Integrating language arts and social studies through the use of literature

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INTEGRATING LANGUAGE ARTS AND SOCIAL STUDIES THROUGH THE USE OF LITERATURE

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Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project is to show that literature can be used to successfully integrate social studies and language arts within the elementary classroom. The English-Language Arts Framework (1987) and the History-Social Science Framework (1988) contain overlapping goals that can be simultaneously addressed through the use of carefully chosen pieces of literature. Through the use of literature, language arts proficiency can be developed at the same time as social studies content is being learned.

Procedure

The first goal of this project is to show that the teaching of history has taken on a greater importance than ever before. The goals of the History-Social Science Framework are meant to prepare our children to become responsible adults ready to face the twenty-first century. The literature review will discuss some of these major goals that are laid out in the framework.

The second goal is to point out the many similarities that exist between the History-Social Science Framework and the English-
Language Arts Framework. An understanding of these similarities will lead teachers to a more successfully integrated program.

Finally, it will be shown that many of the similarities between the two frameworks can be accommodated through the use of carefully planned, integrated units of study that center around works of literature. Some suggestions for selecting various materials and strategies will also be discussed.

Conclusion

This project will present three literature units that integrate language arts and social studies. The three historical novels presented are: Sarah, Plain and Tall, The Sign of the Beaver, and Ben and Me. The units were prepared following a whole language approach. They integrate reading, writing, listening, and speaking with the various content areas. The activities within each unit of study were designed to give the students an enjoyable and meaningful learning experience.
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Statement of the Problem

Literature-based language arts programs have been proven to be very effective and highly successful. The use of literature is now being expanded into the area of social studies as well. Literature can play a very important role in the social studies curriculum. It can be a powerful tool that brings history alive, making it interesting and relevant to the reader. The new California History-Social Science Framework (1988) embraces the use of literature. Teachers are faced with a new challenge as they begin to implement the new framework's guidelines in their classrooms.

Many of the guidelines outlined in the new History-Social Science Framework coincide very closely with those found in the English-Language Arts Framework (1987). Both embrace the use of an integrated curriculum, combining social science with art, science, language arts, and math. In fact, the History-Social Science Framework states that "the teacher is expected to integrate the teaching of history with the other humanities and the social science disciplines" (p. 4).

The History-Social Science Framework also recognizes the power of enrichment and motivation that literature brings to a subject. Teachers are encouraged to use "both literature of the period and literature about the period" (p.4). All different types of genre are recommended, again correlating well with existing recommendations in the English-Language Arts Framework. It reminds us that "teachers
must never neglect the value of good story telling as a source of motivation for the study of history." It is our responsibility to "bring the past to life, to make vivid the struggles and triumphs of men and women who lived in other times and places" (p. 4).

It is clear that the English-Language Arts Framework and the History-Social Science Framework have some overlapping areas. This makes a very interesting and challenging job for educators to address. It is my understanding that literature selections need to therefore address both areas whenever possible. Through the use of literature, language art skills can be developed at the same time as content is being learned. In her 1988 review of the frameworks, Norton suggests that students can "read, write, listen, speak and think about History-Social Science content" and "learn and practice their English-language arts skills" (p. 51). Such integration will meet the dual criteria in both frameworks. It also means that teachers can fit more quality learning experiences into their already full schedule. And so, as Norton points out, "literature becomes the "core curriculum" for English-Language Arts and a supplement to History-Social Science" (p. 50).

I don't think anyone can deny that history needs to come alive in order to capture the attention of the students. I have listened to my students groan when asked to get out their social studies books. I have also seen them forget the textbook's facts as soon as their books were closed. Many students view history as boring and irrelevant. I
believe that we need to get students "hooked" into history. We need to capture their interest and help them see the connection between the past, the present and the future. As the History-Social Science Framework points out, "our highly complex society needs well-educated minds and understanding hearts; it needs men and women who understand our political institutions and are prepared to assume the responsibilities of active citizenship" (p. 3).

The use of literature in the social studies program will greatly help to accomplish these goals. Literature can be used to bring history alive. It can provide the rich details and human connections not found in most textbooks. O'Brien (1988) expressed these points well when she wrote, "Literature has a way of bringing social studies alive through the portrayal of that which is human in all of us, regardless of our race, sex, or ethnic background. A close examination of literature in the context of social studies will deepen and extend a student's understanding of people and the societal contexts which shape them" (p. 53).

Once students have made an emotional connection with a topic, it becomes more meaningful and relevant to them. This is true for all content areas, including social studies. They will be much more likely to comprehend and retain the material presented to them. Spiegel (1987) states that "literature provides examples to broaden concepts by providing specific instances that flesh out cognitive networks of information (schemata) about particular topics" (p. 163).
Cianciolo (1981) reminds us that by using literature "readers identify with the characters, react to historical reality as the characters do, their imagination is stimulated and the historical past in which the action of the novel occurs becomes a vivid picture, the historical content becomes significant and relevant" (p. 454).

This is not to say that the social studies texts have no place in the classroom. They just need to be put in their proper place, as one of many resources available to the students throughout the year. Not only are many textbooks dry and harshly factual, but many overwhelm both students and teachers with the amount of material that is expected to be covered in a year. They are expected to leap across centuries of history in a single bound. The History-Social Science Framework addresses this concern as it "emphasizes the importance of studying major historical events and periods in depth as opposed to superficial skimming of enormous amounts of material." It continues by stating that since topics are to be studied in more depth, "students will have time to use a variety of nontextbook materials, to think about what they are studying, and to see it in rich detail and broad scope" (p. 5). Carefully selected and integrated literature will provide such enrichment and will be a valuable resource in the social studies classroom.

I believe that through the use of literature in the social studies classroom, we may be able to address another ongoing problem: how to encourage our students to do more leisure time reading on their
own. The literature we choose for our social studies classrooms may very well have an effect on the reading habits of our students. Sanacore (1990) also believes that "social studies teachers must share a role in promoting longterm literacy" (p. 414). He continues by adding that "using literature in social studies classes increases the potential for enjoying reading and for considering it as a lifetime activity" (p. 415).

We have seen the powerful effects of literature in our language arts programs. The History-Social Science Framework also recognizes this and encourages teachers to integrate literature throughout their social studies program. Teachers can capitalize upon this by using carefully chosen literature around which both language arts skills and social studies content can be woven.

Literature can bring history alive and capture the imagination of the reader. It can present factual information in an exciting manner and make history more relevant and meaningful for young readers. It may even find its way into the leisure-time reading of our students. Freeman and Levstik (1988) also concluded in their article that literature "can generate a response to history that is the scaffolding for mature historical understanding, for without the ability to empathize, to put oneself into the past, history can be a dry and barren ground for children. Their vision is limited to the present by their inability to visualize the past and thus to project into the future" (p. 336). As educators, we can accept this challenge by
carefully choosing works of literature to weave throughout our curriculum, therefore revitalizing our program, bringing history alive.

**Theoretical Foundations**

There are many theories concerning the teaching of reading, and I have chosen the whole language perspective to study and implement in my classroom. Educators following the whole language perspective view reading as being meaning based. Reading is a process of three interrelated cueing systems: graphic, syntactic and semantic; which the reader uses to predict, confirm and integrate meaning (Goodman & Burke, 1980). Comprehension is the primary goal and the basis of whole language teaching. Whole language educators follow the belief that comprehension is related to the reader's prior knowledge that is brought to the reading experience. Swaby (1984) explains that the whole language approach "delineates two major functions of the comprehension system: the formation of concepts and the interrelations among the concepts" (p. 66).

To build upon the reader's prior knowledge, or existing schemata, a whole language program uses experiences that are meaningful to the students. Goodman (1986) explains that "language learning is easy when it's whole, real, and relevant; when it makes sense and is functional" (p. 26). Therefore, language experiences are student-centered, being authentic and purposeful.

Whole language requires a literature-based program that integrates speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Literature units
are planned around topics or themes, and tie all content areas together. Hornsby, Sukarna, and Parry (1986) explain the importance of literature as they write, "Children's literature must be the core of every reading program because it is real literature which touches the lives of children in special ways. With real literature, children don't just learn how to read; they choose to read" (p. 8).

A whole language teacher works hard to provide the literate and supportive environment that is necessary for a whole language classroom. Students are surrounded with print that is both fictional and non-fictional and has a wide range of difficulty and interest. A variety of centers and resources are brought in, all surrounding the current thematic unit being explored.

A whole language classroom encourages risk taking. Teachers following this belief use active praise and active acceptance to reinforce the learning process more than the learning product (Goodman & Burke, 1980). Students are respected and take ownership of their responses to and interpretations of the literary events. Students in a whole language class feel comfortable taking risks and making errors.

The whole language approach to teaching language arts is a very positive and successful method of teaching and learning. Students gain confidence in their abilities to become authors and readers. As they engage in functional and relevant literary events, they become more effective communicators. Goodman (1986) lists the specific
keys for a successful whole language program: "lots of reading and writing, risk-taking to try new functions for reading and writing, focusing on meaning. If these three essentials aren't present, no matter how many specific whole language activities are used, the program will not be a successful whole language program" (p. 49).

I have found that the materials and strategies used in a whole language curriculum are exciting, effective, and successful for both the learners and for myself. Therefore, the choice of materials and strategies used in this project will reflect a whole language orientation. This project is literature-based and integrates writing, reading, speaking, and listening through a variety of activities. The activities are chosen to be relevant and meaningful to the learners. The students will be involved in such activities as journal writing, role-playing, poetry writing, reader's theatre, and letter writing, along with a variety of science, math and art projects and other hands-on experiences.

This project also reflects the belief that building on students' prior knowledge is the basis for understanding. Students will use brainstorming, clustering, mapping or other pre-reading/writing activities. Students will be allowed to make frequent predictions, which will later be revised or confirmed.

