

## USING LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE ARTS TO TEACH SOCIAL STUDIES

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### USING LITERATURE TO TEACH SOCIAL STUDIES

There are many very good social studies texts and commercial curriculums that can be used in elementary and middle school classrooms. Unfortunately, teachers sometimes find themselves forced to use social studies texts and curriculums that are outdated, poorly written, or badly designed. In these cases, you can hear an audible groan when students are asked to take out their social studies texts. There are two very simple solutions to this: The first is to creatively adapt the social studies text using only those parts that you find worthwhile while adding to the other parts as if it were an integrated unit (see Chapter 3). The second is to use literature in the form of picture books and trade books for social studies class. This section focuses on the second option.

#### *The Magic of Books*

*Picture books* rely on pictures to carry the story and are usually used with primary students. A *trade book* is a story that is broken into chapters and relies on text, instead of pictures, to carry the story. Why literature should be used with a social studies curriculum? Four reasons:

**Learning through stories is a natural way to learn.** Throughout history humans have used stories, mythologies, and legends to carry important ideas from one generation to another (Campbell, 1988). Stories are far more interesting than a list of facts. Also the human mind seems better able to absorb and remember stories. This is because a story line pulls things together in a logical sequence. Stories also elicit or draw upon our emotions and personal experiences, enabling us to make associations to our own lives. Through story, facts and concepts become more relevant and we are able to learn things at a much deeper level.

**Literature helps us to experience and understand other people, times, and situations.** Louise Rosenblatt (1983) says that literature makes known the many ways humans meet life's possibilities. Reading books and hearing stories allows us to hear the thoughts of others, and to make contact with their values, dreams, and philosophies. Also,

through literature we can have vicarious experiences of people in different times and places. In this way a good book can be a powerful field trip of the mind.

**Literature can enhance students' ability to engage in moral reasoning and can help clarify their own values.** Hearing the thoughts of literary characters struggling with issues and situations is much like what happens with moral dilemmas and values clarification activities (see Chapter 15). Literature can be used then, not to teach particular values or behaviors, but rather, to expose students to the values and moral reasoning of others who are searching for what they consider to be the best action or behavior in a given circumstance. Being exposed to literary characters working out their principles and values creates the conditions whereby students are better able to reflect upon and gain perspective on their own. Also, as described in Chapter 15, the problems and situations faced by characters in the story can be used as problem-solving and moral-reasoning activities for the students in your class.

**Literature helps children make sound choices.** In a story we encounter the imaginative trials and errors of others. Here we are able to vicariously experience the logical consequences of certain actions without having to experience the actual actions or consequences. Literature can also help people view their own problems and situations more objectively. For example, if a child was going through an abusive situation, reading about the abusive situation of another may provide a context for that child to make sense of the situation and provide some ideas as to possible courses of action. Similarly, if students are making decisions related to drugs, alcohol, sex, gangs, or crime, experiencing the full impact of possible decisions through the actions of some literary characters can help to provide insight.

### ***The Literature-Driven Approach***

So how do you create a social studies unit around a chapter book or picture book? These are the steps:

- 1. Find a good book.** Look for books that you find interesting and engaging. Chances are if the book is interesting to you, your students will also find it interesting.
- 2. Read the book or books.** As you read the book start to look for areas in the story where you might create lessons related to geography, time, government, society, science and technology, human interaction, or other areas related to social studies. For example, if you are using *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977), you might research important events of the 1970s, geography or events related to the time and place, music and cultural traditions of the period, transportation of the era, or important technological innovations that occurred during that time.

### HOW DO I? Use Literature in Social Studies

Trade books and picture books can be used to augment lessons from a social studies curriculum or textbook. This is the *textbook-driven approach* outlined in the column on the left below. Social studies units can also be built around trade books and picture books. This is the *literature-driven approach* outlined in the column on the right.

Textbook-Driven Approach	Literature-Driven Approach
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start with a topic or unit.</li> <li>2. Find a book (narrative text) related to the topic.</li> <li>3. Get a copy for each student.</li> <li>4. Use literature circles or reading workshops where students are reading different books or read different chapters at their own pace.</li> <li>5. Create mini- lessons to teach textbook concepts.</li> <li>6. Use textbooks as a reference source for students to get specific information for activities and assignments</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find a good book.</li> <li>2. Teach social studies lessons based on things found in each chapter</li> <li>3. Use textbooks as a reference source for students to get specific information for activities and assignments.</li> <li>4. Create mini- lesson to teach social studies concepts.</li> <li>5. Students spend the majority of class time reading or engaged in literacy discussions.</li> </ol>

**3. Do research; get information.** Part of teaching is providing students with information that is well organized and in a form that they can easily assimilate. Good teachers teach. That is, they recognize there are times when it is necessary to tell students about the world in which they live, to provide them with information using visual aids and spoken words (speech) in a structured format. Based on the ideas in Step 2, conduct research in order to get the background information necessary to create and teach effective lessons.

**4. Create activities to go with each chapter.** All of the activities described in this book can be used with trade and picture books to design pre-reading activities or post-reading activities. The goals of the activities are to manipulate, expand upon, or explore the ideas found in the chapter or in the information provided by you during the social studies lesson.

