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ABSTRACT

The teaching activities presented in these articles integrate language skills in the social studies curriculum in a variety of ways. The paper describes (1) producing a news program in the classroom; (2) creating "word webs" (using a core word to make associations with other words); (3) making jackdaws (a collection of anything, real or imaginary, that concretely relates to a particular book, time, or theme) in order to increase understanding of an era--its people and places; and (4) writing postcards to become involved with another culture or geographical location. (EL)

Language Everywhere--Social Studies

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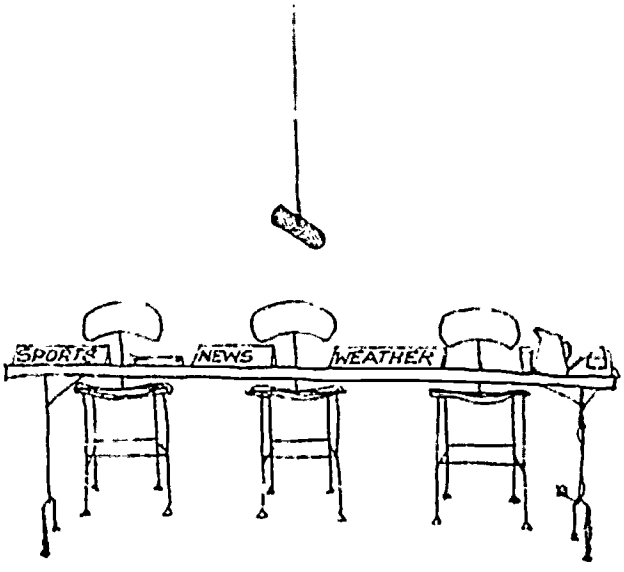
National Council of Teachers of English

Language Everywhere

SOCIAL STUDIES

Student Newsbreak

Although most students watch television, few watch the news segments. Producing a news program in the classroom requires students to watch television news programs, listen to radio news, or read the newspaper. It also gives students opportunities, in short segments, to speak in front of the class, to gain poise, and to become familiar with the vocabulary and style of newscasting.



The news show takes roughly five to ten minutes at the beginning of each day (or as many days as determined). A simple news station is set up. Equipment consists of a table, three chairs, a logo sign for the station, and a map. Local, regional, or national maps can be enlarged and covered with clear plastic so they can be drawn on with colored markers and wiped clean with a damp cloth.

The panel consists of three reporters: one each for news, sports, and weather. The news reporter is the anchorperson who opens the show with a greeting, reads the news, and wraps up the show with a short feature of human interest. Reports on sports and the weather are given by the other two panelists between news stories. Only the straight news is to be reported; no editorializing is allowed. Urge students to watch the television newscasters: where they look, how they sit and move, how their voices sound, how quickly they speak. Students should get up-to-date information for their news stories from television or radio news reports the night before or the morning of their presentation; newspapers could also be consulted. Panel members write the highlights of the news stories on note cards for use during the "show." Stories should cover the following topics:

News	
worldwide national state local	Include three to six brief stories. (Avoid gossip—just report the news.)
Weather	
national local	Include: natural disasters, temperatures, precipitation, winds, fronts, etc. (Show students where to find this information in the newspaper.)
Sports	
national state local school	Include: all seasonal sports at all levels.

The show may be videotaped if the equipment is available. The reporters will enjoy watching themselves "on the air," and their classmates may wish to offer constructive comments.

Rotate reporting assignments. All students should become familiar with television and radio newscasts and with newspapers, and all should have the opportunity to write and read the news. In case of illness, a student must call on a classmate to be a substitute reporter. The news must go on.

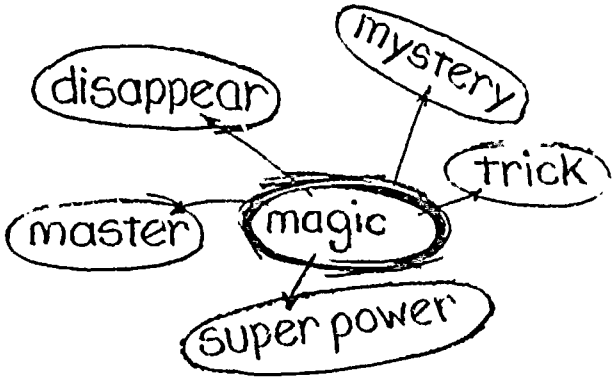
Laurie Davis teaches at Jamestown Junior High School, Jamestown, North Dakota.

Word Webs

Reading begins before the book is opened. One way to help students better comprehend factual material is to help them get in touch with what they already know about a topic *before* they start reading. Word webbing gives students a chance to talk in a low pressure situation (with no right or wrong answers), to do some logical thinking, and to become aware of their own background knowledge.