Active learning will be encouraged. Students will be offered a choice of activities and questions to address. They will be involved in cooperative learning groups, but will also be offered the choice to
work independently. Open-ended questions and activities will be used to promote higher level thinking activities. As active learning takes place, the teacher will take on the role of a facilitator.

It is my intent to make this project an exciting, meaningful, and successful experience for both students and teachers. I want to help the learners become more confident and effective in their roles as authors and writers. I want teachers to feel comfortable and positive about their use of literature in their classrooms. By using a whole language perspective, I hope to make this a reality.
Literature Review

It is the purpose of this review to show that as the twenty-first century approaches, the teaching of history to our students is taking on a greater importance than ever before. The role of literature as a very useful and powerful tool with which to do this will also be discussed. The newest California History-Social Science Framework (1988) recognizes this important place that literature holds in the curriculum. There are several guidelines within the History-Social Science Framework that correlate very closely with those found in the California English-Language Arts Framework (1987), many revolving around the use of literature. Therefore, another goal of this review is not just to show the correlation between the two frameworks, but to also discuss how teachers can integrate and implement these two frameworks in their classrooms.

The Importance of Teaching History Today

The goals of the History-Social Science Framework are meant to prepare today's children to be responsible adults in the twenty-first century. Our children will have to be ready to face a complex, fast-changing world. The framework reminds us that "by studying history-social science, students will appreciate how ideas, events, and individuals have produced change over time and will recognize the conditions and forces that maintain continuity within human societies" (p. 2).
We want our children to become adults who will care for and nurture the legacy of democracy that they will inherit. They need to understand that their rights and freedoms are privileges not to be taken for granted. The History-Social Science Framework states, "We want our students to understand the value, the importance, and the fragility of democratic institutions" (p. 2).

We also want our students to see that history is not just a collection of irrelevant, unrelated, and random events that have been strung together over time. Our students need to see that history is the outcome of ideas and actions taken by people before us. That is, they will need to be adults who will realize that their actions and decisions will have a direct effect on their lives and on the lives of future generations. The History-Social Science Framework explains, "We want students to see the connection between the values and ideals that people hold and the ethical consequences of those beliefs" (p. 3).

Most importantly, we have to prepare our children to live in an ever widening global community. As adults, they will need to be understanding, tolerant, and appreciative of the variety of cultures and societies that will be found within this global community. Members of this society will have to be able to cooperate and share resources and knowledge if our way of life is to be continued and improved upon. As the framework says, "Our complex society needs well-educated minds and understanding hearts" (p. 3). Shubert adds to
this by saying, "Our world will become increasingly more interdependent, and it will be critical to understand other cultures, values, and languages in order to be truly literate" (p. 38).

Teachers are faced with the challenge of addressing these goals in their classrooms. Textbooks alone will not be able to meet these needs. Most textbooks offer a dry, watered down delivery of the facts. Students do not usually relish the use of their social studies texts and often view history in the same manner as it is presented in their books: dry, watered down, and boring. James and Zurrillo (1989) explain that "educators have long realized that teaching about the known world through the memorization of selected facts and static knowledge has severe limitations" (p. 154). Well-known historical fiction writer Jean Fritz was quoted as saying, "Textbooks often expurgate facts or even falsify them. A teacher might want to skirt some issues but we shouldn't dress up the facts." She adds, "It's important to see that people can do great deeds even though they are imperfect" (Bargsley, et al., 1984). Teachers are faced with the challenge of making history lessons interesting and meaningful.

Children's literature can be the tool that educators use to make history come alive for their students. Literature can present facts in a lively and interesting way. Students can make emotional connections with the people and events found in historical literature. Some authors point out that historical stories allow the students to vicariously experience the past, therefore making history relevant
and significant. They add that this allows the students to become involved with the topic being studied (Clanciolo, 1981, Anderson, 1987, Spiegel, 1987). As Freeman and Levstik (1988) point out, "Without the ability to empathize, to put oneself into the past, history can be a dry and barren ground for children" (p. 336).

Literature also addresses complex social issues in a format that is interesting and thought provoking. Students can discuss varying moral issues and conflicts that have occurred in the past. Through the safe context of literature, they can see how people of the past have grappled with these dilemmas and can come to conclusions of their own. Freeman and Levstik note that older elementary students are usually more interested in the "human cost" of a historical event rather than just an outline of the facts surrounding an event. These authors also state that "historical fiction is generally based on the personal choices forced by historical events. Such stories provide a lively format for the discussion of differing points of view, distinctions between fact and opinion, and the difficulties of conflict resolution" (p. 331). They also add that "through historical fiction, students learn that people in all times have faced change and crisis, that people in all times have basic needs in common, and that these needs remain in our time" (p. 330). Common (1986) summarized this well when she stated: "It is in the moral realm that social studies becomes the powerful, exciting, enduring, and indispensable subject for
critical study. It is here that the story as an instructional vehicle most properly belongs. Through the literary experience our values are fostered, rather than through the study of dates, graphs, charts, and maps in the social studies content (p. 247).

Literature can not only make history more real to learners, but it can also make it easier for concepts and facts to be retained since they are presented in an realistic, meaningful context. If students learn and retain important historical information while at the same time enjoying it, they will be more likely to view the study of history as an enjoyable and important endeavor. This can set the stage for future learning. Spiegel (1987) points out, "Literature provides examples to broaden concepts by providing specific instances that flesh out cognitive networks of information (schemata) about particular topics" (p. 163). James and Zarrillo (1989) contend that "elementary children should have a sound knowledge of the past for two reasons: This information provides a sort of cultural glue, offering a shared American heritage and national identity; and historical knowledge becomes an essential foundation upon which greater and deeper understandings can be built" (p. 153).

**Similarities Between the Two Frameworks**

The History-Social Science Framework (1988) and the English-Language Arts Framework (1987) contain many similarities within their philosophies and goals. These similarities can be used by teachers to more successfully integrate their curriculum. This can be
especially useful since most teachers find it hard to fit everything into their busy teaching schedules. As Schubert explains, "It's the ultimate 'two-for-one' offer" (p. 38). By understanding the correlations between the two frameworks, teachers can plan to simultaneously meet the goals expressed in each.

The value of literature as a teaching tool is expressed in both frameworks. The History-Social Science Framework "emphasizes the importance of history as a story well told" and reminds teachers that they should not "neglect the value of good storytelling as a source of motivation for the study of history" (p. 4). It also calls for the use of "literature of the period and literature about the period" (p. 4). This framework asks teachers to use a variety of works including poetry, novels, plays, essays, documents, myths, legends, biographies, and more.

The English-Language Arts Framework follows this closely as it states that an effective language arts program is "a literature-based program that encourages reading and exposes all students, including those whose primary language is not English, to significant literary works" (p. 3). It adds that great, classic literature has the ability to "involve students and motivate learning with its appeal to universal feelings and needs, and to elevate common experiences to uncommon meaning" (p. 6). Norton (1988) effectively concluded that due to the emphasis on literature in both
frameworks, "literature becomes the 'core curriculum' for English-Language Arts and a supplement to History-Social Science" (p. 50).

Each framework has the goal for students to develop cultural literacy. As communities and nations become increasingly interconnected and interdependent, cultural literacy should be of considerable importance to our curriculum. The History-Social Science Framework states that "students must understand the rich, complex nature of a given culture." The framework continues by adding that such a "multicultural perspective should respect the dignity and worth of all people" (p. 15). History, geography, politics, literature, art, drama, music, dance, science, sports, and more, are all areas that the framework suggests to be addressed in order to achieve the beginnings of cultural literacy.

Following this topic, the English-Language Arts Framework points out that "language permits people to gain access to the knowledge that makes us culturally literate, and one of the most important ingredients in becoming culturally literate is familiarity with significant works of literature" (p. 1). It adds that "literature reminds us of the best in the human character, the most admirable in human values, and the most articulate in human speech" regardless of the time or place of origin (p. 7).

In her comparison of the frameworks, Norton (1988) also points out that the English-Language Arts Framework "suggests that students 'explore and learn from the differences among cultures' and
that they 'discover both the remarkable wholeness in the intricately woven tapestry of American society and the unique variety brought by many cultures to that intriguing fabric'" (p. 49).

Both frameworks perceive the need for our students to grow into responsible and educated citizens capable of protecting and upholding the ideals of our nation. The History-Social Science Framework addresses this need as it "encourages the development of civic and democratic values as an integral element of good citizenship" (p. 6). Another one of its guidelines "supports the frequent study and discussion of the fundamental principles embodied in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights" (p. 6).

The English-Language Arts Framework also addresses the need to develop good civic values and responsibility. This framework states that one of its goals is "to prepare all students to function as informed and effective citizens in our democratic society" (p. 1). It also states simply that "the end of English-Language Arts programs is developing a literate, thinking society" (p. 6). Norton (1988) notes that the English-Language Arts Framework suggest that teachers can address this goal by allowing students to "encounter values such as truth, justice, and compassion through interesting stories and memorable characters" (p. 42).

Another goal that both frameworks hold in common is that they both recognize the importance of engaging students in higher level thinking processes. The History-Social Science Framework wants
critical thinking skills to be addressed at every grade level. Specifically, it states that the following critical thinking skills should be developed in the curriculum: "define and clarify problems, judge information related to a problem, solve problems and draw conclusions" (p. 25). Meanwhile, the English-Language Arts Framework calls for "instructional programs that guide all students through a range of thinking processes as they study content and focus on aesthetic, ethical, and cultural issues" (p. 3).

That students engage in active learning is also a common goal between both frameworks. The History-Social Science Framework specifically states that it "supports a variety of content-appropriate teaching methods that engage students actively in the learning process" (p. 7). It gives examples of suggested activities such as simulations, role playing, dramatizations, cooperative learning, and the use of technology. The English-Language Arts Framework addresses this goal by suggesting that teaching strategies be used that "allow students to take active roles in their learning, share ideas with partners and groups, ask questions about what they want to know as well as about what the teacher intends, and write and discuss and make presentations for the class" (p. 14).