**5. Decide on the approach for reading and the reading schedule.** Create a very flexible general outline of the chapters that contains the information that you will provide with each and activities that might go with each chapter. With trade books, do no more than a chapter or two a day. This allows the slower readers to keep up with the class. A typical class period might include one of the following approaches:

- Provide a pre-reading activity, allow students to read the assigned chapter silently or with a reading partner, and then assign a post-reading activity based on that chapter to be done in class or as homework or during social studies class.

- Create an activity to do at the beginning or end of the class and let students spend the majority of time reading.

- Provide information related to the book and then create an in-class activity or assignment for students to do. Here you would not assign chapters, but simply provide information (lecture), relate this information to things happening in the book, and then design activities to manipulate the information or ideas presented.

**6. Differentiate instruction for high- and low-ability students.** With younger students, it may be appropriate for you to read the assigned chapters and then do classroom activities. With older students, you will need to accommodate to meet the special needs of readers of differing abilities (see Chapter 6).

Should you let students read ahead? Generally yes. It is hard to say no to a student who has a passion for reading. If students finish the book you can provide them with books written by the same author or other books on the same topic. However, be careful not to make this extra reading extra work. That is, if they read extra books they should not have to be held accountable for these books. The goal here is to simply enjoy the stories.

### ***Books and Genre***

What kinds of books and genres should you use in a social studies class? The genre is not as important as the content. Almost any book that has humans interacting can be used for a social studies class. For example, there are some very good fantasies or science fiction books such as *A Wrinkle in Time* (L'Engle, 1962) and *Eva* (Dickinson, 1990) that can be used to cover topics such as good and evil, heroes, feeling different, future technology, or problem solving. There are realistic fiction books that depict real-life situations that can be used to examine interpersonal and social issues such as *The Goats* (Cole, 1990) and *Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1990). Historical books and historical fiction such as *A Long Year of Silence* (Doty, 2004) and *Girl in a Cage* (Yolen & Harris, 2003) can be used to examine time periods.

Websites containing lists and brief descriptions of a variety of trade books that can be used in a social studies curriculum are found on the Student Study Site for Chapter 11. The NCSS has a particularly valuable website here that identifies notable social studies trade books along with related NCSS thematic strands.

## **STRATEGIES FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH LITERATURE.**

This section describes variety of strategies and activities that can be used with literature. These are all designed to get students to interact with story ideas and to make connections with literature which, in turn, as will enhance comprehension. These strategies and activities can also be the basis for literature log entries as well as other types of

assignments and activities. For a more detailed description of literacy strategies, see *Teaching Reading and Writing: A Guidebook for Tutoring and Remediating Students* (Johnson, 2008).

• **Rating character traits.** This is a post-reading activity where students identify three or four character traits and then rate the degree to which various characters in the story displays those traits (see Figure 11.1). Eventually students will be able to select their own characters and traits to rate. This activity invites students to go beyond the written text, to infer, and to look for clues to support their rating. Students can also rate and compare characters from different stories, from real life, history, current events, or even their own lives. It can be an effective way to make connections with literature. Results can be displayed in a journal or on a poster in either table form (Figure 11.1).

Mr. Oberman's social studies class was reading *The Upstairs Room* by Johanna Reiss (1972). This is the story of two young Jewish sister who were given shelter by a Dutch farmer and his wife during the German occupation of Holland during World War II. Annie and Sini de Leeuw lived for two years in the cramped attic of their house. As part of this unit, students created the table (Figure 11.1).

**Figure 11.1. Table for rating character traits.**

	<b>Brave</b>	<b>Smart</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Friendly</b>
<b>Annie de Leeuw</b>	8	7	8	8
<b>Laura Ingalls</b>	8	8	8	9
<b>Donald Rumsfeld</b>	1	1	2	1
<b>Lyra Asriel</b>	9	10	9	8
<b>Martin Luther King</b>	9	10	9	8
<b>Andy Johnson</b>	7	9	9	5

**Key:** 10 = very high; 5 = average; 1 = very low

• **Character maps.** Character maps are a post-reading activity in which students identify two or three describing adjectives for a story character and then finding supporting details. First draw a circle in the middle of a sheet of paper with the name of a story character on it. Next, find two to three character traits or adjectives that are descriptive of that character. These become nodes. Then, list story events that reflect or indicate each of the describing adjectives (see Figure 11.2). To make the personal connection, students would then create a character map of themselves, a friend, or a person they admire.

• **Person chart.** The person chart is a post-reading activity that invites students to use story details to make inferences about what a character might like and dislike as well as things they are good at and not good at (see Figure 11.3).

Figure 11.2. Character map.

