

“Outlines” of History: Measured Spaces and Kinesthetics.

What would happen if social studies student used spaces marked out on the floor and physical movement to learn social studies? Would such a lesson conform with the Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies?¹ Students get out of their chairs and away from their desks to perform events within a defined space elsewhere in the room or outside. An outline refers to a carefully measured space that matches or maps the dimensions of a thing or place from the past, such as a ship or a land claim. Kinesthetics are movements that involve the “big muscles” of the body. The use of outlines and kinesthetics can allow students engaged in concept development-to play with time and space, and to learn about human events. In these lessons, fourth grade students help to create an outline and then use kinesthetics to acquire knowledge, skills, and values.

Social studies educators practice powerful teaching when the lesson is active, challenging, integrative, meaningful, and value-based.² Teachers who pursue the ideals of powerful teaching will want to experiment with outlines and kinesthetics. Young students need an active environment; and movement engages their interests, helps them learn facts and concepts, and often improve memory.³

Students can help with the careful measurement and marking of the outlines on the floor, either working in small groups (with masking tape, yard stick or tape measures, and a “blueprint” to follow) or one-on-one with the teacher (while the rest of the class works on a written assignment, for example). Then, the sorts of kinesthetic activities that occur within the measured space are limited only by the teacher’s imagination and the closing bell.

Setting Sail for Jamestown in 1606

The content of the social studies provides many opportunities for lesson that use outlines as kinesthetic. A lesson about the arrival of settlers to Jamestown, Virginia illustrates the social studies standards Global Connections and Civic Ideals and Practices.⁴ In 1606, a small group of Englishmen came to Jamestown on three small wooden ships. There were 144 male passengers and crew; no women came to the colony in its first years. With the use of masking tape on a hard floor, students and teachers can mark out the estimated deck dimensions of (one or more of) these ships: the *Discovery* (39 feet long and 11.5 feet its widest point), the *Godspeed* (52 feet long and 15 feet wide), and the *Susan Constant* (82 feet long and 25 feet wide).⁵ Then ask the students to speculate about how many passengers and what cargo might have been included on this voyage. Have a list of cargo, supplies, passengers, and crew ready to distribute so students can compare it with their speculations. The teacher can refer to a calendar to indicate the length of the voyage across the Atlantic, which was 128 days. Point out that, were all the passenger and crew to go on deck on the *Susan Constant* for example maybe sixty people would have had to fit into the space. These travelers had no way to take a break for the crowded conditions during the trip. Guide student in a discussion about how passengers and crew may have spent their time.

To get an idea of how early colonists lived aboard ship and how they passed their time, students should enter the space of the ship for an extended time, perhaps a whole class period.

On the ship the students (can pretend to) take sightings with the astrolobe or sexton, check the direction of the ship's compass, measure time with the hour glass, steer the ship, haul cargo out off the hold, raise the sails, turn the windlass, sleep, or play games on deck. They can keep a journal of their experiences and discussions. For example, at this point, student could examine how discussions on the cramped ship led to a system of social rules for lie in the early

settlements.⁶ What rules could people agree on without even knowing much about the conditions of the New World? The actual rules could be assigned as reading.

At the end of the exercise, simulate a storm by asking the students, who are sitting down within the “hull” of the “ship,” to rock back and forth in unison. Warning: laughter may ensue.⁷

Trading Furs in New France in 1750

Outlines and kinesthetics can be used to help students learn about the fur trade in Canada and the United States. Standards Time, Continuity, and Change, People, Places and Environments, Science, Technology, and Society can all come into play.⁸ When the French came to New France they traveled in the rivers and Great Lakes in canoes. The French used 15- and 25- foot canoes for smaller lakes and rivers, and 36 foot canoes for crossing the Great Lakes.⁹ Students can outline one of each. The entire class should then help load the “cargo” –folded wool blankets, boxes, or barrels, (The French hauled furs out of North America and brought in trade goods such as guns, gun powder, lead shot, knives, fish hooks, traps, flints and steels, pipes and tobacco, blankets, cloth, beads, pans, kettles, and pots.) Student can then climb into the canoes and “paddle” them.