Norton (1988) explains that the frameworks share another similarity in instructional technique. She discusses that both frameworks advocate the use of integrated curriculums. The
History-Social Science Framework expects teachers to "integrate the teaching of history with the other humanities and the social science disciplines" (p. 4). It continues by stating that the study of the history of a society should not stop with the study of its political, economic, and social arrangements. The study should also include that society's "beliefs, religions, culture, arts, architecture, law, literature, sciences, and technology" (p. 4). The framework also wants students to be exposed to basic skills that will help them "organize and express ideas clearly in writing and in speaking" (p. 26).

The English-Language Arts Framework states that an effective language arts program requires "integrating all the elements of language before students can make sense of the processes of thinking, listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (p. 6).

It is clear that these two frameworks contain many of the same goals and guidelines. Through the use of quality literature, the goals of both frameworks can be addressed simultaneously. This will allow for the successful integration of subjects and techniques. Through the use of literature, proficiency in the language arts can be developed at the same time as content is being learned. This means that teachers can fit more high quality learning experiences into their schedules.

**Addressing the Similarities in the Frameworks Through Literature**

It has been seen that there are many similarities that exist between the History-Social Science Framework (1988) and the
English-Social Science Framework (1987). If teachers want to capitalize on these similarities, they will need to center their lessons around literature. Through the use of integrated units of study that focus on literature, both frameworks can be covered in the curriculum. Norton (1988) suggests, “The first step would be for teachers to envision English-Language Arts as a process through which students learn the content of History-Social Science. That is, students will read, write, listen, speak and think about History-Social Science content” (p. 51).

Teachers can begin by deciding which goals they want to address in each framework. Then a piece of literature can be selected that covers these goals. Norton (1988) reminds us, “No longer will separate times be set aside for social studies and reading, spelling, writing and English. Instead, time will be scheduled based on the activities developed within the unit of study” (p. 51). When developing a unit of study, O'Brien (1988) also recommends that literature be used thematically “using several different books related to one area of study or concept, with each book emphasizing a different aspect or viewpoint of the concept” (p. 56).

The History-Social Science Framework recommends many types of children literature that are especially useful: stories, folktales, biographies, addresses, fairytales, myths, speeches, historical fiction, nonfiction, songs, diaries, and more. O'Brien (1988) reminds us, “The book that is chosen as the basis of these lessons should be
interesting, well-written and have a theme, setting, characters and plot which lend themselves to expansion and exploration" (p. 60).

James and Zurrillo (1989) suggest five points to consider when selecting literature to use in a history unit:

1. As many selections as possible should be primary sources, or be well-written, child-appropriate accounts based on referenced primary sources.

2. Material should be selected so that the perspectives held by participants during the period are represented.

3. The variety of student reading levels should be met.

4. Both a collection of historical fiction and nonfiction should be used including songs, poetry, speeches, letters, and diaries.

5. A careful balance must be found between enjoying the literature selected as art, and using literature as data for social science analysis. The process should never be so onerous that the joy of reading is diminished (p. 154).

Freeman and Levstik (1988) also discussed the value of using literature and pointed out that historical fiction can serve many purposes. It can be used as "a source of historical data, as supplementary reading, as reference material, and as an introduction to a unit or lesson. It can also provide teachers with background for their own teaching, literature for an individualized reading program,
and motivation for students who are disenchanted with textbook history" (p. 332).

Other authors also discuss the value and use of primary sources in literature. Cianciolo (1981) explains, "The use of such literary devices makes it possible to reveal the most intimate thoughts and feelings so that the reader can learn from the correspondents themselves who they are, to find out what their motives, feelings, prejudices are in the context of the times, to learn why they reacted as they did to the circumstances and conditions in which they lived" (p. 455).

O'Brien (1988) inspires us as she leads us to do the following: Through it all, paint a picture of history as it happened and still happens today ... with living, breathing people who wanted a better life not only for themselves but for all living things, who used their powers of persuasion to dissuade those who can see only short term goals, to leave this world a better place for all because they lived their lives according to their conscience. As educators, we can do this through the examples we set for our students and through the mind-opening literature that we masterfully weave throughout the curriculum, integrating all subjects as we progress throughout the year (p. 40).
Goals, Objectives, and Limitations

Goals

Students will view historical literature in a positive manner through the use of enjoyable and personally rewarding experiences.

Students will heighten their self-awareness and will experience personal growth through their contact with historical literature.

Students will realize there is no wrong or right personal response to a piece of literature.

Students will gain confidence in their ability to read, write, speak, and listen.

Students will share in whole book literary experiences.

Students will be engaged in activities that require higher order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis.

Students will be given the opportunity to choose from a variety of learning experiences.

Students will predict, confirm, and integrate meaning while engaged in the use of quality literature.

Students will understand that history can be meaningful and relevant as they make personal connections between the literature and their personal lives.

Students will understand the importance of careful decision making skills as they see that events in history are the results of
decisions that were made at that time, and that those decisions affect our lives today.

Students will use a variety of assessment tools to gain feedback concerning their growth in the use of the language arts and in their understanding of the historical events depicted in their works of literature.

Objectives

Students will actively be engaged in reading historical novels that are commonly considered to be works of quality literature.

Students will be asked to read the entire novels.

Students will be engaged in activities that integrate their prior knowledge of a topic with the new information being presented.

Students will respond to the literature both orally and in writing.

Students will be given opportunities to work individually and in small group settings.

Students will discuss the literature in small groups as well as with the whole class.

Students will build responsibility for their own learning as they make their own choices of response activities.

Students will write for a variety of purposes using a variety of styles.

Students will regularly be asked to make predictions and confirmations throughout each piece of literature.
Students will be asked to integrate the information from the novels with their own personal lives.

Students will analyze the characters and their actions to gain a deeper understanding of the story and the historical period it depicts.

Students will participate in music, art, and drama which will enhance their understanding of the literature and its content.

Students' responses will be kept in journals which will also act as personal portfolios.

Student progress will be assessed through the use of peer-evaluation, self-evaluation, teacher observation, and teacher evaluation.

Limitations

There are some limitations that can be found concerning the use of this project. One possible limitation to the use of this project is that the philosophy and techniques that are presented within it follow the whole language theory of how students learn to read and write. Teachers not familiar with this philosophy, its terms, or techniques may not feel comfortable using this project.

Another limitation occurs because although the whole language philosophy allows students to choose their own reading material, this project uses three novels that have already been chosen for student use. There are two main reasons for this action. First, our school site has already purchased class sets of the novels included in this project. There are not any literature units available to use with
these sets of novels at this time, so one purpose of this project is to provide the needed units. Teachers who do not have access to class sets of the novels used in this project will be limited in what they can accomplish with their students.

Another reason why the literature has already been chosen for the students is that, at present, I am most comfortable with managing whole-class literature studies. I do not feel competent yet with managing multiple groups of literature studies within my classroom. Other teachers may feel more comfortable having various literature groups working at the same time, and this project would be able to accommodate such an approach if any of the groups chose to read any of the three novels presented in this project.

Finally, the professionals using this project may have to make adaptations so that this project is useful and meaningful for themselves and for their students. Not all of the activities and methods presented here are meant to be used in their entirety. Teachers will have to use their professional judgement as to which activities will be the most meaningful and motivational for their particular groups of students.
References


Appendix
Social Studies
- "I learned that prairie life was..."
  statements and mural.
- Venn diagram comparing chores of 1800's and 1990's.
- Chart advantages and disadvantages of 19th century prairie life and 20th century life.
- Venn diagram comparing winter on prairie with winter in California.
- How decision making affects historical events.
- Recreating an 1800's meal.
- Mapping activities.

Math and Science
- Research on plants and animals mentioned in story.
- Experiments with plants.
- Plant organs and their functions.
- Dissect, draw, label plant parts.
- Research on weather, types of storms.
- Use of weather instruments, graphing results.
- Cooking activities.
- Mapping activities.
- Calculating mileage, travel time, expenses of a trip.

Art
- Drawing family members.
- Watercolor seascapes.
- Science sketches of flowers.
- Pastel chalk florals.
- Sketching important people and places.
- Creating posters.
- Creating a mural.

Language Arts
- Letter writing.
- Character analysis.
- Making Predictions.
- Journal writing.
- Diary entries.
- Writing to a variety of prompts.
- Written science reports.
- Oral reports of information.
- Poetry.
- Critique of video.

Sarah, Plain and Tall
By Patricia MacLachlan

Drama
- Dramatization, chosen scenes from the book.
- Critique of video.
- Puppetry.

Music
- Sharing family songs.
- Square dancing.
Sarah, Plain and Tall
By Patricia MacLachlan

Synopsis of the Story
This story is about Sarah Elisabeth Wheaton, from the seacoast of Maine, who answers an ad for a mail-order bride. The ad was placed by widower Jacob Witting who is looking for a new wife and mother for his two children, Anna and Caleb. Sarah agrees to come and stay with them for one month, to see how things go. This touching story follows the Wittings as they try to welcome Sarah to nineteenth century prairie life. Sarah brings new life and color to the little farm, and the delicate beginnings of a new family start to blossom.

Pre-reading Activities
Have the students cluster their ideas about what would make the perfect mom. Have them work independently for a few minutes. Suggest that they consider such characteristics as personality, looks, hobbies, skills, and talents.

