

The Workshop Approach in Social Studies

by Geoffrey Cabat

In the summer of 2003 the New York City Department of Education introduced a variant of the workshop model, called the Point of Entry Approach, to improve reading and writing skills in all subject areas. Staff members from the educational consulting firm, *America's Choice*, trained literacy coaches and reading and English teachers in the method. While training was not given to social studies teachers, science teachers or teachers of other disciplines, many schools mandated this approach to teaching in all subject disciplines.

To assist social studies teachers, John Paul Bianchi, social studies supervisor of Region 4 Queens, New York and I developed a sixty-minute model lesson using the workshop model. In a tenth grade Global History lesson about World War I, the teacher could begin with a brief motivational discussion of the present Iraqi War. In this segment, students discuss what they know, relate what they have learned from friends or family who are serving in the U.S. Armed Forces and speak about their feelings on the current conflict. This segment of the lesson should take 5-7 minutes.

Horrors of Trench Warfare

In the next phase, the teacher reads aloud a document or reading about World War I. We recommend a passage from *All Quiet on The Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque where the author describes the horrors of trench warfare. The teacher can give the students a copy of the passage so they can follow the reading. The instructor should read reflectively linking the passage about World War I with the conversation about the Iraqi War and give impressions about the horrors or even the need for war. Students should be encouraged to make notes and write down questions. In the next segment student pairs share impressions about the reading passage and discuss it in groups. In a full class discussion, the teacher should attempt to elicit a focal question, which both reflects the students' interest and is at the same time, congruent with the requirements of the curriculum. What might emerge from class discussion is a power aim. For example youngsters may question whether war is ever justifiable. This segment of the lesson should take about ten minutes.

In the next segment, the teacher presents a mini-lesson on the causes of the Great War using a cartoon of sticks of dynamite labeled nationalism, imperialism, anarchy, militarism, and alliance system. It shows the assassination of the Archduke as the spark which ignited the explosion and the ensuing conflagration. This segment should take about ten minutes.

Document-based Instruction

Using the elicited hypothesis or aim as a basis for further research, the teacher distributes a packet of sources on World War I (i.e., a first-hand description of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand; President Wilson's War Message; anti-German propaganda cartoons; "The Green Fields of France," a song about the war; the poem, "Dulce Et Decorum Est," by Wilfred Owen; an essay by the diplomat Friederich von Bernhardt describing the reasons for the Great War from the German point of view). Individual students select one of the documents with teacher's assistance. They read it on their own and then share their ideas with other students reading the same document. Finally, students join groups with students who examined different documents and teach each other about their documents. This jig-sawing strategy is very useful in developing the autonomy that is the essential goal of the workshop model. This period of active engagement should last about 20 minutes. In the process of active engagement, the instructor should be circulating, moving from group to group posing and answering questions to provide insights which will help student address the focal question posed at the beginning of the learning activity.

The final segment of this learning activity is a group share that should last ten minutes. It is in essence a debriefing. In it learners provide feedback about the research they did about the hypothesis, as well as the process they used to obtain their answers to their question. As a final group activity or individual homework assignment, students use the information from their research and discussions in a writing exercise that addresses the focal question. This written piece can be an essay, editorial or even a poem.

Vocabulary Recognition with Learning Disabled High School Students

by Casey Jakubowski

With the rise of high-stakes testing in schools, a growing number of students face the prospect of delayed graduation caused by failing a cumulative test in a core academic subject. This was the scenario for six special education students in January of 2000. In the student's academic past, each had sat for and attempted to pass the New York State Global Studies Regents Competency Test (RCT) exam at least three times. Each student failed the exam each time he or she took it. In their senior year, the students needed to pass the Global RCT exam to graduate.

