

	OBJECTIVES Student pairs will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ use USA TODAY and other sources to research a current conflict. ▶ identify at least five past events that led to a present situation. ▶ create a humorous, thoughtful script for a time-travel cartoon that illustrates how the event could have been prevented. ▶ rehearse and present their script. ▶ evaluate the performances of peers. 	STANDARDS <i>This project meets the following national standards for middle and high school:</i> NL-ENG.K-12.8 Developing research skills <i>Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. (NCTE)</i> NL-ENG.K-12.4 Communication skills <i>Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. (NCTE)</i> NL-ENG.K-12.7 Evaluating data <i>Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. (NCTE)</i>														
<p>WEEK 1: In <i>Peabody's Improbable History</i>, a 1960s TV cartoon, Peabody, a dog, and his pet boy, Sherman, travelled to an important occasion in history via the aptly named "Wayback Machine." Peabody and Sherman usually found events in a mess and had to fix some problem so that history turned out according to plan. The show – which used wry humor to teach and entertain viewers – always ended with a groan-inducing pun. In this project, you and a partner will be writing and presenting an episode of <i>Peabody's Improbable History</i> – except your characters will be fixing the past so that a current conflict <i>doesn't</i> occur.</p> <p>This week, peruse USA TODAY for an article about a conflict that interests you and your partner. After reading the story, record the pertinent information about the event (the who, what, when, where, why and how). Then, create 10 questions about the event that are not answered in the article. At least half of your questions should require critical thinking – i.e., they will not have simple answers. (Complex questions usually begin with "why," "how," "if," etc.) Finally, use outside resources to locate the answers to your queries.</p>																
<p>WEEK 2: Consider the innumerable events that have led to your existence – all the details of how, when and where your parents met, and how, when and where <i>their</i> parents met, etc. What would have happened if just one of those circumstances had been different? Would your parents have met? Would you still be here? Now, think about the conflict you researched last week, and list at least five historical events that directly or indirectly led to it. Which of these – if it had never occurred or had occurred differently – might have prevented the current conflict? After discussing various scenarios, choose the one that you find most intriguing. Finally, decide how Peabody and Sherman will execute this change in history when they travel back in time.</p>																
<p>WEEK 3: Now it is time to begin writing your <i>Improbable History</i> episode. As you work on your script, it might be helpful for your partner and you to role-play the parts of Peabody and Sherman. Some things to keep in mind: 1.) Your episode must explain how the two characters influenced history, so that the conflict you researched never occurred. 2.) Your script should be funny and educational. Make sure it teaches peers at least three important concepts or facts. 3.) The final version of your episode can be presented to your classmates live or on video or audio tape. If you choose the last option, make sure you include sound effects. 4.) The last line of your script should be a really bad pun. 5.) Your completed episode should be no more than four-and-a-half minutes long – the same length as the originals. When you have written, edited and rewritten your episode, practice it until you can deliver your lines fluently. Then, work on your comic timing.</p>																
<p>WEEK 4: In preparation for pairs' performances, create and make copies of an evaluation form similar to the one below. Fill out a form after every performance. Be honest, but kind. Give your completed evaluations to your teacher. After the performances, discuss whether individuals – like the leaders of the world's nations – actually have the power to alter history. Writer Leo Tolstoy believed that the actions of our leaders are "in bondage to the whole course of previous history, and predestined from all eternity."* Do you agree? Explain.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Names of performers:</td> <td>▶ Rate this performance on the following scale:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Topic of episode:</td> <td>1 - Go back to the drawing board.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▶ What did the episode teach you about the current event?</td> <td>2 - Needs a lot of work.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▶ Did the performance hold your interest? Why or why not?</td> <td>3 - Ok, but not inspiring.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▶ Were the performers well-prepared? Explain.</td> <td>4 - Good. Needs a little tweaking.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>5 - Wow! Can't be improved.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>▶ Thoroughly explain your rating.</td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>*War and Peace</small></p>			Names of performers:	▶ Rate this performance on the following scale:	Topic of episode:	1 - Go back to the drawing board.	▶ What did the episode teach you about the current event?	2 - Needs a lot of work.	▶ Did the performance hold your interest? Why or why not?	3 - Ok, but not inspiring.	▶ Were the performers well-prepared? Explain.	4 - Good. Needs a little tweaking.		5 - Wow! Can't be improved.		▶ Thoroughly explain your rating.
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