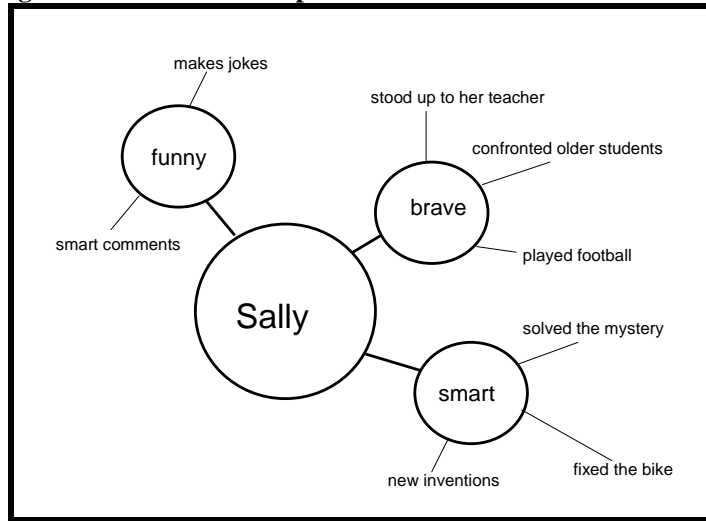
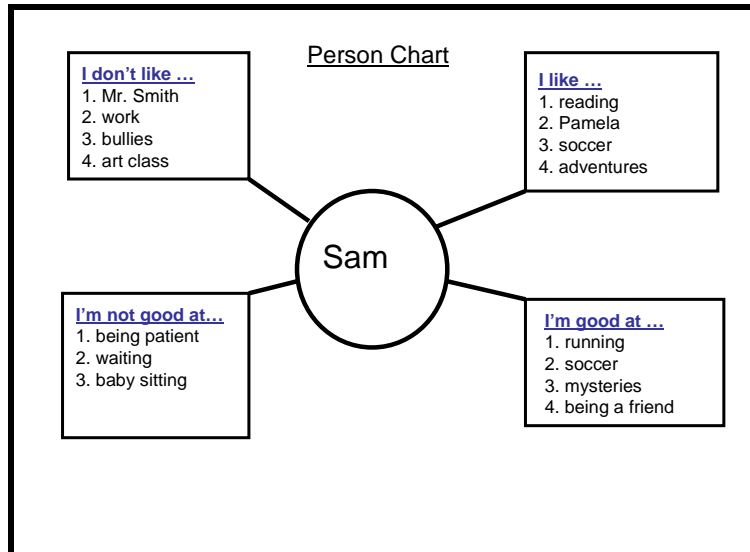


Figure 11.3. Person chart.



• **Comparing T-Chart.** A comparing T-chart is simple a way to compare any two characters, items, story events, chapters, or stories side by side. The comparing T-chart in Figure 11.4 enables the reader to make very personal connections to the story.

Figure 11.4. Comparing T-chart: Lyra and me.

<u>My unfortunate incidents</u>	<u>Lyra's unfortunate incidents</u>
got up late cornflakes were soggy got yelled at on the bus lost my homework got teased at recess dropped the ball in gym	Her friend was kidnapped Discovers her mother is evil People try to kill her Has to run away from home Is captured by polar bears Almost loses Patalaimon
<p><b>Ideas/Conclusions:</b> Both of us have had some unfortunate incidents in our lives. Hers are much worse than mine.</p>	

• **Compare-O-graph.** The compare-O-Graph (Figure 11.5) enables students to compare many characters (or other things) simultaneously.

Figure 11.5. Compare-O-graph.

COMPARE-O-GRAPH			
<u>me</u>	<u>Lyra</u>	<u>Luke Skywalker</u>	<u>Arthur</u>
No sister	No sister	Has a sister	Has a sister
Written word	alethiometer	Light saber	sword
Very handsome	don't know	Okay	don't know
runs from dangers	faces danger	Don't' know	Don't know
<p><b>Ideas/Conclusions:</b></p>			

• **Attribute chart.** Described in Chapter 5 to teach concepts, the attribute chart can also be used to compare (a) stories found in different chapters, books, movies, or TV shows; (b) characters from the stories, TV, movies, real life, history, or current events; or events from stories, real life, or history (Figure 11.6).

Figure 11.6 Attribute chart.

ATTRIBUTE CHART					
	Can Sing	Can dance	Loves honey	Battles evil	Battles paparazzi
Me	x		x	x	x
Lyra				x	
Luke Skywalker				x	
Winnie-the-Pooh	x		x		
Brittney Spears	x	x			x

**Ideas/Conclusions:**

• **Story Analysis.** Analysis is thinking skill that can be used as a post-reading activity. Here students analyze the story (or chapter) and decide what the beginning, middle, and ending parts of the story are, and the important elements in each (Figure 11.7).

Figure 11.7. Story analysis chart.

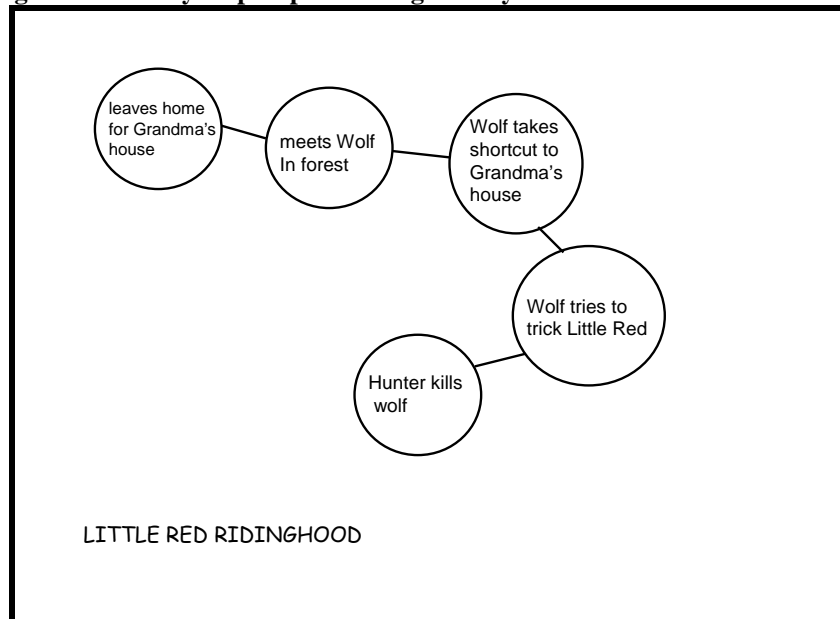
ANALYZING STORY PARTS		
Wizard of Oz		
List interesting or important events that occurred in each part of the story.		
Beginning	Middle	End
- In Kansas - Miss Gulch takes dog - Dorothy runs away -Tornado comes - Dorothy get's carried to Oz - House lands on Witch	- Find herself in Oz - Meets Glinda and Wicked Witch - Tries to find the Wizard to get home - Meets Tinman, Scarecorw, and Lion	- Kills Witch - Brings broom to Wizard - Get's in balloon - Shoes take her home - Says she'll never leave home again