Social Studies in New York State is the only core (English, Social Studies, Science, Math, Foreign Language) subject with two required exams: a Ninth and Tenth grade Global Studies exam administered after tenth grade, and a United States History and Government exam administered at the completion of eleventh grade (NYSED April, 2000). This has led to a number of teachers searching for answers on how to help weaker students, transient students, and learning-disabled students. The New York State Board of Regents has mandated schools institute academic assistance programs (or services) called AIS programs to help bolster weaker student performance on state mandated assessments. In addition, special education departments are searching as well for programs and activities that will assist their student population on the state performance indicators. It was upon the request for the school building Committee on Special Education Chair that this study materialized. The author was asked to analyze the results of the January 2000 Global Studies RCT for the six students in need of a passing score for the exam. My goal was to find a pattern in the content or skills missed to help mold a remediation program to fit the needs of each student. After analyzing a graphic distribution chart of missed questions, a number of patterns began to emerge. Following this initial analysis of the January 2000 test, a follow-up analysis of four previous RCT exams was undertaken to establish patterns of skill and content question requirements.

Stress Vocabulary Skills

Based on these studies, a decision was made to concentrate on student vocabulary skills. The scheduling of the six students prevented me from meeting with the students as a group, so we worked as

a pair (teacher and student) using vocabulary flash cards. Questions that were missed on previous exams were broken down into key vocabulary words and made into flashcards and we created a consistent vocabulary definition list for the six students. Using the flash cards, the students and I practiced the vocabulary words for one half hour sessions after school. When a student mastered the vocabulary word, did not misidentify the flash card for two straight rotations through the flashcards, it was removed from the pile.

Tutorial Sessions

Tutorial sessions stressed the vocabulary content words as well as the test taking strategies. In addition, the Special Education department readied the students for the exams and their staff to administer the exams. Four of the six passed the exam with little problem. One student was granted an IEP diploma and is no longer in the district. The final student is still trying to pass the exam.

Based on this study, we believe we have learned the following:

First, the use of visual flash cards assisted a small group of seniors that needed to succeed on a state mandated exam. Each student increased their score on the exam from previous attempts. The group mean was an improvement of nine points from twenty eight hours of review. Remediation intervention can be time consuming, but well worth it for students who need to succeed.

Second, students, when confronted with an unknown question, fell back on their knowledge of popular culture. For example, when asked why Gandhi was identified as an African freedom fighter, the student used racial characteristics to base their answer.

Third, the Regents push to standardized testing is creating a level of stress in New York teachers that is unacceptable. Curriculum decisions are pulled away from the teacher and given to a state board. The need to move away from testing towards a more authentic assessment of students is needed.

Fourth, the Regents should reconsider the amount of curriculum material covered in the Global Studies Regents course. A return to a "less is more" approach might be more successful.

Using Fiction to Picture the Past

by Sally Smith

History textbooks can provide students with facts, dates, and a useful scope and sequence of the period under study, but they rarely bring history to life. Well written and researched historical fiction and memoir enable readers to enter into an historical period, identify with issues and personalities, and gain a deeper understanding of different perspectives. They also introduce the speech, sense of place and other contexts of the era. The lives of ordinary and extraordinary people and events in New York State history has captured the interests of writers from various eras. In this review, I recommend twelve novels from a continuum of New York history: the early Colonial period, the Civil War period, late 19th and early 20th Century urban life, the Roaring Twenties, the fifties, and more recent stories of immigration and alienation. These books depict rural Western New York State and the Adirondacks, cities like Albany, and the multicultural urban scene of New York City. Six of the titles are suggested for high school students and six for middle school students and/or less able older readers. Despite the richness of this historical coverage, there remain time periods and events with no chronicler. Teacher historians and their students may be interested in filling in these gaps themselves!

High School:

1. *Lake in the Clouds* by Sara Donati. NY: Bantam, 2002.

Set in rural New York State in the late 1700's and early 1800's, this novel incorporates themes of taming the wilderness, the removal of Native Peoples, and the Revolutionary War. The novel is one of three Donati has written about the Bonner family. She continues the saga of the family as they struggle to survive in the wilderness of New York State in 1802. They live on a secluded farmstead, high up on a mountain; the nearest town is named or rather misnamed, Paradise. Characters include the Bonners and their White and Indian relatives and friends. The plot is extremely complex and includes the family's dangerous scheme of smuggling escaped slaves north to freedom in Canada. While the novel is something of a potboiler, with action every minute, it provides a vivid portrait of the lives of the Whites who struggled to turn forests into farmland and to make communities. It also chronicles their interdependence with their Indian neighbors.