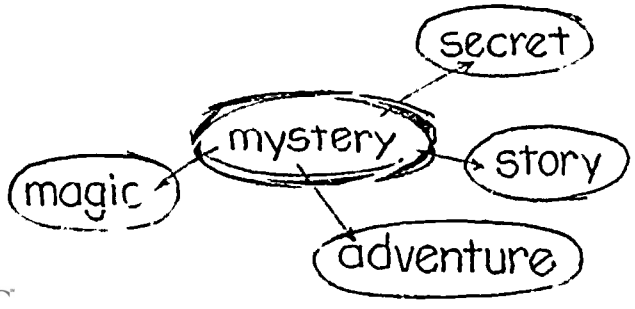
Word webbing begins by taking one core word and putting it on the board or overhead projector. From that word, students begin associating other words that could be connected. Students explain their choices and tell how their words are connected to the core word.

For example, in preparation for reading a biographical sketch of a magician, one class started with the core word *magic*. In response, the students offered such words as *disappear, mystery, trick, superpower,* and *master.*



When the students had listed as many related words as they could, they then read the biographical sketch. Afterwards, they checked to see how many of their words and ideas appeared in the sketch. Students are always pleased to see their ideas actually used in print!

We extended this word webbing by making one of the arms the new core word. This started a whole new web.



Another example of word webbing prepared students to read a nonfiction article about cowboys. Our core word was *cowboy*. The first words were *holster, saddle, boots, bandanna.* As we began to spin off, we had *gunbelt* to go with *holster.* The spin-off word *chuckwagon* started a new, extended branch as students began to modernize the cowboy with words like *truck* and *airplane.* This led to a lively discussion about the differences between the cowboy of one hundred years ago and the cowboy of today.

When we stopped adding to our word web, we had over ninety words on the board, and the students could have gone on and on. They were using good oral language skills as they verbalized their ideas, they were learning from one another about word association, and they were having fun. When students actually began reading the article, they did so with far more enthusiasm than usual.

Mary Oakvik teaches at Edison Middle School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

August 1984

Language Everywhere

SOCIAL STUDIES

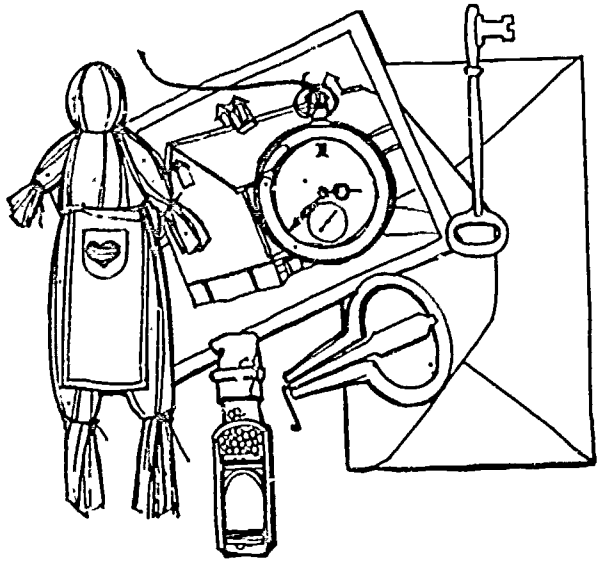
The Jackdaw Way

How can a book about the American Civil War come alive for the readers? From research we learn that the more readers generally "know" about an era, its people, and its places, the more they understand and enjoy what they read. For this reason, a jackdaw can be an answer.

What is a jackdaw? It is a collection of anything, real or imaginary, that concretely relates to the book, time, or theme. The concrete items can range from actual items to imaginary drawings: real food, recipes, clothes or sketches, music or recordings, household gadgets, photographs, poems, maps showing locations in the book, or even biographical sketches of the author and the historical characters. Real or facsimile newspaper articles, shoe box dioramas of important scenes, or timelines from the story can be part of the jackdaw. The maker of a jackdaw is limited only by imagination.

A sample jackdaw might be made for the book *Zoar Blue* by Janet Hickman (Macmillan, 1978). This book explores the American Civil War through the eyes of a German community of Separatists—pacifists who discovered the difficulties of remaining neutral while surrounded by war. The items range from real and imaginary objects to background material on the Civil War and on Germans living in Zoar, Ohio:

1. Since the Separatists were not frivolous, corn husks were used for dolls by the young child in the story. A corn husk doll provides a striking contrast with dolls of today.
2. A young boy runs off to enlist in the army where his staple food is hardtack, possibly made from an 1800s recipe. Students who taste this flour and water bread are surprised at the meager fare given to army recruits. Other foods mentioned in the book are made out of cardboard or paper in the shapes of the items they represent.
3. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, secretly read by the heroine of the book, is included to alert students to books read in that time.
4. Actual maps (of Zoar and the characters' travels) are included along with researched information on the Separatist way of life.
5. Imaginary diary entries recreate war scenes that did happen or could have happened.
6. Letters exchanged between characters after the war tell about events during the war.
7. A notebook on the Battle of Chancellorsville, so integral to the plot, is included.