• **Story map.** A story map is a visual representation of the story plot. It lays out the story events so that you can see them in order. Story maps come in a variety of forms. Timelines are the simplest form of a story map. The story map in Figure 11.8 can be used as a pre-reading activity. Here the teacher creates a visual representation of the major events or elements in a book or chapter. This provides structure and a preview/overview to enhance students' comprehension as they read the story independently. It can then be used as a during- or post-reading activity. Here students would list interesting or important events related to each of the nodes or bubbles.

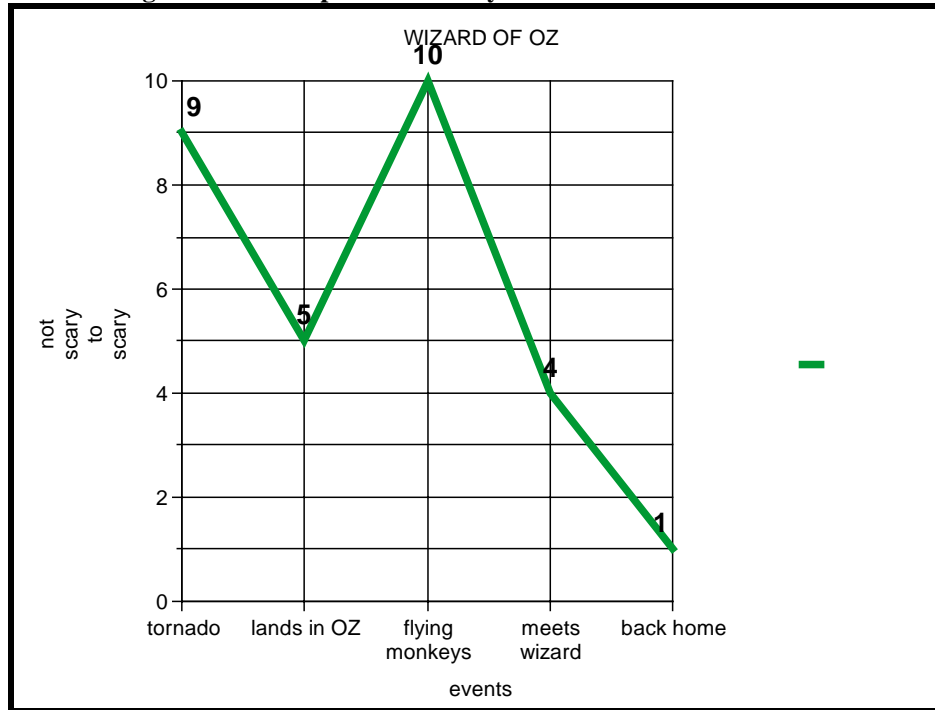
Story maps are open-ended activities in which students at all levels can experience some level of success. They also provide a good sense of how students comprehend and interpret story events.

**Figure 11.8. Story map as pre-reading activity.**



• **Plot Profile.** The plot profile can be used with individual chapters or with complete books. Students begin by recording interesting or important events that occurred. These are then put in chronological order and numbered. The numbers corresponding to each event are listed on the horizontal axis on the bottom of a line graph (see Figure 11.9). The vertical axis is numbered from one to 10 and is used to rate sort some criteria (happy or sad, exciting or boring, good or bad, or important or not important). Each story event is then rated. Each point is connected with a line to show change over time.

Figure 11.9. Plot profile for story.



To extend, ask students to list interesting or important events in their life, the past year, the past week, or the day. They can also list current events, historical events, or school/classroom events, or community events. A similar axis and rating system is then used to show change over time. Plot profiles can be shared with a buddy or in a small group or using a large poster. They can be done individually, with a partner, or in small group. Again, when working in small groups, the actual product students create is not nearly as important as the thinking and discussion that takes place in creating it.

### MULTILEVEL INSTRUCTION FOR LITERATURE

Most of the multilevel strategies described Chapter 6 can be used with literature as well.

#### *Students Who are EL Learners*

Two things to keep in mind for students who are EL learners: First, the social and reading vocabularies of these students may vary greatly. For independent reading select books in which most of the words are in their reading vocabularies. That is, you want known words for known concepts. Address new words by introducing them in the context

of a sentence and displaying them with a picture, semantic map, diagram, or visual cue of some kind. Second, do not avoid using students' first language. English-language learning is enhanced when students are encouraged to use the skills and strategies from their first language (Watts-taffe & Truscott, 2000).

### ***Shared Reading Experiences***

The last chapter described how to do a shared reading experience with expository text. This multilevel strategy can also be used with narrative text. The steps for planning this are the same. Figure 11.10 contains questions that can be used here.