2. *Cloudsplitter* by Russell Banks

This novel takes place in the mid 1800's to the end of the Civil War. The setting ranges from Kansas to the Adirondack Mountains to Harper's Ferry. The Abolitionist John Brown is the main character in this carefully researched story. Characters include historical figures such as Brown and other Abolitionists as well as invented characters. His only surviving son, Owen, narrates the story. As the narrator, Owen depicts his father as both a devoutly religious and devoted family man and a stubborn man with deep flaws. Driven by his extreme wrath over the immorality of slavery, John Brown's acts impact on the course of history: some historians see his acts as a primary instigator of the Civil War. Banks reanimates one of America's most controversial figures, and illuminates the role of rural New York in relocating former slaves.

3. *Bread Givers* by Anna Yeziarska. NY: Persea Books, 2003.

Sara Smolinsky, who begins the story as a ten-year old girl, one of three other sisters, narrates the action in this powerful novel over a period of some dozen years. Sara and her family live in the immigrant ghetto of the Lower East Side of New York but their worldview is heavily shaped by their origins in the Old World of Eastern Europe. In that society, the male head of the household is the master. Not only does Sara's father, a Rabbi, claim that women have no place in running a household, but he also can point to the Torah as justification. The Reb refuses to work for money; he expects his family to do that, leaving him time to study the Torah. Yeziarska poignantly captures the multitude of feelings and obstacles any immigrant must face in the struggle to find where he/she fits in: the old world or the new. Yeziarska vividly captures the sounds, smells and speech patterns of the immigrant ghetto.

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4. *Ragtime* by E L. Doctorow; NY: Dutton/Plume, 1975

This novel is a tumultuous fictional portrayal of America in the era between the turn of the century and the First World War. It is set in the Metropolitan area, beginning in 1906 in New Rochelle, New York, at the home of an affluent American family. Henry Ford, Emma Goldman, J. P. Morgan, Evelyn Nesbit, Sigmund Freud, and Emiliano Zapata populate the story, meeting up with fictional characters, including an immigrant peddler and a ragtime musician from Harlem. The wide variety of characters, vividly drawn, provides a rich history of the times from different perspectives. Race, revolution, morality, class, economics are all represented in the rich, complex plot, presenting the perspectives of the time within a framework of our contemporary knowledge.

5. *Snow in August* by Pete Hamill. NY: Warner Books, 1999

In 1940s Brooklyn, Michael Devlin is an Irish boy who loves Captain Marvel comics. He meets another recent immigrant, an Orthodox rabbi. In exchange for lessons in English and baseball, the Rabbi teaches him Yiddish and tells him of Jewish life in old Prague and of the mysteries of the Kabala. As outsiders to the mainstream culture, they both find themselves fans of Jackie Robinson. They attend a Dodgers game together, and they both experience hatred and racism. The racism is set in the larger historical context of the Nazis and the Brooklyn Dodgers (Jackie Robinson's team) but focuses on Michael's and the other characters experiences of racism, anti-Semitism and violence in their neighborhoods. Using a story from the Kabala enables Michael to help good triumph over evil. The descriptions of 1940's Brooklyn are vivid and realistic - Marvel comics, Dorsey's band - as are the depictions of friendship and fear. The story is involving and moving, and is made richer by the portrait of the world at large.

6. *Brown Girl, Brownstones* by Paule Marshall. NY: Feminist Press, 1981.