Next, have them find a partner and share their "perfect mom" clusters with each other. After a minute or two, come together as a class and develop a class cluster on the board, showing that everyone will have different ideas about what makes a perfect mother. Emphasize that there are no wrong responses to this activity. Any response is acceptable.
Discuss with the students the need for mail-order brides in the nineteenth century as the country was expanding westward. Explain that men would often place ads in city newspapers for such brides. Have the students pretend that they are going to place an ad in a newspaper for the "perfect mom". Students can write a make-believe ad in their journal. Volunteers may share their ads out loud when the writing session is over.

Bridge to Sarah, Plain and Tall by telling the students that this story is about a man who places such an ad in a newspaper in Maine. Locate Maine on the map and trace how far it is to the prairie where the family may have lived. Discuss how it might feel to write such an ad or to answer such an ad.
Chapter One

Read and Respond:

Read the first line of the story together. Try to make predictions about the story based on that line only. Who is Caleb? Where does he live? Why does he ask that question? When does the story take place? Who is he talking to? Accept all responses, stressing that there are no wrong responses to such questions. Continue reading the chapter. Take time to stop and check if any of the initial questions can yet be answered.

Allow time for students to begin dialogue journals. They should respond to the chapter in their journals. Then have them trade journals with a partner, and write a reply to their partner's entry.

Activity Choices:
1. Students can exchange their pre-writing "perfect mom" ads with a partner. Then they can write a letter that replies to the ad. Remind them that the letters should be realistic and address the setting described in chapter one.
2. Students can write a letter to Jacob, Anna, or Caleb describing why their "perfect mom" would be the perfect mom for them.
3. Students can draw their real-life mothers. Under the picture they can list the characteristics that make their mom perfect for them.
4. Caleb and Anna miss the songs that their mother used to sing. 

Ask the students if they have songs or rhymes that are special in their families. These can be written down and shared.
Chapter Two

Read and Respond:

Have the students read chapter two in small groups. Each group should write three to five predictions about what will happen when Sarah arrives. Groups should share their predictions, and these should be placed on a chart for later reference.

Tell the students that although they have not met Sarah yet, they already know a lot about her. On another chart, start a character analysis of Sarah. Have students volunteer adjectives that describe Sarah. Ask the students to give their reasons for choosing such adjectives, and list these reasons next to the describing word they have offered. All responses should be accepted, again modeling that each reader will get his or her own meaning out of a book.

Activity Choices:

1. Students can take on the role of Jacob, Anna, or Caleb. Have them write a letter to Sarah. Then have them exchange letters with a partner. Now they should become Sarah, and write a letter in reply.
2. Students can pretend they are going to get a new mother. Have them list the questions they would like to ask their new mother when they first meet her.
3. Students can get together in small groups to act out a short scene that was not mentioned in the book. For instance, they can depict Sarah leaving her family in Maine, or they can act out what happened in the Witting house the morning that Sarah was due to
arrive. They could also act out something that happened to Sarah while she was on her journey. Point out that authors leave such scenes like these up to our own imaginations. Have groups present their skits to the whole class.

4. Based upon what they have read about mail-order marriages, students can make observations about what pioneer life may have been like in the nineteenth century: harsh, impersonal, male-oriented, family-oriented, agricultural, and often isolated. Students can write "I learned that prairie life was ..." statements and share them with the class. These can be collected and recorded, now and throughout the remainder of the book.
Chapter Three

Read and Respond:

Review the predictions that were made following chapter two. Read chapter three together. Stop to check if any of their predictions actually came true in the chapter. Modify or add new predictions as necessary.

Take time to add to the character analysis chart previously started about Sarah.

Allow students to respond to the chapter in their journals. The students should trade journals to get a reply. Volunteers may choose to share what was written in their journals.

As a class, create a Venn diagram comparing Caleb and Anna's chores with the chores of students today.

Activity Choices:
1. Have students take the role of one of the book's characters. Have them write an imaginary page from their character's diary that shows their reflections of Sarah's first day on the farm. Remind them that it needs to be written in first person narrative and should reflect what their character probably felt like that day.
2. Bring in books or calendars of seascapes. Discuss the scenes, colors, and moods of the pictures. Students may want to try a watercolor seascape of their own.
3. Students can write about a time they had to move to a new place. They can tell how they felt, what they missed, and what it was
like to have to make new friends. Then have them write how Sarah probably felt about coming to a new place.

4. Students can discuss the things they do to make a new student feel more at home at their school. Then they can write ways that Caleb and Anna could make Sarah feel more comfortable and welcome in her new home.
Chapter Four

Read and Respond:

Students should read chapter four in small groups. Each group is assigned a character: Anna, Caleb, or Jacob. After reading the chapter, each group should write a brief character analysis of their assigned character. Hang a piece of chart paper labeled with each character's name. Groups should combine their character analyses on the appropriate charts. These can be shared with the whole class.

Allow students to respond to the chapter in their journals and to obtain a reply from another student.

Activity Choices:

1. Many kinds of flowers are mentioned in this chapter: paintbrush, clover, prairie violets, goldenrod, wild asters, bride's bonnet, and woolly ragwort. Students can research one of the plants and present the information in an oral or written report.

2. Seed packets of some of these flowers may be obtained from a nursery. Students can study the packets for their illustrations and planting directions. If possible, some of the seeds can be planted. This can lead to studies about seed germination as well as various experiments dealing with plants.

3. This is a good opportunity to introduce the structures of flowering plants. Research the parts of a flower and their function. If possible, bring an assortment of blossoms into the classroom. Dissect, draw, and label the parts of the flower.
4. Bring in books or calendars showing Georgia O'Keeffe's style of close-up floral paintings. Real or artificial flowers should also be made available. Students can use colored chalks to create large, realistic pictures following O'Keeffe's style. Spray the finished pieces with clear plastic spray or hair spray to prevent smudging.

5. A variety of sea animals were also mentioned: sea clams, oysters, razor clams, conch shells, and seals. Students may choose to research and report on the sea animal of their choice.

6. Caleb made up a quatrain about Woolly Ragwort following the AABB format. Students can learn about other quatrain poems that can follow the AABB, ABAB, or ABCB formats. Then they can write quatrains of their own about the prairie or the ocean.
Chapters Five and Six

Read and Respond:

Students can read the chapters in small cooperative groups. When they are finished, the groups should make one chart showing the advantages and disadvantages of living on the prairie in the nineteenth century. Then they should make another chart showing the advantages and disadvantages of living in the twentieth century as we do now. Groups should share their findings with the class. Are there advantages and disadvantages that the two time periods hold in common?

Students can write in their journal about which time period they would like to live in the most: on the prairie in the nineteenth century or in the present. They should support their opinions with reasons. Journals should be traded and responded to between partners.

Activity Choices:
1. Have students pretend that they can bring one of the characters into the present. They should write about what might happen. Which character would they pick and why? How would that character get along with their family? What would they do with that character, and where would they take them?
2. Sarah drew pictures to send to William in Maine so that he could know what her new home looked like. Students can make
sketches showing what's important to them where they live, including the surroundings and the people.

3. Students can write about which character they would like best to have as a friend. They need to support their choice with reasons.

4. Sarah and the children discussed the first words they spoke. Anna and Caleb also get their first swimming lesson. Students can write about one of their first memorable experiences.

5. Create a Venn diagram comparing winter on the prairie with the winter in California.

6. Students may choose to form small groups of three or four and reenact one of the scenes from these chapters. They might act out the scene at the “dune”, or they may act out the scene at the cow pond.
Chapter Seven
Read and Respond:

Students can read the chapter in partners or alone. As the chapter ends, summer is drawing near. The time of Sarah's trial visit is coming to an end. Have the students write five or six predictions in their journals concerning what they think may happen next in the story. Journals can be exchanged and responded to by partners. Volunteers can share their predictions. These can be listed on a chart for later reference.

Activity Choices:
1. Students can add dandelions, corn, wild daisies, dahlias, columbine, and nasturtiums to their floral picture collections.
2. Students can design a postcard that Sarah might have sent to her brother William. They can put an illustration on one side and Sarah's message on the other.
3. Both Sarah and Maggie missed some things about Maine and Tennessee. Have students suppose that they were to move to another state. They can write about what they would miss about California.
4. Discuss how important it was for farmers to help one another back then. They shared equipment and labor. Discuss why this was done. Students can write about a time their family helped another relative or friend by sharing the work of a big job.
Chapter Eight

Read and Respond:

Review the predictions that were made at the end of the previous chapter. As the chapter is read, take time to confirm, add, or change the predictions. After reading the chapter, this is a good time to add more to the character analysis chart of Sarah that was started earlier.

Students should be given a chance to respond to the chapter in their journals. The journals should be traded, and replies should be written. Volunteers may share what was written in their journals.

Activity Choices:
1. Students can research various types of storms. The information can be presented in a report, on posters, or in student-made books.
2. Students can draw what they think the farm looked like after the storm.
3. Students may write about an experience they have had with a bad storm.
4. This is a good time to start a science unit on weather. Various weather instruments can be used to keep track of the local weather over a period of time. Newspapers can be used to obtain current weather forecasts. Graphs can be made to show the results of the weather study.
5. Students can write an ending for the story. After they finish the book, they can tell how their ending was similar to or different from that of the author's.
Chapter Nine

Read and Respond:

Before reading the chapter, students can predict what they think Sarah's decision will be. A vote can be taken on how many students feel she will stay and how many feel she will return to Maine. Students can then finish reading the book to themselves.

Students can make a final response in their journals. They could choose to write about their overall opinion of the book. They could also choose to write whether they would recommend the book to their other friends or not.

Discuss how the decisions that the characters made shaped the events that occurred in the story. List many of the decisions that were made: Jacob's advertisement for a wife, Sarah's response to Jacob's advertisement, Sarah's decision to learn to drive the wagon, Sarah's decision to stay.

These decisions can be discussed in groups or with the whole class. They can be analyzed for the following information: the circumstances surrounding the decision, the nature of the decision involved, who was making the decision, the effects of that character's decision. Students can consider the feelings, attitudes, and values that led the character to make such a decision.

