

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 376 486

CS 214 612

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
 TITLE Children's Literature in Social Studies.
 PUB DATE 94
 NOTE 11p.
 PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.)
 (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Basal Reading; Childrens Literature; *Content Area
 Reading; Elementary Education; *Social Studies;
 Supplementary Reading Materials; Textbooks
 IDENTIFIERS *Trade Books

ABSTRACT

Children's literature and the social studies need to be integrated so that holism is involved in pupil learning. A variety of kinds of reading materials should be available to learners so that each social studies unit might be meaningful and interesting. Individual differences among pupils' abilities and achievements must be adequately provided for. Basal social studies textbooks can be a useful approach for some students and teachers. When using this approach, teachers, in addition to introducing new words to students, should discuss background information. Concrete (objects and items) as well as the semiconcrete (pictures, study prints, and audio-visual materials) could be used by the teacher to introduce a topic such as rain forests. Follow-up activities might include some of the following: (1) reading related trade books listed by the authors; (2) writing a formal dramatization from the content read from the basal; (3) pantomiming selections from the text; (4) debating opposing values contained in the writing. Various kinds of children's literature may also be used to teach social studies. When using this approach, teachers should consider discussing the story's setting, its characterizations, its concept of irony, its concept of plot, its point of view, and its theme. Also, children may enjoy finding idioms in the text such as "barking up the wrong tree," or "placing it on the front burner." Keep in mind that children's literature comes in many forms: biographies, autobiographies, fictional accounts, factual accounts, encyclopedia entries, magazine articles and animal stories.
 (TB)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

M. Ediger

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN SOCIAL STUDIES

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED 376 486

Children's literature has numerous contributions to make in ongoing social studies units. One student teacher I supervised in the public schools used children's literature entirely instead of basal textbooks. Here, learners would volunteer to say what they had read from a trade book in the social studies unit being pursued. There was no end to comments made by pupils. Basically the quality of responses from learners was good and reflected much enthusiasm. Generally learners held the title of the book up for all to see in the classroom when discussing ideas read. It appeared that many pupils had truly become hooked in the reading of trade books. I believe that trade books can provide subject matter for much of the social studies unit being pursued. Perhaps, it is good to bring in both the basal and trade books when teaching social studies. Basals, carefully chosen, should have much to offer pupils in ongoing units of study. I will start off with discussing how basal textbooks can successfully be used in unit teaching.

Basal Social Studies Textbooks

The manual should have an objectives section from which the teacher may consider ends for learner attainment. Careful consideration must be given to each objective that is worthy for learner attainment. Those objectives emphasizing higher levels of cognition should be stressed first in importance such as critical and creative thinking skills, as well as problem solving. There are word recognition skills which need emphasizing. Prior to having learners read a selection from the basal, the teacher needs to preview the content to attempt to select new words which pupils need assistance in mastering. The manual section of the basal generally provides lists of words that may be new to learners for each chapter title. The teacher should look at these words and determine if any or all might be unknown to the involved pupils in class. Pupils should be able to pronounce words correctly and know their meanings, either in terms of definitions or within a sentence in context form. I would suggest that the teacher print in manuscript style for all

CS214612

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
 Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy



pupils to see clearly, either on the chalkboard or on an overhead projector, each new word that learners will read in print. As each word is viewed by pupils while the teacher points to and pronounces it, learners say the same word correctly. Those pupils who can identify new words correctly from the chalkboard, hopefully, will also recognize the same word(s) when reading from the basal. Comprehension increases as pupils correctly identify words in print. Instead of printing the new words in isolation for pupils to learn to pronounce from the chalkboard or from the overhead, each word can be printed within a sentence. Perhaps, the new word should be underlined within that sentence. A more holistic approach is then involved in having pupils learn to recognize new words in print. The important point is that each pupil be able to pronounce correctly words read in context from the basal.

I have had teachers ask if phonics should be emphasized in reading in the social studies. I would say generally not. However, there are teachable moments when a pupil mispronounces many words that start with the "m" sound, for example. I think the teacher then needs to emphasize that sound as the need arises in helping the learner to make appropriate grapheme - phoneme associations. Thus by having the pupil notice a series of words that start with the "m" sound, the learner might make much headway in using the "m" grapheme to relate directly to a specific sound.