This semi-autobiographical novel by Paule Marshall was originally published in 1959. It is set in Brooklyn in the late 1940's and early 50's, and describes the coming of age of Selina Boyce, a Caribbean-American girl. While there is abundant literature on immigrants from Europe who came here and helped build America, much less information is available on immigrants from places like Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, Panama, etc. As this novel stresses, African Americans have multiple ethnicities. As seen in this book, sometimes this quest occurs at all costs even at the expense of outward expressions of love and The book is a coming of age story of a young woman who must figure out her multiple identities as a young woman, a Black woman and and Afro-Caribbean woman. Selina's story vividly portrays her attempts to balance her ties to her parents' homeland and her dreams for her life in America. (ages 14-adult)

Middle School:

1. *Who is Carrie?* by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier. NY: Delacorte, 2001.

Set in the early 1800's, this is the story of an enslaved girl named Carrie, who has worked in the kitchen of Fraunces' Tavern in New York City for as long as she can remember. She does not know her own last name, or who her true family was. Carrie and her long time friend Dan Arabus talk about how Dan's father fought and died in the Revolutionary War, and Dan's plans to free his mother from slavery. After talking to Dan, Carrie decides that she needs to find out who she is, and if she is a slave or not. Richly narrated, and sprinkled with old 1800's accents and dialects of the Northern Colonies, the novel introduces historic characters and events as Carrie eavesdrops on Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and President Washington.

2. *Indian Captive* by Lois Lenski. NY: Harper Trophy, 1941/1995.

Based on the true story of Mary Jamison, daughter of a White settler in Pennsylvania who was taken prisoner by the Senecas and adopted into a Native family in what is now New York State. Lenski has fictionalized the history, following Mary from the time she was captured at age 12 to her acceptance of her life as a Seneca two years later. Through her narration, the reader feels the horror of the attacks on unsuspecting settlers, and experiences all of the varied and full life of the long house community. The Senecas are portrayed as realistic individuals and their life is depicted accurately and positively. In reality, Mary was strongly urged to return to White "civilization," but she preferred her life as a Seneca. She was known as "The White Woman of the Genesee,"

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and lived to an old age with her children in Western New York. Lenski's book is accompanied by drawings of implements and other aspects of Seneca life along with a bibliography. The author's treatment is highly fictionalized and is not a biography.

3. *Radical Red* by James Duffy. NY: Charles Scribners' Sons. 1993.

A gripping story of women's rights, set in Albany, New York in 1894. A chance encounter between Connor O'Shea, 12, and Miss Bertha Hall, one of "Aunt Susan's girls," changes the lives of the girl and her mother forever. Susan B. Anthony is in town to convince the state constitutional convention that women are entitled to vote. Connor (and her mother's) feminist sympathies grow as her father, the sergeant of the capitol police, becomes increasingly antagonistic. He isn't able to vote, either, since he can't read; but he is happy to rely on his friend Senator Phelan to guide him, and gets abusive when his wife and daughter disagree. By focusing on this one small episode in the history of women's suffrage, Duffy not only shows the dedication and hard work involved but also the contributions made by hundreds of humble, now-forgotten people. *Radical Red* is a well-crafted story, with strong characters and the kind of detail that bring the events to life. And, while it is an excellent addition to historical fiction collections, the subplot of family conflict makes it universal in appeal. Its major flaw is the puzzling absence of an author's note; readers deserve to know who is real and who is not, what Duffy's sources were, and what happened afterward.

4. *The Journal of Finn Reardon* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti. NY: Scholastic (Dear America Series), 2003.

The central character in this "diary" is Finn Reardon, a thirteen-year-old Irish-American newspaper carrier who hopes to be a journalist someday. The novel is the journal of his experiences living in New York City in 1899. It depicts the conditions of his crowded apartment on the Lower East Side and the political background of the times, including the "newsie's" strike. When Finn isn't working or hanging out with his gang of friends, he's in a sixth grade class taught by Mr. Drinker who is "more stern than a prison guard" and uses the "power of the paddle" to discipline his students. Finn plans to quit school at fourteen and get a job at the newspaper office. The characters are interesting and memorable, easy to identify with, and the setting is rich and believable. The book concludes with historical notes and photographs that provide a useful context.