Culminating Activity Choices

1. Bring in wedding announcements from the newspaper. After the students study the information that is present in the announcements,
they can create a wedding announcement of their own for Sarah and Jacob.

2. Students can learn to square dance. There are records available that include the directions to the dances.

3. If facilities are available, a wedding feast can be prepared featuring foods that were mentioned in the book: stew, greens, corn, biscuits, and fresh baked bread. *The Little House Cookbook*, by Barbara M. Walker, offers recipes for frontier foods including baked beans, cornbread, butter, succotash, and much more.

4. Students can write another chapter for the book that takes place a year after Sarah and Jacob’s wedding. This chapter could be presented to the class in the form of a skit or puppet show.

5. The class can brainstorm everything they have learned about prairie life from this book. Then a large, factual mural can be made depicting life on the prairie.

6. *Sarah, Plain and Tall* was shown as a movie on television. Depending on the school’s regulations, the students could watch a tape of this movie if one could be located. They could make comparisons between the movie and the book.

7. Students can prepare a map of Sarah’s probable journey. They will need to decide on which cities she could have realistically started and ended at. Using a map of the U.S., teams can outline a possible route that Sarah might have traveled upon. Textbooks or other references may show maps of the U.S. in the 1880's. Students
can estimate the mileage of her trip and then, using the map's scale, find the actual mileage. Students can find out the speed at which trains traveled in those days, and figure out how long Sarah's journey might have taken. Students could also map out a similar trip which could be made today. The Automobile Club could be used as a source for maps and travel guides, allowing students to calculate mileage, travel time, and traveling expenses fairly realistically.

Assessment

A variety of evaluation methods can be applied including self evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher evaluation, and teacher observation. Students should always know how they are going to be evaluated before they begin on a project.

Self evaluation and peer evaluation work well because they give the students a sense of control over their learning experiences. These methods also make them responsible for their own choices and actions and are often very motivating to the students.

If self evaluation, peer evaluation, or teacher evaluation are to be used, statements like these may be completed:

1. I/They/You deserve the grade of ___ because ...
2. Two ways that my/their/your project is good are ...
3. Two ways my/their/your project could have been better are ...

Another approach is to have students evaluated by using a point system. First, the elements that are to be evaluated need to be
determined, either by the teacher or by the students. These elements may include such topics as proof of editing, originality, clearness of presentation, use of supporting details, evidence of effort, neatness, or any other elements that seem appropriate to the activity. Then the point value can be set by the teacher or by the students as a group.

Teacher observation can also be a useful evaluation tool. Teachers can observe and record student growth through the use of portfolios. Teachers can observe and note such factors as participation, effort, team work, and responsibility. Portfolios can be kept for each student, containing a variety of work samples as well as teacher comments. Students can be responsible for what work is put into the portfolios and should have open access to view their own portfolios as they choose.
Bibliography


Social Studies
- Mapping activities.
- List- "What We Have Learned About Native Americans".
- Charting Matt's skills and Attean's skills.
- Researching family names.
- Venn diagram comparing Biblical and Indian "flood" stories.
- Research on Indian tribes and their beliefs.
- Recreating an 1800's meal.
- Debating Indian and white settler's viewpoints. Arriving at compromises.
- Create model of Iroquois village.
- Decision making skills.
- Discuss rites of passage.
- Compare and contrast student's family with an Indian family.

Math and Science
- Pioneer and Native American cooking activities.
- Mapping activities.
- Study of Maine's climate.
- Research on bees and beaver.
- Survival skills.
- Making clock candles.

Art
- Spirit masks.
- Sketching characters and the Indian village.
- Cartooning.
- Family Coat-of-Arms.
- Creating a mural.
- Making a model of an Iroquois village.

Language Arts
- Journal writing.
- Making predictions.
- Writing to a variety of prompts.
- Oral reports of information.
- Character analysis.
- Guest speakers.
- Book publishing.
- Comparing Native American folktales.
- Written reports.
- Story telling.

Drama and Music
- Dramatization, chosen scenes from the book.
- Research and creation of Native American musical instruments.
- Creation of dance with spirit masks.

The Sign of the Beaver
By Elizabeth George Spear
The Sign of the Beaver

By Elizabeth George Speare

Synopsis of the Story

This story of survival is set in the wilderness of Maine territory during the summer of 1769. Twelve-year-old Matt is left alone to guard the family's new homestead and crops while his father travels back to Massachusetts to bring the rest of Matt's family back to Maine. During his father's absence, Matt encounters many adventures and trials. These lead him to the Indian tribe of the Beaver People. Matt and a young Indian boy, Attean, form a tenuous friendship. They each share their skills and talents with each other as their friendship expands and deepens. When the danger of winter approaches and there is no sign of Matt's father, Matt is faced with a grave decision. Should he go with Attean's people when they leave for their winter lands, or should he hold onto his hopes and wait for his family's arrival?

Pre-reading Activities

1. Have the students imagine that they are going to be left to survive on their own in the woods. All that they will have is a log cabin without electricity or water, a hatchet, and the clothes that they are wearing. Let cooperative groups brainstorm all of the tasks that will need to be accomplished in order to ensure their survival. They should consider how they would obtain food, light a fire, get additional clothing, and protect themselves from wild animals.
After the groups have had a chance to sufficiently brainstorm, come together and make a chart listing the jobs that they came up with. Have the students meet back with their groups again. From the class list, they are now to choose what they consider to be the ten most important jobs. Have the groups rate these in order from most important to least important. Groups should share their top ten jobs with the whole class. Students can be given the opportunity to defend and support their group's decisions.

2. The students may benefit from studying some information about the French and Indian War since the Indians is this story were still living with the conflicts that developed during and after this war. They need to understand the factors that led the Indians to mistrust and dislike the white settlers who came onto their lands.

This war began as a conflict over land and power between the British and the French. Each had Indian allies who fought for them: the Iroquois sided with the British, the Algonquin with the French. The Algonquin people regarded the British as a bigger threat to their native lands than the French fur trappers and missionaries who did not endanger their hunting grounds.

At the war's end, the British won while the French lost control of their lands. The Indians were disillusioned as the British backed out of their treaties and began to confiscate Indian lands. Under British control, more settlers came to the area and more land was claimed. It is not surprising that the Indians had feelings of hatred
and mistrust towards the British, and in turn, against the settlers who came to this region.
Chapters One and Two

Read and Respond:

Read the first paragraph of the first page. Stop to make predictions concerning why Matt's father left and where he is going. Continue reading the chapters, discussing the setting that is described. Stops should be made to check if any of the initial predictions have come true or if any need to be changed. At the end of chapter two, list predictions of who the unexpected visitor might be and what may happen in the next chapter. List these on a chart and save them until the next session.

Have students respond to these chapters in their journals. If they need a prompt, have them consider that Matt's father expressed confidence in Matt. Discuss the evidence that points to this conclusion. Then have the students write about a time their parents had confidence in them and left them in charge of a situation. They should describe the situation and its outcome.

Activity Choices:

1. Students can draw a map of the New England states. They can label the main cities, bodies of water, rivers, Canada, and other landforms. Using a scale of miles, students can estimate the length of the trip that Matt and his father made to their new homestead.
2. Students can consult an encyclopedia or other source to obtain information about Maine's climate. Graphs or charts can be made
showing the seasonal temperatures and precipitation rates. These can be referred to as the story continues.

3. Students can imagine they are in the wilderness and must build a shelter. They should consider what kind of shelter they would build: a cave, a hut, a cabin of stones or logs, etc. Once decided, they can draw a picture of the shelter they would make. They should write the steps it would take to make such a shelter and their reasons for choosing that type of shelter.

4. In the first chapter, Matt munches on a bit of "johnnycake". The Little House Cookbook, by Barbara M. Walker, offers a recipe for Johnny-Cake and tells a bit of the background behind this frontier staple. Students may enjoy tasting Johnnycake for themselves.

5. Matt's father gave Matt one of their family's heirlooms before he left. It was his grandfather's pocket watch. Students can write and draw about an object they would choose to hand down to the future generations of their family. They should give reasons for their choice.
Chapters Three and Four

Read and Respond:

Review the predictions that were made at the end of chapter two. Begin reading chapter three. Discuss what clues, if any, the author gives us about Ben's true character and if he is going to cause trouble for Matt. Make stops to see if any of their predictions come true. Make changes, deletions, or additions to the list of predictions.

At the end of chapter three, explain to the students that Matt's troubles are not over. Brainstorm a list of possible troubles that Matt may encounter in the upcoming chapters. Save the list for future reference.

Have students respond to the chapters in their journals. For a prompt, have the students think about the fact that Matt felt he had to lie to Ben about his family's whereabouts. They can respond by writing if they think it was right or wrong for Matt to lie. They can also consider if there are any instances when it is permissible to lie or is honesty always the best policy? They need to support their point of view. Volunteers may choose to share their journal entries with the class.

Activity Choices:

1. Students can write a story describing a time they carelessly forgot to do something and it ended up having bad consequences.
2. Students can write a letter to Matt giving him advice and support. They can give Matt ideas as to what he should do next. They can also try to make him feel better in the face of these disasters.

3. Students can write a new ending to chapter four telling what may have happened if Matt had actually surprised the marauding bear while it was still in the cabin.

4. Students can describe the way their family might react if a stranger came to their house and invited himself to dinner. They can tell if their family would welcome the stranger and how far they would go to make their "guest" feel comfortable. Students can compare how their family's reactions would compare with Matt's reactions.