**Figure 11.10. Questions for shared reading: narrative text.**

<p><b>To preview:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think this story is about? What clues do you see in the title or cover of the book?</li> <li>2. What does the title tell us?</li> <li>3. What are some interesting things you see on the cover of the book?</li> <li>4. What do you know about _____ ?</li> </ol> <p><b>To check for understanding:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the story about?</li> <li>2. What is the problem?</li> <li>3. What do I want to know more about?</li> <li>4. What do I know about ....?</li> <li>5. What doesn't make sense to you?</li> </ol> <p><b>To associate:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are you thinking about right now? Why?</li> <li>2. What does this story remind you of? Are there events that are similar to another story or to events in your life (compare-O-graph)?</li> <li>3. Who does this character remind you of? Is this character similar to another character you know in another story or in real life (compare-O-graph)?</li> </ol> <p><b>To notice:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is an interesting description that you noticed?</li> <li>2. What new or interesting word did you notice?</li> <li>3. What important story clue did you notice?</li> </ol> <p><b>To Elaborate:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How might you make that sentence more interesting?</li> </ol>	<p><b>To predict-verify-decide:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What's going to happen next?</li> <li>2. What are some important clues? (Use the predict-O-graph)</li> <li>3. How do you think this story will end?</li> </ol> <p><b>To infer:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does this tell us about that character?</li> <li>2. Based on story clues, happened before/next?</li> <li>3. How does _____ feel about _____?</li> </ol> <p><b>To imagine or visualize:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you image this (person, place, or thing) looks like?</li> <li>2. What does this scene look like to you? What are some things you would see if you were there? What picture is painted in your mind?</li> </ol> <p><b>To summarize:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the important events that have happened so far?</li> <li>2. What's happened so far? Who did what?</li> </ol> <p><b>To decide:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think _____ should do?</li> <li>2. How might _____ solve this problem?</li> <li>3. What would you do if you were _____?</li> </ol>
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2. What kind of character would you add to the story?

## THE LANGUAGE ARTS AND SOCIAL STUDIES

The language arts can also be used as an effective learning tool in social studies. The language arts encompass the expressive parts of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Reading, speaking, and listening have all been covered in previous chapters. This section will focus specifically on writing and writing activities as they relate to social studies.

*Expository writing* can be used to explore ideas, to organize thinking, and to communicate ideas and information to an audience. *Creative writing* can also be used to explore a variety of intrapersonal dimensions and to communicate ideas through the use of art and metaphor. Both forms of writing can be used to enhance learning in all subject areas at all levels.

### *The Process of Writing*

Writing is the process of using print to create meaning. It is best taught and learned using the five-step process writing approach first described by Donald Graves (1983):

**Step 1: Prewriting.** The goal in prewriting is to generate ideas without regard for evaluation. Listing, brainstorming, outlining, silence, conversation with a neighbor, or power writing (described below), all are ways to generate ideas. What writers do before writing is just as important as what happens during the writing process.

**Step 2: Drafting.** Drafting is the writer's first attempt to capture ideas on paper. Quantity is valued over quality. If done correctly, the draft should be a rambling, disconnected accumulation of ideas.

**Step 3: Revising.** This is the heart of the writing process. Here a piece is re-visioned and reshaped many times. The draft stage is like throwing a large blob of clay on the potter's wheel. The revising stage is where you shape the blob of clay, adding parts, taking parts away, and continually mold and change until you get it just right. You look for flow and structure. Writers at this stage spend a lot of time rereading paragraphs and moving things around.

**Step 4: Editing.** This is the stage where the mechanics of writing are attended to. This is where grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors are corrected. Make sure you do not move editing to an earlier stage. If writers are editing or overly concerned with mechanics at the prewriting, drafting, and revising stages, the flow of ideas and the quality of writing will suffer. Precious brain space that should be devoted to generating and connecting ideas will instead be utilized to attend to writing mechanics.

**Step 5: Publishing.** This is where students' writing is shared with an audience. At this stage, writing becomes real. You can publish students work using class books, collections of writing based on a theme, student newspapers, student magazines, posting

writing on websites, displaying short samples of writing in the hall or out in the community, or having students read out loud in small groups, to another classmate, or in a large group setting.

### *Choice of Writing Topics in a Social Studies Class*

Students are more motivated to write and take greater pride and ownership in the final product if they are given choices as to their writing topics. However, choice does not mean total choice all the time; rather, it means that you use a continuum of options, sometimes giving students more choice and sometimes less. A continuum of choices is presented here:

- **Choose a variation on a topic.** Give students a theme or topic and allow them to interpret it and respond to it or explore a facet of it that they find of interest.
- **Choice within a set of topics.** Give students a menu or list of possible topics to explore through writing and let them make a choice. Students with similar topics might even be encouraged to work together to gather information related to their topics.
- **Choice within a set of parameters.** Give students a set of parameters within a subject and then allow them to choose a writing topic within those parameters. Example: When studying science and technology, you might ask students to find a topic they are interested in related to technology, become an expert, and tell the class about it using writing.
- **Choice related to personal or reflective elements.** Include personal or reflective writing assignments and activities as well as more formal expository writing assignments. Here students tell their stories or describe their ideas, insights, or personal experiences related to a theme or subject.