5. *Hidden Roots* by Joseph Bruchac, NY: Scholastic, 2004.

This story is set in an upstate New York town during the early 1960s. It is the story of Harold, a middle school boy who is somewhat of a loner. He knows that his family has secrets, but his father is too angry when he comes home from his work at the paper mill on the Hudson River, and his mother won't talk about the family. Harold is close to his Uncle Louis, who takes him into the Adirondack wilderness and shows him forest lore. But his uncle visits mostly while his father is at work. Gradually, Harold learns his family's history, and about the 1930s Native American sterilization program known as the Vermont Eugenics Program. Once a strong Abenaki family living on the New York/Vermont border, the horror of this program drove his family and other Abenaki people into hiding for three decades. Harold's own family pretended to be French Canadians. A second theme in the novel is the pollution of the Hudson River from the waste of companies such as the mill where Harold's father works, and the dangerous working conditions there. This provocative book should stimulate interesting discussion.

6. *Behind the Mountains* by Edwige Danticat, NY: Scholastic, (First Person Fiction series), 2002.

Award-winning Danticat (author of *Breath, eyes, memory* and *Krik Krak?*) has written a brief story in diary form of Celiane's experiences in Haiti and her first months living in Brooklyn, New York. Celiane leaves Haiti and comes to a cold new home with its own dangers and stresses. This memoir-novel is written in a very straightforward style that would appeal to less sophisticated or able readers. While this book is somewhat narrow focus on the personal feelings and neighborhood experiences of a Haitian girl who becomes an immigrant, without much social or political context, it will appeal to students who find adult historical fiction off-putting.

Using Children's Literature to Teach about Farm Work and Farm Workers

by Judith Y. Singer

Who are the people who grow and harvest our food? What are their lives like? Farming in this country was transformed in the 1930's from small family farms to giant conglomerates, a result, in part, of the Great Depression. Many small farmers lost their farms. At the same time, the owners of the large farms depended on an influx of laborers to harvest vegetables and fruits for the market. Many of the people who came to harvest the crops were called migrant workers, because they moved from one farm to another, picking the crops as they became ripe. Today, New York State is a major producer of fruits and vegetables, most of which are harvested with migrant labor, including apples, potatoes, strawberries, and sweet corn amongst others (<http://www.nass.usda.gov/ny/>).

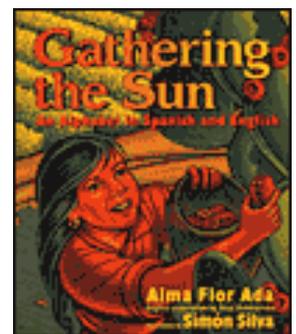
In New Jersey, the majority of an estimated ten to fifteen thousand migrant workers is undocumented, which contributes to abusive labor practices and very low pay. The work of harvesting the crops requires both strength and stamina, and workers are usually paid according to the amount of produce they pick in a day, so they pick as fast as they can. Often there is little consideration shown for the physical needs of workers laboring under the hot sun in strawberry fields or in the cold mornings in apple orchards. Children of migrant workers frequently work in the fields beside their parents, both before and after school. Moving from place to place is particularly hard on the children, who repeatedly change schools and leave new friends behind. (<http://www.njsbf.com>).

Because of organizers like Cesar Chavez, the working conditions for migrant workers have improved over the years. In New York State, a Farm Worker Equity and Wage Reform Act signed in 1999 established a minimum wage for agricultural workers. Education and medical care are provided to children of migrant workers in Southern New Jersey. However, significant abuse of farm workers still persists. For example, in June, 2002, six farm labor contractors were accused of virtually enslaving a group of Mexican workers whom they had transported from Arizona to New York State (<http://migration.ucdavis.edu>).

The books described below will help readers imagine the lives of farm workers and their children. They reflect both the hardships of farm work and the dignity of the workers as they struggle to make a life for themselves and their families. Some of the stories look at the efforts of children to establish continuity in their lives. Others describe how family members sustain one another and how they are all sustained through the beauty and affirmation of their culture. Some of the books reflect on the struggle for union representation and for basic amenities, such as access in the fields to water and portable toilets. The workers who pick the fruit and vegetables today tend to have their roots in Mexico and Central America. However, poor Blacks and poor Whites have also followed the crops for many years.