5. Pairs of students may want to dramatize the fateful meeting between Matt and Ben. They can act out the meeting, the dinner, and the stealing of the rifle.
Chapters Five and Six

Read and Respond:

Read to the bottom of the first page of chapter five. Stop to list predictions of what might happen next. Continue reading to the end of the chapter, finding out if the predictions happen or not. Students should read chapter six in small groups. When they are done reading, the groups should make a list of all the things they have learned about the Indians who live near Matt. These lists can be compiled to form a class chart entitled "What We Have Learned About Native Americans". This chart can be added to throughout the remainder of the book.

Activity Choices:
1. Students can draw and describe what they feel would have made a better gift for Matt to give to Saknis. They need to tell why it would have been a better choice for a gift.
2. Based on the evidence in the chapter, students can draw what they think Attean looks like. They may want to draw other characters as well. These drawings can be shared to show that each person pictures the characters differently in their own imaginations.
3. Students can write a journal entry that Matt might have written describing his first experiences with Indians.
4. Students can write about what might have happened if the Indians had not came along and saved Matt when they did.
5. Students can do research about bees. They can find out about their life cycle, their social way of life, their physical characteristics, different types of bees, and the safe way to harvest honey. If possible, a beekeeper could be asked to be a guest speaker, or could be interviewed by students.
Chapters Seven and Eight

Read and Respond:

These chapters can be read in cooperative groups. After they are done reading, groups should begin a character analysis of either Attean or Matt. They should list adjectives that describe Attean or Matt. They should also give their reasons for choosing such adjectives and list these reasons next to each describing word. The groups' work can be displayed on chart paper, allowing the groups to make additions or changes as they progress through the rest of the book.

Activity Choices:
1. Invite a reading specialist or ESL teacher to your classroom to explain how they teach students new to English how to read.
2. Students could go to a kindergarten or first-grade classroom to observe a beginning reading lesson. If possible, the students could become peer-helpers by pairing up with younger students to help them practice their reading.
3. Students could observe and record the common characteristics of various alphabet books. They could then write, illustrate and publish their own alphabet books. These could be given to either younger siblings or to younger schoolmates.
4. Students could make a journal entry which addresses why Matt uses words such as "savage" and "heathen" when he talks about the Indians who have been so generous to him.
Chapters Nine and Ten

Read and Respond:

Read chapter nine together. Discuss the last paragraph in this chapter. The class should try to answer Matt's question, "Was there perhaps another possibility?" At the end of the chapter, have the students also make predictions whether Attean will return or not. Students should consider why Attean may or may not return.

The students can read chapter ten by themselves. After they are done reading, make two charts. One will be titled "Matt's Skills" and the other will be titled "Attean's" skills. For each chart, have the students provide the skills that each character knows how to do such as raising corn, making a snare, reading, or fishing with a spear. These charts can be added to throughout the rest of the book.

Activity Choices:

1. Students can write a script for one of the scenes and create a skit for the class.
2. Matt and Attean both have skills that they use to make various items. Students can share something with the class that they have made. They should write a simple list of directions to share with the class. They may choose to share a model, a recipe, a craft, and so forth. If the other students are interested enough, they may conduct their own lessons teaching their skills to small groups of students.
3. Students may want to draw a series of cartoons illustrating the scene at the fishing spot. Students should add a humorous caption that Attean or Matt might have said.

4. Students may want to research an Indian tribe in more depth. They may want to learn more about Indian skills, handicrafts, and arts.

5. A variety of Indian folktales may be read to the class. The folktales can be analyzed for common elements and for the lessons they impart.
Chapters Eleven and Twelve

Read and Respond:

After reading the chapters, add to the variety of charts begun earlier in the book. Reread the last paragraph on page fifty-seven. Have the students discuss if they think Attean is making Matt feel inferior on purpose. The students should make predictions about ways Matt might finally win Attean's respect.

Using Kids' America or other sources, students can research the origin of their family name. They can also make a coat-of-arms to represent their family name. The symbols they choose for their coat-of-arms should be carefully chosen and accompanied by an explanation of why they were chosen.

Activity Choices:
1. Discuss the changing nature of the friendship between Attean and Matt. Students can write about a friendship that they have had that has changed in some way and the incidents that brought about the changes.
2. Students can research beavers and their dams. The information can be published in a book or presented in a report.
3. Boy Scout books, Girl Scout books, and other resources may contain information about trail markings and other survival skills. The students may want to collect information about these skills to share in a book, a report, a poster, or a display.
4. If students have dogs, they can use a Venn Diagram or a chart to compare and contrast their dog with Attean's.

4. Find someone who will let the class borrow a bow and arrow set. Allow the students to practice shooting, building respect for the skill that it takes to be accurate.
Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen

Read and Respond:

After reading the chapters, use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast the story of Noah and the Ark with the Indian story Attean told. To further aid in developing multi-cultural understanding, ask a librarian for more "flood" stories from other cultures. These can also be compared with Matt and Attean's beliefs.

Students can respond in their journals about the incident with the trapped fox. Do they agree with Attean that the fox should be left since it is on another tribe's land? Or do they agree with Matt that the fox should have been freed? Volunteers can read their entries to the class. Two debating teams could be formed to present and uphold each point of view.

Activity Choices:

1. Most Native Americans believe in many spirits. They also believe that spirit power can be gained through certain ceremonies. Students may want to research various Indian tribes to learn about their spiritual beliefs. Afterwards, the students can make three-dimensional spirit masks out of construction paper, paper mache', or clay.

2. Students may want to learn about Indian musical instruments. They may choose to make some instruments of their own. Then music could be combined with the spirit masks in a dance production.
3. Attean used storytelling to present the story of Robinson Crusoe to his family. Discuss and practice good storytelling techniques together. Have students choose a favorite story of their own to tell to their group or to their family. If possible, an experienced storyteller could be asked to come and present a story to the class.

4. Groups of students could choose a favorite children's story that would be appropriate for kindergarten or first grade. They could create a "big book" of the story. The students could also practice telling the story using good storytelling techniques. The stories could then be presented to a young audience. The "big books" could be presented to the audience so they could practice reading the stories themselves.
Chapters Fifteen, Sixteen, and Seventeen

Read and Respond:

Have the students read the first paragraph of chapter fifteen. Stop and take predictions of what the "greatest adventure" will be for Matt and Attean. Continue reading to see if their predictions come true.

Students can respond in their journals whether they feel that Matt deserved a share of the bear or not. They can also predict if Matt will ever be given another chance to visit the village again.

Have the students form two groups. One group will represent the Indians. The other group will represent the white settlers. Lead each group to discuss and debate their points of view concerning the use and ownership of the land. Groups can then brainstorm ways that the Indians and settlers could have compromised with each other.

Activity Choices:
1. Groups of students can act out the scene of the bear hunt. They can also act out Matt’s visit to the Indian village.
2. Students may respond in writing to the statements, "And he knew that in Attean’s world everything that was killed must be used. The Indians did not kill for sport". They can express their agreement or disagreement with this philosophy.
3. Students can make a large mural depicting the encounter that Matt and Attean had with the bear.
4. Students can make an illustration of the Indian village as it is described in the chapters.

5. Students can compare and contrast how their family celebrates an important occasion with how the Indians celebrated the feast of the bear.
Chapters Eighteen, Nineteen, and Twenty

Read and Respond:

Read to the bottom of page ninety. Have the students predict why Matt's family is so late. Continue reading to the bottom of the first paragraph on page ninety-two where it says, "Somehow he had to get that dog out of the trap". Have the students discuss if they feel Matt should or should not rescue the dog since it is on Turtle tribal property. Students can list the pros and cons, and then they can make recommendations about what they feel Matt should do.

Discuss that in every society, there are rites of passage from one stage of life to another. In order to be accepted by the Beaver people as an adult, Attean had to be alone in the forest until he discovered his manitou. What are some rites of passage in our society that young people must perform in order to be accepted as adults?

Activity Choices:

1. Matt kept track of the days by making notches on sticks. One way that early settlers kept track of time was through the use of candle clocks. A candle clock had notches in the side that marked the passage of each hour. Students can make their own candle clocks by first getting two identical candles and mounting them side by side. Have them notice the time on the clock and light only one of the candles. After an hour, notice how far the one candle has burned down and place a mark on the other candle at exactly the same place.
Continue until the one candle has burned down completely, making marks on the clock candle at each hour, and then number the markings on the unburned clock candle. Other candles that are of the same size can now be calibrated with the newly made clock candle. One of the clock candles can be burned the next day to see how accurate it really is in keeping track of the hours.

2. Many early Americans and Indians depended on acorns as a food staple. The students can have a chance of their own to see if they like acorns or not. Kids’ America outlines the process for handling acorns. First, select white oak acorn that do not have any holes in their shells. Remove the acorn caps, crack the shells, and remove the nuts. Boil the nuts in a pot of water until the water turns a dark tea color. Pour out the water and reboil the nuts in clean water. Continue to boil and change the water for about two hours. When the bitterness is gone from the acorns, stop boiling them. Roast the drained acorns in a slow oven for about one and a half hours.

3. The Indians and settlers dried fruit so they would have it to eat in the winter and spring. Using a variety of cookbooks, health food books, or Kid’s America, students can use a recipe for making their own dried fruit. This can be eaten or wrapped up as a gift.

4. Matt played a couple of Indian games. The class may want to try these games for themselves. As an alternative, the students can design a game of their own that Indian children might have played.
Remind them to write out the rules of the game. They must remember to only use natural materials in their games.
Chapters Twenty-one and Twenty-two

Read and Respond:

Read chapter twenty-one. Stop to analyze the decision that Matt must make. Should he stay and wait for his family, or should he go with the Indians? List the alternatives and discuss the consequences of each choice. Label the consequences as being positive or negative. Students should then discuss which decision they think is the best one for Matt. Continue reading chapter twenty-two to find out what Matt decides to do.

Students can respond in their journal by making predictions of what they think will happen to Matt, to Attean, and to their friendship.

Activity Choices:

1. Matt finally is sure that he has Attean's respect. Students can write about a time they were sure that they had won someone's respect and how it make them feel.