Provide opportunities for students to select writing topics that they care about, topics that invite them to say what it is they want to say, and opportunities for them to share their writing and ideas with others. This will create a greater motivation to write which, in turn, will improve students' writing and communicating skills and result in a more interesting and engaged classroom.

#### **EXAMPLE: Choosing a Topic Within Parameters**

Ms. Gagne had to force herself to read the papers she had assigned her 8th grade social studies class. After one major assignment it became very apparent that her students cared little for the writing topic that she had selected for them. They had as much interest in writing a meaningless paper to please their teacher as Ms. Gagne did in responding to their meaningless papers to please her students. It seems as if the only thing this writing assignment accomplished was to create a situation whereby a whole lot of people spent a whole lot of time doing something that created a whole lot of meaningless misery, just so that Ms. Gagne could have some sort of measuring device to use in sorting people into grading categories. A great deal of time was being spent by students writing their papers, and Ms. Gagne spent countless hours reading, responding, and grading these papers. With all the time and energy going into this

writing assignment, she really questioned how much learning was taking place.

The next quarter, Ms. Gagne decided to try something different. Instead of assigning students a writing topic, students were asked to select a topic related to a unique or interesting aspect of the social studies unit they were studying. They were given a menu of possible writing ideas as well as the option of choosing their own idea with the approval of the instructor. The papers were to be two to four double spaced pages, but no more than five, and students were to use a minimum of two sources. Grading was based on five criteria: (a) content, (b) depth of thinking, (c) organization and readability, (d) writing mechanics, and (e) professionalism (meeting deadlines and handing in a product that looks professional).

The result of this was that students were able to find topics that were much more meaningful to them than the very narrow topic that Ms. Gagne had assigned the previous quarter. Some students wrote about topics that Ms. Gagne had not even considered. Also, in reading them, she was able to see their minds at work as they grappled with ideas and topics that were of interest to them.

**EXAMPLE: Using Reflective Writing to Enhance Social Studies in Mr. Kelly's 5th Grade Class**

Mr. Kelly's 5th grade class was studying the Midwest region of the United States as part of their social studies class. He introduced the concept of change, showing his class how this region had changed over the last 300 years in terms of the environment, the plant and animal life, and the lives of the people living there.

He then used the following two writing prompts: "What would you like to be doing if you had lived in the early 1800s? What things have changed in your life in the last couple of years?"

Students wrote for three to four minutes and then shared their ideas in a small group. Mr. Kelly also wrote and joined in one of the small groups, sharing his ideas as an equal member of the group. As a result of this activity students were able to make some personal connections with the material being covered. They were able to connect their very subjective feelings and experiences to the very objective material and thus learn at a much deeper and more personal level. Also, as Mr. Kelly listened to them share their ideas in a small group, he was able to see beyond the faces that stared up at him each day in class, to see the very real person beyond the face. At the end, he asked each group to come up with one big idea or something interesting they noticed to share with the class.

**Ms. Newman's 2nd Grade Class**

Ms. Newman's 2nd grade class was studying rules and laws as part of their civics and

government unit. Before social studies class, she used the following writing prompt: “If there were no rules in school, what kinds of things would you like to do?” Students wrote for two to three minutes, then moved into small group to share their ideas. Next, students moved back into a large group. Ms. Newman asked a few students to share their ideas. Ms. Newman was then able to link their writing to the importance of having school rules and laws and then societal rules and laws.

For links to a variety of social studies lesson plans containing writing, go to the Student Study Site for Chapter 11.

### **JOURNAL AND REFLECTIVE WRITING IN SOCIAL STUDIES**

A journal in a social studies class can provide a place for students to record their thoughts, observations, and interesting ideas. The journal becomes a written version of their thinking space, a place to explore ideas and thus, should not be graded for spelling, mechanics, or content. Some might think that this type of reflective writing should be done only in a literacy class; however, remember that social studies is a study of people interacting. Sharing ideas and experiences through writing is a powerful way for students to begin to understand themselves in a greater social and human context. It can also be a vehicle to help students know and understand others. This knowledge and understanding contributes to their ability to make informed and reasoned decisions just as much as knowledge and skills related to history, geography, civics and government, economics, and psychology.

#### ***Responding to Journal Entries***

Having others respond to a journal greatly increases students’ interest and improves the quality of their writing. These responses provide students feedback as to how their ideas are being perceived by others. Students should always be given a choice as to which entries they want to share with others. Paper clips can be used to denote the specific entries here. Also, students need to be taught how to respond to each other’s journal entries using aesthetic responses. An aesthetic response is one in which you describe the effect the writing has on your imagination, emotions, or associations. The aesthetic response questions in Figure 11.11 can be displayed in poster form as a guide in teaching students how to respond to the writing of others.

**Figure 11.11. Questions That Elicit an Aesthetic Response**

1. What did it make you think about?
2. What is something it reminded you of?
3. What book, movie, TV show, or historical event is this like?
4. What images were painted in your head as you read?

5. What did you want to know more about?
6. What is one idea that you liked?
7. What were you feeling as you read this?
8. What experience in your own life has triggered similar feelings or situations?
9. What events in your life are similar to those described?
10. What do you want to say to the writer/author?