The first four books I describe may appeal more to younger elementary school children, but upper elementary school children can also appreciate them.

Gathering the Sun by Alma Flor Ada (1997). Illustrator, S. Silva (New York: HarperCollins). In this Spanish/English bilingual picture book, bright colors and poetry help readers visualize the fields of lettuce and peach orchards ready for the harvest: "Juicy, golden peaches, honey-sweet, like a gentle caress in the palm of my hand." This book emphasizes the importance of family, culture, and education to the "campesinos" who travel from Mexico to work in the fields in the United States. In some pictures, we see children laboring with their parents; in others, children rest under a tree, enjoying the beauty of the world around them. The vivid illustrations in this alphabet book, while geared towards younger children, tell a story of the lives of migrant workers in the Southwestern U. S., which may appeal to older elementary school children as well.

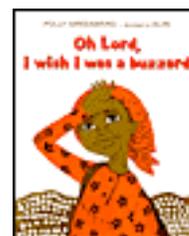


Working Cotton by Sherley Anne Williams (1992). Illustrator, Carole Byard (San Diego: Voyager Books). This story takes place in the segregated South. The African-American family we meet is transported on a school bus to the cotton fields early in the morning, before the sun comes up. As the sun rises, the narrator tells us, "The rows of cotton stretch as far as I can see." She comments on other children who pass by in the field. "It's always kids in the

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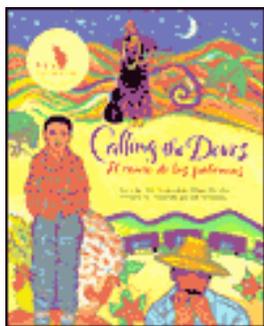
field; sometimes they be your friend. But you hardly ever see the same kids twice. . .” Family members are always there for one another, however. The family works side by side, stopping for a lunch of cornbread and greens. “Sometime, it’s a little bit of meat in your bowl,” the narrator reports. Then it is back to work until the bus picks them up in the near dark. These children have no time to rest under a tree. Of particular interest to readers of this book will be the use of African-American vernacular English.

Oh, Lord, I Wish I was a Buzzard by Polly Greenberg (2002). Illustrator, Aliko (New York: Seastar). “We picked and we picked and we picked and we picked.” These children working in the cotton fields may not be migrant workers. They may be share-croppers, who grow crops for the landlord in exchange for a share for themselves. An entire family of share-croppers has to work in the fields, for barely enough to survive. The repeating phrase, “we picked and we picked and we picked and we picked,” along with the dots of white spread over the pages, give a sense of the magnitude of the job this little girl is facing. She wishes she were a buzzard or a dog or a snake, or any animal which appears to be cooler than she is. She doesn’t get her wish, but she does get a lollipop for a treat after all her hard work.



Picking Peas for a Penny by Angela Shelf Medearis (1990). Illustrator, Charles Shaw (New York: Scholastic). The children in this story are tending the crops on their grandfather’s farm during the Great Depression. They are poor, but they are working on their own property. The narrator, a little girl, tells us, “Now times were hard, and times were tough, so picking peas for a living was plenty good enough.” There is no mention of Ma and Pa. They have probably gone to look for paid work to help support the family. Grandma and Grandpa work next to the children in the field. This is an optimistic story about making do with what you have when times are hard.

The next group of stories are about children working on farms in the Southwestern United States.



Calling the Doves by Juan Felipe Herrera (1995). Illustrator, Elly Simmons (San Francisco, CA: Children’s Book Press). This book celebrates the joys of family and community in migrant life. This bilingual story is about the author’s childhood, on the road with his mother and father, helping to pick grapes, melon, lettuce and broccoli on farms in California. “‘You were born on the road, like your father.’ My mother would tell me this when we had to move to another labor camp.” The illustrations reflect a magical quality to the author’s childhood. Hard work and few possessions are not necessarily experienced as hardships. The author describes a childhood in which his mother recited poetry and sang songs to him, while his father told stories and showed his son how to call the doves. The child grows up to be a poet.

