



## Kimberly Jordan

Kimberly is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Binford Middle School, reportedly one of the best middle schools in the Richmond City Public School district in Virginia.

Kimberly counts herself lucky to be in a well-managed school where there are many excellent and dedicated teachers. Literature is her favorite subject because the stories make the characters come alive for her. Although she also likes history as a school subject, and sees history as a series of “stories that actually happened”, she would like history to come alive for her in the way that literary characters do.

### Environment

Kimberly’s history class is mostly taught through PowerPoint lectures, readings, maps, and videos. There is a limited amount of technology use in the classroom. Although there are classroom desktops available, the class activities limit the use of the computers to looking up the maps and watching the videos.

After each lesson, she rarely remembers historical dates and facts because they are presented as a list to memorize, rather than as events that can be visualized and discussed in order to be understood.

### Attitudes

Kimberly is highly-motivated to learn history. She even takes online quizzes that help prepare her for the actual classroom tests by providing a review of the material. One of her favorite classroom activities (which, unfortunately, they are seldom asked to do) was to think about people in history and research about them. They then had to create a presentation using their findings about their chosen historical character. She thinks that similar activities that would require students to visualize actual events, thus making history “come alive”, would result in a more effective and deeper understanding of the subject matter.

She thinks that discussions in history class are interesting and necessary because history books don’t necessarily reflect the truth. She cites as an example the recent revelation that the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Virginia history textbook erroneously states that “Thousands of Southern blacks fought in the Confederate ranks, including two black battalions under the command of Stonewall Jackson.”.

Aside from history books not necessarily being truthful, Kimberly thinks that history also depends on “who is telling the story”. She likes learning about women in history – so when it

comes to the history of suffrage for example, she would like to know more about it from the perspectives of both male and female historical figures.

## **Skills**

Kimberly is more creative than analytical and logical. She is good at drawing and at visualizing concepts and events. One of her favorite activities is creating skits for the stories they study in Literature class. For their last novel, *Of Mice and Men*, she created a skit of the opening scene where George and Lennie are walking by the river. Aside from the skit, she created a detailed drawing of the setting. The props, the script, and her illustrations made the story real to her. She could feel George's protective attitude towards Lennie and Lennie's complete trust in George.

## **Mobile Device Proficiency**

Kimberly is considered a "digital native" since she has used computers in school from the early age of six when she was in first grade. At home, she uses the family desktop computer for school work, email, online games, music, and videos.

Kimberly's grandmother gave her an iPod Touch for Christmas last year and she has enjoyed downloading free game applications that are for entertainment or for learning. She is very comfortable with, and is quite adept at using the iPod Touch and its features. Her favorite history application is the Expedition Africa game from the History Channel. The game recreates the route that Henry Stanley took on his expedition to find Dr. David Livingstone. Players have to balance risks and rewards to ensure that they can continue their journey. If they run out of porters or food for example, their journey ends and they lose the game. Kimberly enjoys this game because of the mental challenge to think ahead. Participation in the game makes her feel that she is re-living the actual journey of Henry Stanley and is able to put herself in his shoes and strive to achieve his mission.

## **Frustrations**

Kimberly is frustrated by the history lessons that are taught using PowerPoint. Students merely take notes and memorize items to pass tests. The methodology does not engage the mind actively because mere regurgitation of the presented lesson is required. Engaging classroom activities are few and far-between, and most of the time she simply has to listen to the teacher and take notes that carry no deep significance for her or her classmates.

## Goals in History Class

Kimberly would like to:

- Learn history in a more interactive and engaging way such as games, debates, and discussions that use visual and collaborative activities that explain the events, rather than being given a series of facts to be memorized
- Get a higher grade in her history class and in her SOLs
- Earn extra grade credits by completing supplementary learning activities