

Student projects based on Catacombs and the Forbidden City

Educators have used Catacombs and the Forbidden City to encourage experience-based reading, cognitive development and simply to have fun! Activities include history, geology and writing development. Some short projects combine reading a chapter and the activity in less than an hour, while others take several hours of effort.

Short Activities

Some groups have a limit of an hour for reading a chapter and completing a project. Hat making is particularly fun. Read Chapter 4, The Forbidden City, and pay attention to the details of the layout of the City, the buildings, or clothing of the various ministries (departments) to create an activity. For instance, hat making is an activity the students enjoy that is easy, cost effective and completed in under a half an hour. The students can wear their final product during the day! Depending on reading level and speed, other activities in this chapter include drawing, or assembling buildings and boats using a variety of materials.

Additional Activities

- History:
 - Board games
 - Trivial pursuit-themed question/answer game with history, geology, characters and plot
 - Musical or art creation
 - Build a replica of the Forbidden City
 - Choose and build your own Forbidden City
 - Choose and build a type of ship or boat mentioned in Catacombs
 - Pick a type of minister, research the colors, details of the outfits and have a Chinese dress up day
 - Hat making day (based upon all the hats worn by the various ministers)
 - Food day-compare and contrast how the Chinese court differed from the French Court (or other royal courts of your choosing)
 - Research and prepare an authentic Chinese dish

- Geology
 - Volcano making contest
 - Volcano research based upon types of volcanoes, types of eruptions
 - Create types of internal cones (stalagmites, stalagmites etc)
- Writing development
 - Pick a character from the book and prepare a short story
 - Research the factual nature of one of the primary characters identified in the historical notes.
 - Explore the use of symbols as a means to develop a character: create (physically) new symbols that might change the nature of a character
 - Create a one-scene play based upon a character or sub-topic of Catacombs

Christian Activity

The lead characters are given gifts that are spiritual metaphors. A shirt for the Cage, the boy, that protects him from evil. It is representative of the spirit of Christ. The girl is given a necklace, which allows her to see what men want. In this book 1, she "sees" material things, such as jewels. As the series progresses, she sees the inner person-the intent of the hearts. Both the shirt and the necklace can be made from simple/inexpensive materials, and give the kids a symbol they can wear that reminds them of Christ-like attributes. And each gift is given when the wearer has been remarkable in some way.