**EXAMPLE: Using Journals**

Mr. Portugal, a 2nd grade teacher in St. Paul, Minnesota has his students write in their journals first thing every day. As soon as school starts, students get their journals from the journal space on the shelf. Knowing that they will be writing every day, students notice things and think about what they might write about on the way to school. In their journals students are encouraged to use words or pictures to hold the idea. During this time Mr. Portugal also records his thoughts and observations in his journal. When he notices the writing energy diminishing around the room (usually after two to five minutes), students are asked to find a new friend to share their writing. (The rule is that you cannot read to the same friend twice during the same week.) In a short time, his students are engaged in an authentic writing activity, they are provided an audience for their writing, and they are able to listen and share with others the things that are going on in their lives. As the year goes on, Mr. Portugal experiments, using groups of three and four students for these early morning sharing sessions.

In Ms. Lombardozzi's 8th grade social studies class, a small part of her students' quarter grades is based on their journal entries. If students make the required number of entries, they receive all the participation points. Knowing that middle school students can forget or lose their journals, she keeps the journals in a box in her classroom (in a secure location). On those days when she wants students to use their journals, she lays them out on a table for students to pick up as they enter her classroom. She does not use the journals every day; however, when she does, students are asked to make personal connections to that day's topic using five types of journal prompts (see below). She always has her journal prompts written on the board at the beginning of class. This enables students to select and process relevant information during class to use in responding in their journals at the end of class.

***Journal Prompts***

Five types of journal prompts that might be used in social studies class are described here.



- **3-I prompt.** The 3-I prompt asks students to describe two to five *Interesting or Important Ideas* that they will take with them from that class.

- **Personal relevancy prompt.** This prompt asks students to pick an idea from class and describe how it affects or touches their lives.

- **Personal metaphor prompt.** Here students are given a metaphor related to that day's topic and asked to describe how it manifests in their lives. For example, after studying wars, you might ask students to describe a time when they were at war with themselves or somebody else or to describe a time when they experienced great conflict.

- **Artistic prompt.** The fourth type of journal prompt is the artistic prompt. Here, students are asked to draw a diagram or picture that describes something related to that day's class. This allows students to use artistic and visual-spatial intelligence in coming to know and describe an idea from class. Students are also given the option of recording a song lyric, describing music, or composing poetry that might illustrate or enhance an idea from the class.

- **Wide open prompt.** Some days you might simply ask students to describe something that is going on in their lives. Upper elementary and middle school students should always be advised to consider the level of disclosure, as you are obliged to take action if you discover something illegal or harmful.

### *Sharing Journal Entries*

Sharing journal entries with others helps students see a certain universality of experience and helps them to understand each other at a deeper level. Sharing also has a certain cathartic effect in that it allows students to identify things that they may have been harboring in their unconscious, and to record these things, share them with others, and then get some kind of response or feedback. Again, students should always be advised to consider the types of things they will be sharing and the level of disclosure, as other people will be reading them. Students can share journal entries with other students in a variety of ways.

- **Partner oral response.** This is the type of sharing Mr. Portugal used in the example. Here students find a neighbor and read a journal entry orally or simply describe some of the main ideas. Partners then respond orally to the ideas, again, using an aesthetic response.

- **Small group oral response.** In small groups, students read or describe a journal entry. These entries become natural vehicles for small group discussions as members of the group respond orally with aesthetic response questions and comments.

- **Trade and respond.** Students trade journals with a partner and write their responses right on the journal page. In this way the journal becomes a living entity and a collection of perspectives. In groups of three or more, students can keep rotating journals until everybody has responded to each.

- **Whole class.** Two or three volunteers sign up to share an idea or journal entry with the whole class each day. Do no more than three of these whole class kinds of sharing in a given class period as students naturally get distracted after a few minutes of listening passively.

### *Other Writing Ideas*

This section contains other writing ideas that can be used to enhance a social studies curriculum and promote deeper learning in all subject areas.

- **Power write.** In a *power write*, students try to catch as many ideas they can in a three-minute period (use two minutes for younger students). This is different from a *free write* where students write whatever they want in an extended period of time. The goal in the power write is to get students to bypass the logical mind through free association, catching the first thought that pops into their minds. A stopwatch should be used here so that students know they are writing for a specific amount of time. Ask them to keep their pencils moving, writing down the first thing that comes to their minds.

Students' power writing is apt to be very disjointed. It helps if you model this sense of disjointedness by showing and reading a copy of a power write (see Figure 11.12). Encourage students to use scribbles, scratch marks, arrows, diagrams, single words, incomplete sentences, and quick impressions. If done correctly, the power write will help writers discover a wealth of images and impressions of which they may not have been aware.

The power write can serve two purposes: First, it can be used as a prewriting tool for students to discover ideas for writing. By generating a pile of ideas students are usually able to find a couple of good writing nuggets that they had not thought about previously. Second, power writes help students discover insights, ideas, or issues of which they may not have been aware.

**Figure 11.12 Example of a Power Write.**

Cold, cold, cold. Glasses fog up when I come inside ... Got a pair of new pants ... Can't wait to wear them ... Good music ... I like the songs we're singing in choir ... Spinning wheels ... Reminds me of yellow circus peanuts my grandma used to give me when we went to her house ... I'll be going there with my brother on Saturday ... My brother is bugs me sometimes ... Do I bug people? He plays basketball ... I love watching the games ... The loud noise ... I plan on going out for basketball when I'm older ... Left the basketball in the garage ... Doesn't bounce ... Bill's coming over after school ... We sometimes play basketball in the snow ... Fun ...