8. Sketches recreate the simple clothing worn in the village, the tools used, and the buildings erected.
9. Posters, based on museum pieces, are sketched to reveal attitudes of both North and South.

Jackdaws work when reading about past or present events, and they extend the reader's knowledge and interest for future reading enjoyment.

Timothy Rasinski and Susan Lehr, Ohio State University, Columbus

October 1984

Language Everywhere

SOCIAL STUDIES

Writing Postcards from Scratch

Having a wonderful time. Wish you were here. . . . You can't fit much more than that in the 2″ × 3″ writing area on a picture postcard. And while this restrictive format may not encourage elaborate expression, it suits its purpose—it allows travelers to remember those back home with a minimum of effort.

This activity introduces a new purpose for the picture postcard: through the use of postcards, photographs, and language, students become involved with another culture or geographical location. After talking about the types of cultural information presented in the photographs and in the printed captions describing the scenes on some sample picture postcards, students cull glossy photos from travel magazines and brochures, research facts to explain the scenes in the photographs, write captions for the photographs and messages to friends, and turn out their own "picture postcards" using rectangles of poster board. The completed postcards, though not appropriate for actual mailing, can be "sent" to other students in the class or school.

You will need to assemble the following materials:

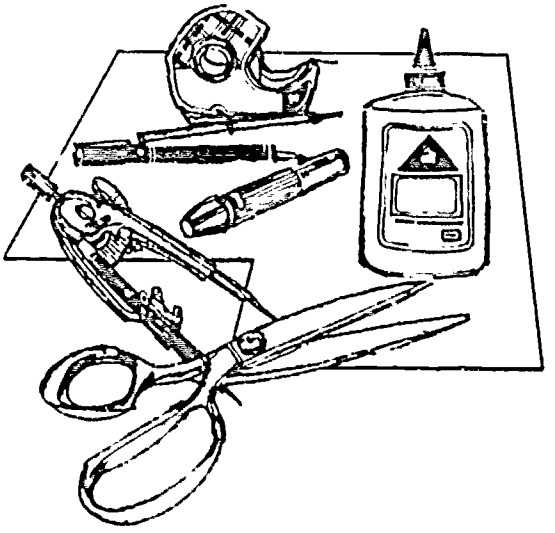
- *National Geographic* magazines, travel magazines, and travel brochures from local travel agencies
- sample picture postcards from other countries (the type with informative captions describing the scene)
- 5″ × 7″ rectangles of white poster board
- fine-point markers
- rulers
- . . ors
- gl

Begin by passing around the sample postcards. Have students look at the scenes and take turns reading aloud the printed captions on the reverse side. Ask them about the information they learn from the cards. Does the caption tell more about the scene? What kinds of details are given?

Have students leaf through the magazines and brochures and cut out photographs to feature on their picture postcards. Each photograph should depict one of the following:

- an aspect of life in another culture (a table spread with delicacies native to another country, the celebration of a holiday)
- a landscape (the Sahara Desert, the Nile River)
- a historical attraction (the Great Wall of China, the Eiffel Tower)

And if any students care to, they may choose more than one photo depicting the same subject matter and snip out portions of each to assemble for a collage effect.



To write a descriptive caption for the photo (to go on the reverse side of the postcard), each student needs to research a few background facts. Remind students to check first the magazines from which they took the photos. The class as a whole can suggest other ways to find the necessary information, such as:

encyclopedias
atlases
special books on specific countries
tourist guides

A single class period spent in the library is probably enough to give students the facts they need to draft the captions. Make sure that they understand the limits of the postcard format; at most, two or three sentences describing the photograph will fit above or below the message on the postcard. As students write their descriptions, classmates can help them to decide what information to include. Advise students to show the photograph to someone else and ask, "Look at this picture and then tell me what you would most like to know about the person (or place or thing) shown here."

Finally, students glue the photographs or photo collages onto 5" × 7" rectangles of poster board. By drawing a line from top to bottom on the blank side of the card, dividing it in half, students provide a space on the right for the address (fictional or real) and stamp (drawn on or cut out of colored paper and glued on), and a space on the left for the finished caption and a message. If you use this activity with upper elementary students, have them copy their captions onto the actual postcards; let younger students write the text on a separate page and have their captions reduced at a photocopying shop so that the captions can be glued on in the space allotted. (Or to save time, copy the captions onto the postcards yourself.)

At this point, students have their picture postcards in front of them, complete except for the greeting. To inspire original messages, ask each student to make his or her message an explanation of why he or she has decided during this "trip" never to return home. Or ask each student to imagine that he or she has visited the same site a hundred times, and to describe why he or she still finds the trip interesting. As students individualize their postcards with messages to real or imaginary friends, you can be sure that they'll employ more thought and imagination than was ever spent on "Having a wonderful time. Wish you were here."

Janis P. Hunter, Fort Loramie Elementary School, Fo.. Loramie, Ohio