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Writing occasions that are particularly suitable for heritage language education

Goal

Many of the previously suggested ideas can be implemented with little difficulty in the native language education classroom. The following writing suggestions more closely focus on issues germane to heritage language teaching. As such, they are more closely related to the themes of either the country of origin or living in and between two cultures and languages, which is the typical experience of the students who attend heritage language classes in their native language.

1. Riddle texts

4th – 9th grade

30 minutes



The students receive an assignment to individually describe an event from the history, culture or geography of their country of origin, without, however, referencing the event, person or place by name. The topic should be limited to history, culture, geography or a person of significance. The task can first be practiced orally by the whole class. After the texts are written, they are collected and exchanged among the students who should solve the riddles.

2. Reports, posters, presentations

3rd – 9th grade



This larger project may extend over several lessons. The students are tasked to create a report, a poster or presentation about an event or a significant person from their country of origin. The different methods of presentation are first discussed in class (e. g. poster or presentation with a corresponding worksheet). The level of difficulty should, of course, be age-appropriate. Two or more double lessons should be dedicated to the project (including presentations). It would be a good idea to announce the project before the longer vacations so as to afford the students time to prepare and collect material.

3. Worksheets, non-fiction texts and quizzes

4th – 9th grade

45 minutes



In lieu of the instructors' preparing all the worksheets, non-fiction texts, pictures, computer presentations, etc. for the heritage language classes, the students can occasionally do this just as well. In doing so, they can learn and review a lot of material. It is very important to previously determine precisely what the task entails, however (e. g. prepare a worksheet or a quiz to finish a topic).

4. Real or fictitious interviews

5th – 9th grade



The students are tasked to conduct interviews concerning a previously discussed topic, to document it in writing and to present it to the class. Possible topics include the memories of parents and grandparents of their childhood in their native country, an interview with someone of the same age in the country of origin concerning leisure time or perspectives of the future, an interview with people in the host country on the topic of racism, foreigners and integration. It is important to previously discuss and practice with the students how to conduct an interview: asking and formulating questions (not yes/no questions, rather open/probing questions: "Tell me about, ...", and to speak as little as possible as the interviewer. Also, explain how to document the answers, not copied word for word, but rather summarized, using key words. The interview may be recorded on tape or a hand-held device.

Appealing variant: conduct and document fictitious interviews with famous people in society and politics from the students' own culture.