Along with introducing new words to pupils, the teacher should also assist learners to attain background information pertaining to what will be read. No doubt, when discussing the correct pronunciation and meaning of new words that pupils will meet in print from the basal, background information will also be discussed. I would suggest that concrete (objects and items) as well as the semiconcrete (pictures, study prints, and audio-visual materials) be used by the teacher to develop background information within learners prior to reading orally within a committee or silently in the social studies. For example if pupils are to read about a rain forest, semi-concrete materials pertaining to that topic might assist learners to understand this concept better. I also believe pupils should read for a purpose and that being to answer

relevant questions. The questions may come from the teacher or from pupils themselves. Reading from the basal is then done to secure necessary information. Answers to the questions, established prior to silent or oral reading, need to be discussed. Meaning should be attached to content analyzed in the discussion. Additional questions may be raised and appraised. What is important is that pupils attach understanding to content read and discussed. Also, higher levels of cognition should be emphasized. These follow up activities might well be sequenced through further experiences. They may include the following:

1. reading related trade books listed by the authors.
2. reading additional stories related to the same topic or title.
3. brain storming other settings, plots, and conclusions than those contained in the basal.
4. writing a formal dramatization from the content read from the basal.
5. pantomiming selections from the text.
6. debating opposing values contained in the writing.
7. developing a collage pertaining to one or more major ideas contained in the subject matter.
8. viewing and analyzing imagery used in the story, assuming this is in the content.
9. dramatizing creatively idioms contained in the reading selection.
10. writing a poem based on the basal reader content.

Ingredients in Children's Literature

Author's of trade or library books in the social studies put different interpretations into content written. One item is the setting of the story. All stories or novels take place in a given area or region. A certain season is also involved. The year of occurrence is also stated or inferred by the author. Pupils need to attach meaning to the setting of the story. Maps and globes should be used by learners to notice the setting. Generally, a certain sequence is followed in writing the setting.

A setting written for young pupils might be quite short. Sometimes a setting can be quite lengthy for elementary age pupils. The important point here is that learners comprehend what a setting emphasizes and why it is salient.

Second, pupils need to understand the concept of characterization of a story. A good description of the characters assists the reader to know what kind of persons are in a story or library book. A character may change in time or a character may stay the same throughout the story. A character may be wealthy, have moderate income, or be on the poverty level. Characters may have positive or negative attitudes, or some place in between. There are many possibilities when characters are described by the author.

Third, pupils should become familiar with the concept of irony. With irony, things turn out differently than what the reader might expect. For example, an ideal parent or parents may raise a child who breaks the law frequently and is in prison frequently. Or, a policeman's son murders a fifteen year old. News accounts of recent happenings frequently have items that truly contain irony. The parent(s) then might be just opposite of their offspring. Literature contains numerous writings where irony is inherent. It appears to make for exciting reading when the writer has irony in his/her writings.

Fourth, pupils need to attach meaning to the concept of plot. Plots should be clear enough so that readers know what happened in the story or reading selection. A plot may be rather lengthy, medium in length, or short. The interest level of the reader should be high in order to complete the reading selection to ascertain the plot. Curiosity in knowing the plot is a must. A good writer is able to hold reader attention until the plot is revealed or inferred. Sequence of content leads to the plot.

Fifth, point of view is important in a literary selection. From whose point of view is the story told? In diverse literary selections, point of view may be provided by the main character telling the story. Other points of view may come from a child, an animal, or an outsider, among others. Pupils should definitely know from whose point of view

the story is being told.

Sixth, writers have a theme that is presented in the literary selection. The theme is the underlying idea presented in the writing. The theme may relate to such ideas as the evils of war, greediness of human beings, good works performed by individuals and groups, or happiness being a continual goal of the human being.

If pupils understand ingredients placed in to literary selections, they should attach increased meaning to the human dimension in the social studies.

Imagery in Children's Literature

Writers of literature empathize the use of imagery. There are two kinds of imagery, similes and metaphors. Similes make creative comparisons between and among persons, things, and ideas. The following are examples of similes:

1. The boy ran like a bolt of lightning. The boy's running is compared to a bolt of lightning. A creative comparison is made. The word "like" makes the connections in making the comparison. Another word that connects to make a creative comparison is "as," e.g. John runs as quick as a deer in the forest.

Metaphors omit the words "like" and "as." Notice the following sentences, each containing a metaphor:

1. The dog, bolting with a flash through the door, licked his master's hand. Notice the creative expression "bolting with a flash through the door" describing the dog's actions.

2. The cloud, rising in the sinking sun, looked beautiful. "Rising in the sinking sun" presents a unique perception for a viewer to imagine.

Imagery is used by writers to portray and describe in novel ways that which cannot be done in a literal sense. Children's literature needs to be an inherent part of any social studies unit since the human condition is so prevalent in the humanities (literature) as well as in the social sciences (history, geography, political science, anthropology, sociology, and economics). An integrated social studies curriculum

must be emphasized in the school curriculum.

Idioms, Literature, and the Social Studies

Human beings tend to use numerous idioms when communicating orally or in writing. Perhaps, it is clearer, in many situations, to communicate using idioms than expressing literal content. Once learners, when ready, can locate and brainstorm as many as idioms as possible. Perhaps, teams of pupils may compete against each other in attempting to find as many idioms as possible. An atmosphere of respect should permeate this activity. I will list some common idioms which pupils should attach meaning to in a sequential series of social studies units.