2. Students can write about why it must have been difficult for Matt and Attean to exchange the gifts that they did. Students can also write about a time they had to buy a very special gift for someone and what it felt like to find the perfect gift.

3. Students can write how they feel about the Indian's concept of land ownership. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a theory?
4. Students can create a journal page that Matt might have written describing how he felt about what might have been Attean’s last visit.

5. Students can make a painting or drawing depicting a time when they had to make a very difficult decision. Volunteers can display and explain their pictures to the class. Students may also want to discuss who they can go to if they need help with a difficult decision.

6. Students can choose which character, Matt or Attean, they would like to have the most for a friend. They could write about which character they would choose, including reasons for their choice. The students could also write about what they would do if that character were brought to life and spent a day with them.
Chapters Twenty-three, Twenty-four, and Twenty-five

Read and Respond:

After reading chapter twenty-three, list all of the tasks that Matt does so that he can survive. Next to each, mark if it is a skill that he learned from the Indians or not. It should be seen that the Indians taught him many things to make his survival easier.

Continue reading to the end of chapter twenty-four. Discuss how Matt's life without his family is like Attean’s search for his manitou. Although Matt chose to stay with his own family, his experiences with Attean will have a lasting influence on him. Discuss in what ways Attean changed Matt’s life forever.

Have the students finish reading the book to themselves.

Culminating Activity Choices

1. Plan and make a pioneer meal with the class using some of the recipes previously mentioned. Include johnnycake with molasses or honey, stew, dried fruit or pumpkin, cranberries, maple sugar.
2. Students can make a model of the cabin and the clearing. They should use only natural materials.
3. Based on this book and on research, students can make a model of an authentic Iroquois village.
4. Have the students go back in history and set up new guidelines for the settlement of North America. Can they devise new rules and guidelines that would prevent the misunderstandings and bloodshed
that could occur, while at the same time protecting the needs of both the Indians and the settlers?

5. Cooperative groups can each paint part of a mural depicting the main events of the book. The mural can be displayed for other students to see, encouraging them to read the book.

6. Students can make a chart comparing their way of life to Attean’s way of life.

7. Students can write an additional chapter to the book which tells about the time that Matt and Attean meet again.

8. Students can read Robinson Crusoe on their own.

9. Students can try to make something that Matt or Attean made such as a snare or a bow. They can report on the success of their attempt.

10. Students can imagine that Matt did go with Attean. They can write a story that describes what happens in Matt’s new life.

11. Students can write an article that might have appeared in Matt’s town newspaper that recounts the events of Matt’s ordeal and the reunion of his family.

**Assessment**

A variety of evaluation methods can be applied including self evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher evaluation, and teacher observation. Students should always know how they are going to be evaluated before they begin on a project.
Self-evaluation and peer evaluation work well because they give the students a sense of control over their learning experiences. These methods also make them responsible for their own choices and actions and are often very motivating to the students.

If self evaluation, peer evaluation, or teacher evaluation are to be used, statements like these may be completed:

1. I/They/You deserve the grade of ___ because ...
2. Two ways that my/their/your project is good are ...
3. Two ways my/their/your project could have been better are ...

Another approach is to have students evaluated by using a point system. First, the elements that are to be evaluated need to be determined, either by the teacher or by the students. These elements may include such topics as proof of editing, originality, clearness of presentation, use of supporting details, evidence of effort, neatness, or any other elements that seem appropriate to the activity. Then the point value can be set by the teacher or by the students as a group.

Teacher observation can also be a useful evaluation tool. Teachers can observe and record student growth through the use of portfolios. Teachers can observe and note such factors as participation, effort, team work, and responsibility. Portfolios can be kept for each student, containing a variety of work samples as well as teacher comments. Students can be responsible for what work is put into the portfolios and should have open access to view
their own portfolios as they choose. Portfolios can be used during conferences to illustrate the growth that the student has been making.
Bibliography


Social Studies
- Research on colonial and modern Philadelphia.
- Mapping activities.
- Research on Ben Franklin and other famous colonists.
- How present day printing and copying affects our lives.
- How inventions have affected our lives in positive and negative ways.
- Research on Revolutionary War era.
- Colonial flags, American symbols.

Math and Science
- Research on mice and rats.
- Mapping activities.
- Calculating mileage, travel time, expenses of a trip.
- Research and experiments with electricity.
- Research and reporting on inventors and inventions.
- Making charts and graphs.
- Designing and building a working invention.

Art
- Sketching characters.
- Creating a diorama.
- Building and flying kites.
- Making posters.
- Creating a get-well card.
- Drawing or sewing colonial style clothing.

Language Arts
- Letter writing.
- Character analysis.
- Making predictions.
- Journal writing.
- Writing to a variety of prompts.
- Written science reports.
- Oral reports of information.
- Poetry.
- Personification.
- Interpreting and writing maxims.
- Understanding points of view.
- Using and writing an almanac.
- Conducting an interview.
- Handwriting skills.

Music
- Patriotic songs.

Drama
- Dramatization, chosen scenes from the book.
- Creation of film strip.
- Role playing.

Ben and Me
By Robert Lawson
Ben and Me
By Robert Lawson

Synopsis of the Story
Amos, the intelligent and talented sidekick of Benjamin Franklin, decides to take "pen in paw" and write the "true" account of Ben's success. The friendship between Ben and Amos is humorously and warmly portrayed from a most unique point of view. Through Amos' eyes we learn about Ben's inventions, his travels, and his role in the American Revolution. We are also led to believe that Ben's fame is all due to Amos' wise advice and counsel. It is within this book that Amos finally sets the historians right and gains the credit that he so richly deserves.

Pre-reading Activities
Have the students develop a chart that lists all that they already know about Benjamin Franklin. Then have them develop a second chart listing what they would like to find out about Ben Franklin. Throughout the story, the students can add more questions to the list of things they want to find out about Ben. As facts are revealed in the book, they can be listed on a third chart entitled "What We Learned About Benjamin Franklin".

Read the forward of the book together. This is very important as it describes the supposed origin of the manuscript upon which the book is based. Have the students discuss why they think the author put the forward in the book. Discuss how it prepares the reader for
the remainder of the story. The students can also discuss the tone and style that is presented in the forward, and how it motivates readers to continue with the story.
Chapter One

Read and Respond:

After reading the first chapter together, students can respond to it in their journals. If a prompt is needed, the students can write what their first impressions of Amos are. They can also make a few predictions about what may happen in chapter two.

Discuss the effectiveness of first-person narrative when it is used in a story. It should also be pointed out that since this story is written using a first-person narrative, the readers will be getting a very personal, yet possibly limited point of view concerning the events.

Activity Choices:

1. Discuss personification and ask the students to give other examples of non-human characters who are given human characteristics. Start a Venn Diagram comparing the ways that Amos acts like a human with the way he acts like a mouse. This diagram can be added to later.

2. Students can start a character analysis of Amos which can be expanded upon as they continue through the book. Students should list adjectives that describe Amos' character. Beside each adjective, the students should list the evidence or incident within the book that led them to choose such an adjective.

3. Students can draw a picture of Benjamin Franklin as he is described on page eight.
Chapter Two
Read and Respond:

After reading the chapter, students can discuss what Ben meant when he said, "Waste not, want not". The students can provide examples of when that saying would be good advice in today's world.

Take time to add to the charts started at the beginning of the book, listing any new information that has been found out about Ben. Students may also want to add to their character analyses of Amos.

Activity Choices:
1. Students could start a character analysis for Benjamin Franklin. It should be similar to the one for Amos described in chapter one. Students should be cautioned that they are seeing Ben through Amos' eyes, not through those of an unbiased observer.
2. Students can write a letter that Amos might have written to his family who were still living in the church. They should try to make the letter sound as if Amos were really writing it.
3. Students may want to do research on mice and rats. Their information could be displayed and illustrated on posters. The posters could be hung in the room for others to view.
Chapter Three

Read and Respond:

After reading the chapter, start a chart that list the maxims that Ben uses in the book. Students should accompany each maxim with an explanation of what it means written in their own words. Students may want to come up with maxims of their own to add to the list.

Students can respond to the chapter in their journals. They may want to write if they feel the agreement between Ben and Amos is a fair one. They should support their opinions with reasons. Volunteers may want to share their entries with the class.

Activity Choices:

1. Have the students imagine that they could have a mouse like Amos. Let them write about the adventures they could have with the mouse. How would the mouse help them? What might be the advantages and disadvantages of such an arrangement?
2. Have the students try to imagine a time when they should have gotten credit for something they did, but someone else got the credit instead. Perhaps they felt they deserved some credit for something, but no one got credit for it at all. If they have had such as experience, they can write about the incident and describe how it made them feel not to get the praise or recognition they felt they deserved.
3. Students can do research on colonial or modern Philadelphia. Their information could be presented in a report or on a poster. They
could compare and contrast colonial Philadelphia with modern Philadelphia. If possible, a map of colonial Philadelphia could be drawn and displayed in the classroom during the reading of the story.

4. Students could use maps to determine how far it is from their own city to Philadelphia. They could plan an imaginary trip to Philadelphia, calculating daily mileage, travel time, expenses, and stop overs.
Chapter Four
Read and Respond:

Discuss how Amos describes swimming and how he describes the dog that got into Ben’s clothes. Discuss why Amos would describe them as he did.

Give the students an opportunity to add to any charts or lists that they have been keeping. These may include the character analyses of Ben and Amos and the chart of facts that are being learned about Benjamin Franklin.