Canoes are used today mainly for recreation. Student could examine how the use and size of canoes have change over time. The can tape the outline of a contemporary standard-sized canoe (average length is 16 feet) on the floor so they can compare and contrast it with the fur trader’s canoes (of up to 26 feet). Student could create a chart that compared the size, materials, purpose, cost, number of passengers, and amount and kind of cargo carried in a Northeastern pre Columbian canoe, a fur trader’s canoe, and a modern three-person canoe. Student can learn about the fur trade routes and portage used by the French traders and explorers.¹⁰

Building a Log Cabin in 1816

Mapping the log cabin where Abraham Lincoln grew up may also promote the standards Culture Time, Continuity, and Change and Power, Authority, and Governance.¹¹ The activity should begin with a discussion of what students already know about Abraham Lincoln's early life. They can speculate about the dimensions and contents of the log cabin in which Lincoln grew up before outlining "Lincoln's log home" with masking tape on the floor. The cabin was only 20 feet by 18 feet.¹² A fireplace and furnishings, such as a bedstead and trundle, corner cabinet, dresser, table, spinning wheel, may be shown with paper or poster board. Groups of four students should then "move into" the home. In the cabin the students can pretend to spin, cook by the fire, work at the table, and climb up the wall pegs to bed. Those who do not go to the upper floor to sleep more the trundle bed out, and replace it the next day. Students can discuss how the issues of power, authority, and governance might be reflected in family life and interpersonal relations in a small cabin. On a cold winter day, with the whole family inside, how would people share the space and spend their time? Students should remember that the only light in the cabin would come from window, candles, and the fireplace. They can be encouraged to record their ideas about the experience by writing or drawing, and to compare their contemporary life experience with life in 1816.

Homesteading in 1830

The Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Ordinance of 1787 lend itself to kinesthetic movement and the inclusion of Standards Time, Continuity, and Change, and Production, Distribution, and Consumption.¹³ Conforming to this code, surveyors marked and divided the township of the Old Northwest Territory into one mile grid squares, numbered from 1 to 36. The sale of the land from section 16 was always to be use for public schools.¹⁴

The teacher can make a walk-on floor map with heavy sheet plastic, sold by the roll from the local hardware store. Cut out a 36 –square –foot sheet from the larger roll with scissors, draw a 6 X 6 –foot grid in permanent black marker (using a string to keep the lines running straight), and place natural and man-made resources on the map with permanent colored markers. The resources shown on the walk-on map could include a forest, sand, cave, clay, limestone, salt spring, fresh water spring, river or creek, dirt road, coal seam, and apple grove.¹⁵ Survey marks can indicate space reserved for a canal or a railroad.¹⁶ Trees or grassland can cover the remaining land. A swamp could provide a challenge and an opportunity; malaria-carrying mosquitoes breed there, but draining the wet land reveals deep, rich soil.

The teacher should provide a brief historical introduction to Land Ordinance of 1785 and ordinance of 1787, review how to read the floor map (including its symbols and scale of 1 foot = 1 mile), and explain the concepts of an ordinance and a survey. Students should learn about the original geologic survey and speculate about what effect the survey had on the settlement of the land.¹⁷ Students can use the symbols on the map to determine the natural resource available and then speculate about possible uses for them. They then must decide which resource are most import economically, and finally make their selection of land by stepping onto the map. While standing on the township map, students can answer: What natural resource can you turn into goods? What good can you trade?

Whose land do you cross to get to school? How far do you walk to school?>? Where might town start? What happens if several people want the same land? How do they determine who got there first? How can they resolve the dispute? Should there be a courthouse or a commons established, or should settler just fight?

Student can study land grant documents, and then write a description of their claim to file in the land office.¹⁸ The new homesteaders (students) can write description of the land to friends and relative back in their “home country,” letters encouraging people to come to the new land to settle, for example.

During a lesson debriefing, the teacher can ask students to evaluate why they chose their land claims. The students should explain what quality make a piece of land desirable or not and discuss what happened when two people wanted the same land. The student can consider how access to new trade routes might affect the value of the land selected and predict where and why town might grow. Students can discuss the willingness of people to accept the benefits and risks of allowing a road or canal on their land. For example, what was the value of the canals once railroads were built? If potential value of land appreciated according to what neighbors do on their land, do the “homesteaders” begin to see that their interests are tied directly to the interests of their neighbors?