Going Home by Eve Bunting (1996). Illustrator, David Diaz (New York: HarperCollins). This story of a Mexican family driving home for Christmas has a magical quality similar to *Calling the Doves*. Whenever their parents speak of Mexico, they tell Carlos and his sisters how beautiful it is. Their parents dance in the moonlight after they arrive at their grandfather’s house in Mexico. But Carlos wants to know why they left Mexico if it is so beautiful. His parents explain, “‘There is no work in La Perla. We are here for the opportunities.’ It is always the same answer.” As they cross the



border into Mexico, Carlos worries about whether they will be allowed back into the U. S. Papa tells him, “Of course. We are legal farm workers. We have our papeles.” Mexicans cannot travel freely between the U. S. and Mexico. They have to have papers which allow them to be in the U.S. to do the hard work of picking the crops.

Lights on the River by Jane Resh Thomas (1994). Illustrator, Michael Dooling (New York: Hyperion). Although this story celebrates family and culture, it also describes the bitterness and humiliation that the farm workers and their children experience over the conditions under which they have to live. In contrast to Carlos and his siblings in

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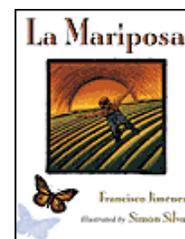
the previous book, Teresa's family cannot afford to go home for Christmas. Her father explains, "The money we make feeds our mouths, with a little left over for Abuela." Teresa's family has finished picking the cucumbers, and now they drive all night to find themselves sleeping in a chicken coop at their next job, picking peaches. "Theresa could still see stains on the floor where their roosts had stood. She could faintly smell the sharp ammonia memory of the flock." Theresa and Mami console themselves at this insult by listening to Papi play the guitar and evoke memories of home and Christmas lights on the river in Mexico.

Amelia's Road by Linda Jacobs Altman (1993). Illustrator Enrique Sanchez (New York: Lee & Low). "Amelia Luisa Martinez hated roads. . . She hated roads so much that she cried every time her father took out the map." Amelia's family are migrant workers who follow the roads seeking the next crop to pick. All Amelia wants is to settle down in one place where she can have friends and stay in the same school. Amelia's new teacher is kind to her and makes sure to learn her name and to include her in all activities. One day, Amelia discovers a new road beside a tall tree and she finds a way to make it her place. Even though her family still has to move, Amelia has a place she can come back to when she returns.

Tomas and the Library Lady by Pat Mora (1997). Ill., Raul Colon (NY: Knopf). Mama and Papa pick corn all day in hot fields in Iowa, while Tomas and Enrique play with a ball and sit under a tree listening to Papa Grande tell stories. One day, Papa Grande sends Tomas to the library to learn new stories. The librarian welcomes Tomas to the library, bringing him a drink of water before she brings him a book. Tomas loses himself in stories about tigers and dinosaurs. All summer long Tomas comes to the library, where the librarian repeats, "First a drink of water and then some new books, Tomas." This little boy grows up to become Tomas Rivera, a well-known Latino writer.

Sometimes the children in these stories find people who are kind to them and help them. This is the case with Amelia and with Tomas. In other stories, the adults are less sensitive, but eventually they come to appreciate the strengths these children have to offer.

La Mariposa by Francisco Jimenez (1998). Illustrator Simon Silva (Boston: Houghton Mifflin). Francisco enters first grade speaking only Spanish. Other children laugh at him, and the teacher insists that he speak only English in school. Because he doesn't know any English, Francisco just sits quietly, observing a caterpillar which has been placed by his desk. He draws the caterpillar and watches as it spins its cocoon and as a butterfly finally emerges from the cocoon. Gradually, Francisco's teacher begins to acknowledge Francisco's talents and he wins first prize for one of his drawings.