1. barking up the wrong tree.
2. placing it on the front burner.
3. having done one's homework.
4. catching fish and cutting bait.
5. beating a dead horse.
6. backing the wrong horse.
7. walking on water.
8. handling a person with kid gloves.
9. getting on the stick.
10. left holding the bag.

Idioms can be dramatized to show the figurative and literal meaning of each. Understanding of how idioms are used in diverse literary selections and in society is important.

Children's Literature versus the Basal Textbook

There are selected writers in the social studies who believe basal textbooks to be too rigid and formal. Further criticisms are that teachers follow the textbook excessively. The basal presents one source of information which can be evaluated with the use of other references to appraise accuracy and thoroughness of content. Then too, there are

criticisms about the text not providing for diverse reading levels of learners. For some pupils, the content will be too complex to read. For others, the subject matter will lack challenge. To remedy these and other criticisms, library books may be used instead. The author believes that both basals and children's literature in library books should be inherent in a quality social studies unit of study. At this point of our discussion, however, let us take a look at replacing basals with library books.

There must be an ample number of library books available for pupil reading that covers all facets of the present social studies unit being emphasized. If a unit on Australia is taught, for example, library books on farming, manufacturing, urban and rural life, trade, education, recreation, travel, geography, history, music, art, and religion of Australia should be in evidence. Thus the scope of reading materials on Australia must be broad so that learners truly can understand the people and nation of Australia.

What pupils read from their library books may then be brought into different discussions pertaining to the unit title of Australia. Thus if pupils are studying urban living in Australia, subject matter read by one or more pupils on that topic should be discussed. Pupils should choose their very own books to read unless they can not settle down to truly complete a library book. When learners choose their own books to read, they tend to choose those based on their own personal level of reading attainment. Learners then are not hindered in reading by library books that are too difficult or too easy to read. There are some exceptions to this statement. The teacher should then intervene to assist a learner in choosing a book to read. I have observed my own student teachers whom I supervised in the public schools use library books instead of the basal textbook within a social studies unit of study. One problem, many times, is that schools do not have an adequate number of library books for a single unit title so that these books might substitute for the basal.

What Children's Literature Contributes to Learners

Children's literature comes in many forms. Thus pupils can read

biographies, autobiographies, fictional accounts, factual accounts, encyclopedia entries, magazine articles, animal stories, people from other lands, folk lore (myths, fables, tall tales, legends, fairy tales, and other imaginary content), diverse nations on the planet earth, values clarification, multicultural topics, and other areas of information to numerous to mention. Content read should ideally relate in one way or another to the social studies unit title being stressed in teaching and learning. There are numerous contributions that children's literature can make to pupils.

First, pupils can not travel to different nations on the face of the planet earth. However, they can experience vicariously from others who have. Second, experiencing something directly can be too costly and negative. Yet through reading one can safely experience things vicariously. Third, children's literature can enrich and expand one's own boundaries and borders. Broadening of experiences is then in evidence. Fourth, sheer enjoyment of reading encourages further pursuits to read. Thus positive attitudes can be developed within learners toward reading. Fifth, subject matter is learned which assists pupils to attain more adequately in any curriculum area. With the present day emphasis upon the integrated curriculum, books that pupils read dealing with the social studies may also relate to subject matter acquired in other curriculum areas.

Where to Order Library Books

I would suggest that teachers and supervisors look at the following company's catalogs to notice brief abstracts of different books, before ordering them.

1. Abelard, Schuman, Ltd., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019.
2. Abingdon Press, 201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.
3. ACI Films 35 west 45 Street, New York, New York 10036.
4. Addison Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, Massachusetts 01867.

5. Aims Instructional Media services, Box 11010, Hollywood, California 90028.
6. Allyn and Bacon, Rockleigh, New Jersey 07647.
7. American Heritage Press, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10020.
8. American Library Association, Publishing Services, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.
9. Association for Childhood Education International, 3615 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20016.
10. Atheneum Publishers, 122 East 42nd Street, New York, New York 10017.
11. Bobbs- Merrill Company, 4300 West 62nd Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46268.
12. Children's Press, 1224 Van Buren Street, Chicago, Illinois 60607.
13. Doubleday and Company, 245 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10017.
14. E. P. Dutton and Company, 201 Park Avenue South South, New York, New York 10003.
15. Harper and Row Publishers, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, New York 10022.
16. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 383 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10017.
17. Scott, Foresman and Company, 1900 East Lake Avenue, Glenview, Illinois 60025.

In Summary

Children's literature and the social studies need to be integrated so that holism is involved in pupil learning. A variety of kinds of reading materials should be available to learners so that each social studies unit might be meaningful and interesting. Individual differences among pupils' abilities and achievements must be adequately provided for. Reading content is a vital way of learning, along with concrete and semiconcrete materials use, in teaching- learning situations. Reading is

one activity, an important one, to guide pupils to attain salient objectives.