

# Lesson plans for Travel4life.org Articles and Podcasts

## (All Grade Levels)

### Overall Goals

#### Students will...

- gain vocabulary and decoding skills.
  - identify important information using note taking skills.
  - navigate through a website.
  - use notes to compose a letter.
  - learn how to post and receive a letter on a blog.
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### Day #1:

#### Lesson objectives: Students will....

- gain vocabulary skills by identifying and defining unfamiliar words in an article.
- gain knowledge of \_\_\_\_\_ by reading an article about it/them.

#### Materials needed:

- Any student article from the Travel4life.org website
- Large *Vocabulary Rating Chart* for teacher to write on
- Individual *VRC* for students

#### Lesson plan:

1. Share the learning goals with students. (Rewrite in words suited for your grade level.)  
Discuss how nonfiction writing often contains words that are new for us. Today when we read we will practice finding and figuring out some of these words.
2. Pass out the article and *Vocabulary Rating Chart*. Explain that the article was written by Dean Jacobs so he could share with others what he is learning about places, people, animals, or plants around the world. (The genre for this writing is literary nonfiction.)
3. Model how to use the *VRC* by writing 2-4 words from the article on the chart you feel your students might have difficulty with.
4. For each word have the students rate it by putting a check mark in either the: *I know it*, *I've heard of it*, or *I've never heard of it* box. Find the word in the article and see if anyone can define it using clues from the article. If not, the teacher then gives a brief definition of the word and writes the definition in the *Meaning* box on the chart. Students copy the definition and then draw a quick-sketch to show what the word means.
5. Have students read the article and write any words they didn't know or were curious about on their *VRC*.
6. When all students have finished reading, have them take turns sharing a word they didn't know. The teacher writes the word on the big chart while the students write it on their individual charts.  
(This activity can be varied by having students share words in partners or small groups.)

## Vocabulary Rating Chart

How much do you know about these words?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

## Day #2: (This can also be a 2-day lesson.)

### Lesson objectives: Students will....

- gain knowledge and vocabulary about \_\_\_\_\_ through reading an article and viewing a podcast.
- identify important information through note taking.
- navigate through a website.

### Materials needed:

- Any student article from the Travel4life.org website
- Smart Board, white board, or projection screen **or** individual computers with headphones
- Note catcher hand-out for students

### Lesson plan:

1. Share the learning goals with students. (Rewrite in words suited for your grade level.)  
Explain that on this second-read of the article the students will now focus on writing down information they thought was important or interesting.
2. Hand out the note catcher to students and tell them they will use the left side to write down their facts. The right side will be used to record questions they have about their facts.  
**Tell them that later they will use these notes to help them write a letter to Mr. Jacobs.**

3. Model how to use the *Two-Column Note Catcher* by asking someone to share a fact they remember from the first read of the article. Record the information on a class *Note Catcher* projected on an overhead, Smart Board, White Board, or chart paper.

Then work with students to come up with a question about their fact that will extend their learning and help them think more deeply about the information they wrote. Example:

**Fact learned:** When scientists track mountain gorillas they write down everything the gorillas do.

**Question:** Why do scientists write down everything the mountain gorillas do?  
What was the most surprising thing the gorillas did while you were there?

4. Students read the article and write their notes. Afterwards take as much time as needed to record more of their facts and questions on the class chart.

### Taking Notes on a Podcast

5. Explain to students that they will now be using this same note taking strategy to record information and questions about a podcast.
6. Demonstrate how to get on the Travel4life.org website and explain how the home page works.
7. Click on the *Dian Fossey Project* tab and find the section with the article and podcast you are using.
8. Introduce the podcast you are viewing and explain how it contains some of the same information as the article they just read. Now they will get to hear Mr. Jacobs tell about it himself!
9. Show the podcast. You can either stop at various intervals to give students time to take notes or have them add to their notes at the end. Afterwards take as much time as needed to record more of their facts and questions on the class chart.

# Note Catcher

For the *Travel4life.org* Website

Name:

Date:

**What you learned ...**



**Questions you have...**



### Day #3:

#### **Lesson objectives: Students will...**

- learn letter-writing skills.
- use their notes to compose a letter.

