

American Colonies Middle Passage Instagram Activity

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## When Lesson Plans Go Wrong

By Educator Barnes – April 17, 2019

After being an instructional coach for three school years, I make no assumptions about what is happening in classrooms in a school. When you are an instructional coach, the principal gives you the rundown on who is a great teacher and who is not. Instructional coaches tend to get inside of classrooms more than principals. Many times, the principal does not know what is truly going.

As an instructional coach, I was responsible for reviewing lesson plans. They were sent to both the principal and me, but I was the one reading them each week. Based on some of the lesson plans I read, I seriously wondered whether some teachers slept through class when the professors were showing how lesson plans should be written, or maybe they were too lazy to make a lesson plan and instead downloaded a ready-made lesson from a site like Teachers Pay Teachers.

In education, teachers frequently say, “You have to beg, borrow, and steal.” This is in reference to resources and ideas to use in the classroom, but some teachers aren’t the type of teachers you should beg, borrow, or steal. Let’s look at exhibit A.

Teacher Erika Forth uploaded “American Colonies Middle Passage Instagram Activity” to Teachers Pay Teachers where teachers could pay \$2.00 to download this assignment. This is the assignment description:

*What If African slaves on the #MIDDLEPASSAGE had Instagram? What photos would they post to document their experiences and the horrors of their journey? This fun, engaging activity asks students to create a historically accurate Instagram feed post from slaves traveling to the American colonies on the Middle Passage.*

*Use as a standalone assignment, formative assessment, in center /station, as part of a learning menu, substitute work, or as extension work. Students will love using their creativity and artistic skills to complete this assignment. Enjoy!*

Educator Dr. Kristopher J. Childs was having none of this foolishness. He called this ‘assignment’ out on Twitter and took the further step to contact the creator. Below is the response he received.



Dr. Kristopher J. Childs 🎓👓 ...  
@DrKChilds

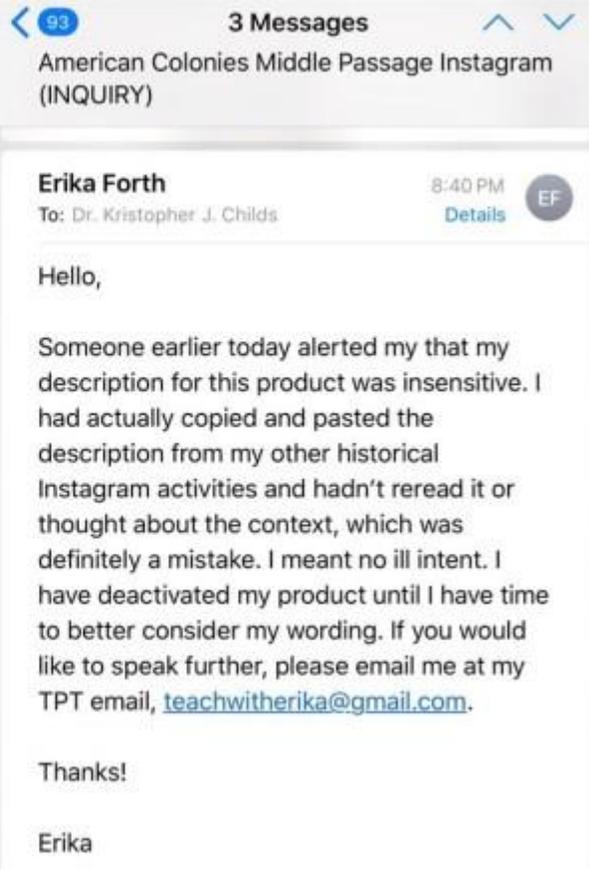
Hey @TpTdotcom,

What could be fun and engaging about the #middlepassage?

The torture, rape, lack of food, chains, families ripped apart...

Your Thoughts????

#ridiculous



*Hello,*

*Someone earlier today alerted (me) that my description for this product was insensitive. I had actually copied and pasted the description from my other historical Instagram activities and hadn't reread it or thought about the context, which was definitely a mistake. I meant no ill intent. I have deactivated my product until I have time to better consider my wording. If you would like to speak to me further, please email me at my TPT email, [teachwitherika@gmail.com](mailto:teachwitherika@gmail.com).*

*Thanks!*

*Erika*

Where to begin? It's no secret that teachers have been known for copying and pasting lesson plans. This tends to happen when no one is monitoring what teachers are submitting to the administration. Not only did Ms. Forth copy and paste this description for her lesson plan, but

she also charged people money for this trash. Yes, she deactivated her product but it seems that she thinks this assignment is okay and that she only needs to reword the description.

What are children supposed to learn by creating Instagram images of the horrors black people faced during the middle passage (and did she really include #MIDDLEPASSAGE in the description)? Does she want students to contemplate whether they should create a rape scene, a beating, or being covered in your own (and others) excrement? Maybe an image of dead bodies being tossed overboard would suffice. The fact that she did not understand this is not a good assignment at all is problematic.

I don't know if she is teaching students of color, but my heart breaks if she is. They should not be subjected to this. If she were teaching all white students, they should not be subjected to this either.

Lesson plans go wrong when no one is paying attention to what teachers are doing. Most teachers make great lesson plans and get joy from creating activities to help their students master concepts. Other teachers have no clue what they are doing, and their lesson plans are not only horrible but could also be traumatizing to students. Principals and instructional coaches, please look at lesson plans. Teachers, continue to call out other teachers who are creating plans like this and don't be so quick to beg, borrow, and steal lessons from other teachers because some teacher lesson plans should be set on fire.