Activity Choices:
1. Students can write a newspaper article that might have appeared in a Philadelphia newspaper reporting about Ben’s mishap at the river. Students should make it sound like an authentic article. They may want to look over some newspapers to get ideas.
2. Have the students try to remember an incident where they were caught in inappropriate clothes or in an embarrassing situation. They may record these incidents in their journals. They can write how they felt at that time and how the situation worked out. Volunteers may share their entries with the class.
3. Have the students take the role of either Benjamin Franklin or Amos. Have them write a diary entry that their character may have written about the day’s events down by the river. The two types of entries should reflect the viewpoints of the two characters. Share
the entries with the class to illustrate how two characters can see the same situation differently.

4. Some students may want to begin researching Ben Franklin's life in encyclopedias or other factual sources. The facts that are found can be compared with the facts found in *Ben and Me*, giving proof to the presence of, or the lack of, accurate facts in the novel.
Chapter Five
Read and Respond:

Let students take the parts of Amos, Ben, the narrator, the Harbor Master, and the various townspeople. Begin reading the chapter, with the students reading their chosen parts. Stop after the third paragraph on page thirty-four where it says, "...but a week later they were brought to his attention in rather dramatic fashion". Stop to take predictions as to what may happen next. Continue reading the chapter to see if the predictions come true.

Activity Choices:
1. Have the students write to Amos telling him what they think of his involvement in the printing problem.
2. Bring in some almanacs for the children to look through. Determine what some of the general characteristics are of an almanac. The students can try to write their own school almanac. It can include their maxims and advice that they think other students would find useful. They can give it a unique title of their own. The almanac could be published and distributed to other classrooms.
3. Students can interview their parents or other adults to determine how printing and copying have changed during their lives. They can ask how present day printing affects their lives, how often they come in contact with printed material daily, how modern day copying techniques have changed their work, and so on. Small groups may want to develop a list of interview questions before conducting
the actual interview. These can be checked by the teacher before the interview takes place. The results of the interviews could be shared with the class in the form of an oral presentation or on a tape recording.

4. The students could try to remember a time when they thought they were helping someone out, but they just made a bigger mess out of the situation. They could write about and illustrate the incident.
Chapters Six and Seven
Read and Respond:

Begin reading to the bottom of page forty-four then stop and let the students make predictions about what may happen later in the story. Keep the predictions posted until the end of the chapter to see if any of the predictions come true.

After reading chapter seven, discuss the differences between how Ben views electricity and how Amos views electricity. Discuss the reasons why each character may feel the way he does. Discuss the reasons why Ben does not want to take credit for the lightning rod.

Students can respond to the reading in their journals. They can express how they feel about Ben's use of Amos in the experiments. They might like to give their opinion about Amos' "improvements" to Ben's electrical system at the demonstration.

Activity Choices:
1. Students can do research on electricity. They can find out about the properties of electricity, its production and storage, its uses, and so on. Provided with batteries, wires, switches, and bulbs, the students can experiment with different types of circuits. They can also experiment to find out which materials are conductors and which are insulators. The safe use of electricity should also be discussed. The information can be presented in a report, on a poster, on graphs, or any other way that the students choose.
2. Invite a representative from the local power company to be a guest speaker. The speaker could address the dangers of working with electricity and the precautions that need to be taken when working with it. The variety of careers available within the power company may also be discussed, along with a description of the jobs and the education required for the jobs.

3. The students could make posters showing ways to use electricity wisely and how to conserve it. These posters could be displayed around the school.

4. The students could research a variety of inventors, inventions, and scientists. A time line could be generated showing when different inventions came into being. Panati's Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things, by Charles Panati, is a fun resource to use with students. It gives the origin of everyday item such as Kleenex, Barbie dolls, and the can opener. Due to its sometimes mature content, this book should be used only as a teacher's resource.

5. Students could make a chart showing how modern inventions have made a positive impact on our lives. They could also list ways that these inventions have had a negative impact on our lives.
Chapter Eight

Read and Respond:

Before reading the chapter, have the students recall a time when they had a fight or a disagreement with a friend. Allow volunteers to share their experiences. Focus on how they felt just after the argument. Make a list of the feelings that are involved in a major disagreement or fight between two friends.

Have the students predict what could be the possible causes of a major argument between Ben and Amos. List these on the board and save them for later reference.

After reading the chapter, it may be beneficial to discuss the value of trust in a friendship. Lead the students to realize that Amos is most deeply hurt by the way Ben broke his word, therefore breaking the trust between he and Ben.

Activity Choices:
1. The students could write a letter from Amos to Ben, while he is at the vestry recovering from his ordeal. Other students may want to write a letter from Ben to Amos, imagining what he may want to say to Amos.
2. The students could debate whether Amos should give Ben another chance or not. If some students believe that Ben should be given another chance, they could make a list of ways that Ben could convince Amos that he can be trusted again.
3. Have the students brainstorm situations that show their parents have confidence and trust in them. Role play situations where students show ways to build even more confidence and trust between themselves and their parents. Then role play situations where the students might break the trust between themselves and their parents. Discuss these situations including who would be affected by the breaks in trust, what the consequences would probably be, and what alternatives could have been chosen.

4. Students could create a get-well card for Amos. They may want to include advice for Amos, telling him what they think he should do next.

5. The students could go outside to fly kites together. A variety of kites could be tried to see which flies better. Some students may want to design and build their own kites.
Chapters Nine and Ten

Read and Respond:

It may benefit the students to have some knowledge of the events that led up to the Revolutionary War prior to reading these chapters. They should know why the colonists were angry and frustrated with the British rule. This will help them understand some of the emotions expressed by the characters in this chapter.

Chapter ten can be read as a script with students taking the parts of Amos, Ben, George Washington, and narrator. After reading the chapter, predictions can be made concerning Ben and Amos' possible success or failure in their journey to France.

Activity Choices:
1. Students can continue to do more detailed research about the American Revolution using their social studies books, encyclopedias, and other references. A timeline of important battles and events could be generated. The advantages and disadvantages facing both the British and colonists during the war could be charted. Reasons for the American victory could also be posted.
2. Using Kids' America, or other sources, the students could each choose one of the signatures on the Declaration of Independence and analyze the handwriting of its owner. Students could then research and write biographies about their chosen patriot, seeing if their handwriting analyses were accurate or not. The biographies could be
accompanied with student-drawn portraits of their subjects and could be compiled in a class book.

3. Some students may want to try their hand at calligraphy, trying to write in the style of John Hancock. *Kid's America,* gives suggestions for making ink out of nuts and berries, for making wood-nib pens and quill pens, as well as for writing "fancy" like the early Americans did.

4. To develop the concept of how points of view may differ over the same situation, read *Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?* by Jean Fritz. Put the students into partner groups, having one student take the role of a colonist while the other takes the role of King George. Let the partners engage in a written conversation concerning the disagreements between the colonists and Britain, each staying true to their roles. Let volunteers share their conversations orally with the class.

5. Many famous songs that are patriotic to Americans today were written during the Revolutionary War. Sing some of our patriotic songs together. Some students may want to compose a patriotic song themselves.

6. Students can research the various flags that were carried by the Patriots during the Revolutionary War. They should find out what the symbols on the flags stand for. They may also want to design their own flag that could have been carried by a colonist. They should
be ready to explain the choices of colors and symbols used in their flags.
Chapters Eleven and Twelve

Read and Respond:

After reading chapter eleven, let the students make predictions of what they think Amos' plan will be to help Sophia. Have them share what they would do if they were in Amos' place.

Ben uses many maxims in these chapters. They should be analyzed and placed on the list of maxims that was already started earlier in the unit. Other charts that were started earlier in the book should also be added to.

Students can respond to these chapters in their journals as they predict if Amos will be successful in his quest to help Sophia or not.

Activity Choices:
1. Students can conduct research about France. They may present their information in the form of a book, a poster, a travel guide, or a documentary for the class.
2. Students can use a variety of sources to research the style of clothing worn in the French court at that time. They may choose to share their findings through illustrations, or they may want to make costumes for themselves or for a doll.
3. Students could compose a poem that Amos may have written to Sophia the night before the great battle takes place.
4. Some students may want to research the various symbols that America holds as its own. A chart or book could be made showing
these patriotic symbols and giving an explanation of their origin and significance.
Chapters Thirteen, Fourteen, and Fifteen

Read and Respond:

Discuss with the students their feelings about the way Lawson used a mouse to tell the story. Have them explain why they believe this technique is effective or not. Discuss the way this book combines fact with fiction to make it more appealing to its readers. Students can write their opinions regarding the book in their journals.

Culminating Activity Choices

1. Students could dramatize the Battle of Versailles described in chapter thirteen.
2. Students can make a diorama depicting a favorite scene from the book.
3. Some students may want to read other books written by Robert Lawson.
4. Read What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin? by Jean Fritz. Compare and contrast the styles of the authors. Compare and contrast the facts that are presented in each.
5. Create a filmstrip or roller movie of Ben and Me that shows the major events in the book. The students could write a script to go with the illustrations and present their "film" to other classes.
6. Students may want to make a scrapbook of Benjamin Franklin's various inventions. The scrapbook should contain pictures and information about the inventions.
7. Students may enjoy writing their own story following the style of Robert Lawson by using an animal's point of view. They may want to have the animal tell a story about something that happened in their own lives.

8. The students can try their hand at making their own inventions. They should first decide on the jobs that they want their inventions to accomplish. They may have to look around their homes, bedrooms, classroom, and other areas to get ideas of jobs that could be handled by a new invention. Then they should carefully plan and assemble their inventions. It should be stressed that the inventions actually need to be able to work. Plan a special day on which the students can share their inventions with the class.

Assessment

A variety of evaluation methods can be applied including self evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher evaluation, and teacher observation. Students should always know how they are going to be evaluated before they begin on a project.

Self evaluation and peer evaluation work well because they give the students a sense of control over their learning experiences. These methods also make them responsible for their own choices and actions and are often very motivating to the students.

If self evaluation, peer evaluation, or teacher evaluation are to be used, statement like these may be completed:

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Bibliography