Students can do power writes directly in their journals or they can use a separate piece of paper and then record only the interesting or important ideas from the power write in their journals. Power writes become more powerful when they are shared with a partner

or in a small group. When sharing here students should always be given the option of reading their writing in its entirety or simply describing a few interesting or important ideas.

### FREE VERSE

Poetry uses words, sounds, and phrases to paint a picture. Free verse is a kind of poetry that paints this picture without the use of rhyme, meter, or other defined poetic devices. This form of poetry allows students to concentrate on the sound of the poem and on recreating a feeling or event. Free verse is a good starting point for writing poetry, as feelings and ideas are not sacrificed for form. Other poetry forms will naturally develop from here as students begin to experiment with different sounds and their effects. Poetry can also be used to bring other ways of seeing to other subject areas. This is an important point for social studies. Instead of writing assignments, worksheets, or other types of homework, you can make learning more interesting and creative by giving students the option of creating poetry or other kinds of art related to the concepts being studied in social studies class. It need not be long or elaborate. Often, a few simple words can best capture the feeling or ideas related to a person, place, situation, or event. Figure 11.13 contains a free verse poem that was created for a middle school unit on the history of music.

**Figure 11.13. Free verse poetry: Music.**

#### **Music**

A skin stretched over a hollow log.  
 The ancients, pounding.  
 Vibrations, traveling through the air.  
 Moving outward, invisible through space.  
 Sounds,  
 Coming one after another.  
 Repeating, pulsating.  
 People moving now,  
 Moving in time with sound.  
 Responding to sound.  
 Transforming by sound.

A chant,  
 A prayer, repeated over and over.  
 The sound becomes line.  
 The line takes shape, moving here and there, fluttering about,  
 A butterfly,  
 A dancing butterfly of sound.

The dancing line, now joined by another.  
 Line upon line, intertwining, one upon the other.  
 The other upon the one.  
 Many together to produce blend.

Chord.  
Colors of sound, perfectly matched.  
Harmonies knit,  
A bridge from here to there.  
between inner and outer.

Sound  
The sound of the mother's heart within the womb.  
The sound of life.  
And the sound of silence.  
A pounding silence then.

### CHAPTER REVIEW: KEY POINTS

1. Literature can help students experience and understand other people, times, and situations; enhance their ability to engage in moral reasoning and clarify their own values; and help children make sound choices.
2. Literature can be used to augment or enhance a social studies textbook or curriculum that is already in place.
3. Informational or expository writing can be used in social studies to help students organize their thinking, explore ideas, and to communicate ideas with others; creative writing can be used to explore a variety of interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions related to social studies.
4. Writing should be taught using the five-step process, which consists of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
5. Sharing ideas and experiences through reflective and other writing helps students understand themselves and others, helps them perceive a certain universality of experience, and understand each other at deeper levels.

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"Teaching social skills in a literature program maximizes instructional time and often the opportunity to encourage socialization within the context of a major curricular area" (Anderson, 2000). This book contains 21 articles written by lecturers, researchers, teachers, and students from Indonesia and Germany about studies in language, literature, and cultural studies. View. Show abstract. Language arts is one content area that lends itself well to this integration, particularly through the use of experientially-relevant literature (Bauer & Balius, 1995; Sullivan & Strang, 2003). "Teacher, It's Just Like What Happens At My House." Article. Literature has also been used to teach social skills to adolescents with learning disorders (Anderson, 2000). 15 Approaches to study of literature while teaching English Language Based Approach: study of language of literary text detailed analysis of literary text to improve interpretation skills knowledge of grammatical, lexical/ discursal categories literary texts regarded as great sources for language activities a wide range of styles and registers (Lazar, 1993). 16 Open to multiple interpretations along with the classroom discussions Focus on interesting topic (Lazar, 1993). One of the Possible negative aspects of this approach is: If the analysis of the text is made in purely linguistic terms, the language competence never narrows down to the study of grammatical patterns and basic vocabulary items. It is far beyond this formal part of language learning. To be a competent and confident speaker, the students must be quite well aware of the culture-specific traits of people who speak the given foreign language. Informing the learners on the target language habits and customs, geography, history, social and political conditions of L2 country; Encouraging the learners to reflect over the main cultural differences between their own culture and the culture of L2 country; Informing learners on the L2 literature, arts, music; Informing the learners on values and attitudes of L2 speakers; Developing learners' tolerance and openness and cultures. Literature, Language Arts, and Social Studies - 1 USING LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE ARTS TO TEACH SOCIAL STUDIES Andrew P. Johnson, Ph.D. Minnesota State University, Mankato andrew.johnson@mnsu.edu This is an excerpt from my book, Making Connection in Elementary and Middle School Social Studies (2nd ed) (2010), published by Sage Publishing. USING LITERATURE TO TEACH SOCIAL STUDIES There are many very good social studies texts and commercial curriculums that can be used in elementary and middle school classrooms. Unfortunately, teachers sometimes find themselves forced to use social studies texts a Thirdly, and this is partly related to the above point, reading literature teaches critical thinking skills. We learn to weigh different points of view, defend our own point of view, and discuss with others. The most important outcome of my studies is to be able to see both sides of an issue. Well, broadly speaking, literature teaches students how to really think. I'm not talking about basic English I and English II, where you learn how to write for the college setting and what various kinds of papers there are"-obviously those are important too. I'm talking about classes where students get to examine texts from a literary angle.