Students can learn how the grid pattern on the land set up the community and state as they exist today. They might also see the need to for rules and law as people encounter limited resource. Details of modern life from insurance to taxes stem from the abstracts, land titles, and survey of the township, and township trustees still influence county government. Students could draw a Venn diagram illustrating factors that influence an individual’s decision to settle in a place in the 1800s and in contemporary times.

“Moving” Experiences

By creating a special space and then moving within it, students may link their imagination to another time and place. Students can use their prior knowledge and imagination in these simulations by role playing different people; they can apply the content they have

learned about an era from other source such as primary historical document or textbooks and bring them to lie in the classroom. They can also reflect on their action afterward in a writing assignment or discussion.

A teacher could end any of these lessons by reading a statement to the student about how difficult it is (and it may be impossible) to really know what it felt like to be another person at another point in history – for example, what a young man in the lower deck of a wooden ship really felt and thought as he travel over the ocean in 1606 to a strange land.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is useful to have such a lesson so that we learn something of how our nation was built – not by superheroes, by human beings. We might also come to understand that life, in any era, confronts people with measured limitations, also with interesting and unbounded possibilities.

In our modern society of over-stimulated senses, the absence of stimulation from electronic media creates a different learning environment for students, one that might make them pause to wonder about the experience of people that live before cars, television, and computer games. Using outline and kinesthetics to examine another time and place seems to be a method of teaching social studies that students find meaningful and enduring.

NOTES

1. National Council for the Social Studies, "Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy," *Social Education* (57) 5 (1993): 213-23.

2. National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Author: Washington, DC, 1994).

3. Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory In Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1993): 19.

4. National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Author: Washington, DC, 1994).

5. These dimensions are approximately those of the recreated ships at the Jamestown Settlement Museum, which are based on the only figures available in the historical record, the "tonnage" of each ship. Download education materials and read background at the website of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (a Virginia state agency) at www.historyisfun.org or write to JYF, Department of Education, P.O. Box 1607, Williamsburg, VA 23187; (757)253-4939 (phone). See also "The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia" in Philip L. Barbour. ed. *Jamestown Voyages under the First Charter, 1606-1609* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969): 378.

6. Oscar T Barck, Jr. and Hugh T. Lefler, *Colonial America* (New York: Macmillian, 1858).

7. On a more serious note, this lesson might be recalled for the class lasted when the history of slavery it taught, "How would it have felt to be confined to such a small space and be

forced to lie down, with shackles on one's leg for three weeks? Can we even imagine such an experience?"

8. National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Author: Washington, DC, 1994).

9. Chet Kozlak. *A Great Lakes Fur Trade Coloring Book*. (Minnesota Historical Society: St. Paul, 1981).

10. John D. Barnhart and Dorothea L. Riker. *Indiana to 1816: The Colonial Period* (Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society. Indianapolis, IN, 1971).

11. National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Author: Washington, DC, 1994).

12. Louis A Warren, *Lincoln's Youth: Indiana Years, 1816-1830* (Indiana Historical Society: Indianapolis, IN, 1991). See also, on the web, the U.S National Park Service site, www.nps.gov/LogCabin.

13. National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Author: Washington, DC, 1994).

14. Barnhardt and Riker.

15. John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed), in addition to being a Swedenborgian missionary, purchased land in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana; planted apple orchards; then sold the land to settlers. Such tracts brought a profit because they had been improved even before settlers arrived.

16. Railroads can be included as a resource depending on the year being remembered. The New Purchase began in 1824 in Indiana and the pioneer period did not close in the state until 1850. By then, Indiana was laced with railroad lines.

17. See the U.S. Geological Survey website at pubs.usgs.gov/circular/c1050/before.htm
18. Land deeds of Rev. Foster, Lincoln County Courthouse, Wiscasset, Massachusetts, August 2, 1790, on the web at www.dohistory.org/archieves/doc003/003_title_img.html.
19. Sam Winburg, "Historical Thinking and other Unnatural Acts." *Kappan* (March, 1999), on the web at www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kwin9903.htm