#### **Materials needed:**

- The student article used in previous lessons
- Students' *Note Catcher* hand-out
- Computer screen or Smart board
- *Letter ideas to Mr. Jacobs* power point

#### **Lesson plan:**

1. Share the learning goals with students. (Rewrite in words suited for your grade level.)
2. Discuss format of a letter and show *Letter Ideas to Mr. Jacobs* power point or reproduce the attached list to recommend ideas for the content of a letter to Dean Jacobs.
3. Share a model letter to Mr. Jacobs with an example of each idea from the power point in it. The ideas in the letter can be color-coded to match those on the list.  
(See example)
4. Students write a letter to Dean Jacobs using the ideas from their note catcher. The letter can be written individually, in partners, in small groups, or whole class.
5. Have students peer-edit or self-edit their letters, then turn in to the teacher for a final edit. Their final copy will be typed onto the blog.

## Ideas for Letter Content

Dear Mr. Jacobs,

- Introduce yourself.
- Tell what part of the website we looked at.
- Tell what you liked about the website.
- Tell what you learned or connected with.
- Ask questions!
- End with a thank you or kind comment.

Your friend,

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## Example Letter

Dear Mr. Jacobs,

I am a reading teacher at Highland Elementary in Littleton, Colorado. My students and I have been using your website to learn about mountain gorillas. We just watched your podcast called "Mountain Gorillas of the DRC". Your photos of the gorillas are amazing! They made us feel like we were actually there.

It is really neat that you got to spend a whole hour with the gorillas in the wild. That is much more exciting than just seeing them in a cage at the zoo! We learned that the rangers make gorilla sounds to let the gorillas know they are coming. What kinds of sounds have you heard them make? What do some of their sounds mean? We also learned that researchers have been studying mountain gorillas for over 40 years. Why have they been studying the gorillas longer than any other wild animal? What was the most surprising thing you learned about gorillas?

Thank you for teaching us about mountain gorillas. It is exciting to learn from someone who has actually spent time with them!

Your friend,

Ms. Tharp

## Day #5:

### **Lesson objectives: Students will...**

- navigate through a website.
- learn how to post a letter on a blog.

### **Materials needed:**

- Smart Board (Optional)
- Edited letter to Dean Jacobs.
- Computer or mini-laptop for each student.

### **Lesson Plan:**

1. Share the learning goals with students. (Rewrite in words suited for your grade level.)
  2. Remind students how to get on the [www.travel4life.org](http://www.travel4life.org) website.
  3. Model how to get to the blog section of the website.
  4. Look at photos, read, and discuss any entries Mr. Jacobs has posted on the blog that might be of interest to the students.
  5. Explain that they can write to Mr. Jacobs on this blog at any time and he will return their letters.
  6. Show students how to post a comment on the blog (see instructions page) **OR** have students post their letters on the link to the blog that is under the Dian Fossey Project tab. This one might be easier for students to use for this particular project.
  7. Have students type their letter and post it on the blog.
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## Day #6:

### **Lesson objectives: Students will...**

- navigate through a website.
- read a letter they have received on a blog.

### **Materials needed:**

- Computer or mini-laptop for each student or pair of students

### **Lesson Plan:**

1. With a partner, have students get on the blog section of the travel4life.org website (or the link to the blog from the *Dian Fossey Project* tab) and find their letter from Dean Jacobs.
2. Have students read the letter they wrote to Mr. Jacobs to their partner. Then they can read his letter in response. Switch and have the other partner share their letters.

## How to Post a Comment on the Travel4life.org website

- Type: **travel4life.org** into the browser box
- Click on: **Go** or press the **Enter key**
- Click on: **Blog Site** on the menu choice of the Home page
- Look at the bottom of any blog entry.
- Click on: **Comments**
- **Scroll down** to the bottom of the comments section.
- Type in your **first name** only.
- Type in your teacher's email address.  
(If you are at home, type in your **parent's email address**.)
- Type your letter in the **Comments** box.
- Click on: **Post**
- **Type in** the random letters in the **empty box**. Make sure they are exactly as they appear!
- Click on: **Continue**