of a hat". However, students may actually choose the scientist if they have a favorite. Two students can work together if they wish.

-MASTHEAD: This is the area where you

place the name of your newspaper. It should be large and attractive in bold print. Include your name(s) and the fictitious date and place of publication.

-ARTICLES: These articles are to be factual accounts of the following topics:

-TIMES: What major world events were occurring in the world and in the region in which your scientist worked at that time?

-BIOGRAPHY: Tell the background of your scientist. You should write about his or her birth, home life, education and career. This is where you paint a word picture of your selected scientist using personality traits, hobbies or other characteristics to bring him or her to life.

-ACHIEVEMENTS: Tell your readers of the major accomplishments or works of your scientist. Do not simply list these, but rather explain why his or her accomplishments were important to the world. This part should not be the opinion of the reporter, but rather the "reported" opinion of experts of the time.

-FEATURES: These pieces can have elements of fiction and fun in them.

-CARTOON: Sketch your own or find a related printed cartoon. Be sure to give credit.

-LETTER TO THE EDITOR: This should give the opinion of a individual living in the same time period. It might be a knowledgeable scientist praising or criticizing the work, an irate priest degrading the work, a government official considering prosecution for violating some obscure statute,...

-EXTRAS: Invent advertisements and classified ads appropriate to the time and place.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

-LAYOUT: Look at how a newspaper is put together. Try to make your's look like a newspaper.

-HEADLINES: Catchy headlines in big letters are always present.

-LENGTH: If it is typed (processed), four to five pages with font size like that of a newspaper. If hand printed (very neatly), six to seven.

-BLACK and WHITE: No color.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: A must. This is an additional separate page. List all sources (minimum 4 sources, of which there should be no more than 2 encyclopedias and at least one printed source) used to gather your information. Include on-line services used for searching.



Interview With Mr. Damelin

L-SCT: Why are you giving this assignment?

Mr. D: It seems that so often students are told to learn what people have done, but don't have any idea of the reason that things were done or any idea of the circumstances surrounding the work. This paper will hopefully integrate the life and times of a famous scientist with the work that person did. Hopefully, the research involved will go beyond the superficial level.

L-SCT: So it's just another biography?

Mr. D: I hope not. I'm hoping that students who already know some of the related history of the era will understand better the impact of new discoveries. For others I hope it will spark some interest in historical events, maybe even make some connections to current history classes.

L-SCT: How's it going to be different?

Mr. D: Besides straightforward reporting of the biography and discoveries of this person, there will be articles about the region of the world, the major historic events of the time in that region, and a little fiction: advertising that might have appeared, classified ads, a

related cartoon, a simulated letter to the editor. Stuff that will give a more complete picture of the happenings of the time and place.

L-SCT: Fiction in a report? Unusual.

Mr. D: Yes, but we have a historical perspective that the scientists of that time did not have. The first person to make gunpowder could not have imagined how explosives would be used kill people on the scale of World War II or to be used in an AK47 or to carve the Panama Canal. With our knowledge of the present we can see the effects that weren't known at the time of the discovery and write from such a viewpoint.

L-SCT: I heard you actually stole the idea for this assignment from Mr. Maciel. Is this true?

Mr. D.: Actually, yes. I thought it was a great idea. I can't even claim credit for the format of this newspaper - I stole that too. Anyway, I thought I would give credit where credit is due, just like my students will when they include the bibliography.

L-SCT: When is this due?

Mr. D: Teusday October 10th.

L-SCT: What is it worth?

Mr. D: It will be worth as much as full lab write up which will roughly be about 10% of their first quarter grade. Aspects of the project on which students will be graded are as follows:

- Quality of writing
- Adequate historical connections
- Depth and Understanding of Scientific info
- Newspaper resemblance
- Creativity
- Timeliness
- No plagiarism!!!