First Day in Grapes by L. King Perez (2002). Illustrator Robert Casilla (NY: Lee & Low). Chico is another boy who doesn't want to go to school because the other children pick on him. He is also upset because Mama doesn't understand. "Mama didn't know how scary school could be." Chico begins to make friends when the other children see him stand up against two school bullies and when they see how good he is in math. This book seems to me to oversimplify the challenges faced by migrant children who have to prove themselves over and over again, but it does affirm the idea that you don't have to know English in order to be good in Math and Science.

The final three books are non-fiction. They can serve as resources in the classroom to broaden the exposure of children to the lives of farm workers. The children in the stories above got support from family members and from other adults who believed in them. Ultimately, children also need hope that bad things can change. The story of Cesar Chavez in *Harvesting Hope* by Kathleen Krull (2003, Illustrator, Yuyi Morales, New York: Harcourt) can provide that hope. In *Harvest* by George Ancona (2001, New York: Marshall Cavendish), vivid photographs illustrate descriptions of the campesinos (farm workers) in Texas and California. In *Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farm Workers Tell Their Stories* by S. Beth Atkin (1993, New York: Little, Brown) the children of the migrant farm workers speak for themselves.

Expo: A Middle School History Museum

by Michael Whelan

“Expo: A Middle School History Museum” is the culminating activity in an extended, interdisciplinary unit on early American history. There are four major interrelated assignments that each student must complete during Expo. The first involves researching and writing a history term paper. That paper becomes the basis for the remaining three assignments: the museum exhibit, a historical newspaper that is included in the exhibit, and an oral presentation about the exhibit that each student makes on the day the museum opens to the public.

Everything starts with, and hinges on, the term paper, an assignment whose complexity can overwhelm many middle school students. In Expo, the assignment is broken down into a series of manageable steps. Students are given a list of 100 possible topics from which each must choose three that he or she would like to study in depth. The list is compiled by the students’ social studies teacher and given to the school librarian, who actually teaches the research course. There are two criteria to be included on the list: each topic must be relevant to the social studies curriculum and must involve issues and questions that students can sufficiently research in the school and local libraries.

Researching and Writing the Term Paper

The whole process of researching and writing the paper is divided into five steps. The first is “the resource search” during which each student prepares a preliminary bibliography of relevant sources available in the library and on-line. Next is “the quiet reading and note-taking” stage, a considerably longer period of time during which students examine and analyze their sources, usually identifying others in the process. During the next stage, the students outline their topics, with each is required to submit a detailed plan of the paper’s overall structure and content. The librarian reviews these plans, either approving them, although rarely without some suggestions for improvement, or rejecting them, in most cases for insufficient research or incoherent organization. If the plan is rejected, the student must submit a substantially revised version addressing the issues cited by the librarian.

Only then do the students start to write their papers. Each prepares a preliminary draft, which the librarian again reviews and comments on. During both writing stages all work is done in the school’s computer laboratory. At no time may any student directly consult any of the sources they have identified. All work must be done exclusively from the research notes they previously compiled.

Final papers are then submitted to the librarian, graded, and returned to the students within a week. After this primary instructional responsibility for Expo shifts to the English and social studies teachers. In social studies, the students start to work on their museum exhibits and oral presentations, and in English, on their historical newspapers.

The Historical Newspaper

Expo’s final three projects are planned with the same thorough care as the first. On the day designated to begin, usually a Monday, each teacher spends a full class period explaining the requirements and deadlines for assignments, and answering student questions. In English class, the teacher starts by telling the students that they will have four weeks “to layout and publish” their historical newspapers. Each paper must include a masthead, two feature articles with appropriate headlines, an editorial with an editorial cartoon, and at least one other visual. Additional “features,” such as supplementary articles, letters to the editor, style and fashion sections, help wanted ads, and arts and leisure sections may be included as well.

A similar orientation session is conducted in social studies, with the teacher explaining the requirements for the museum exhibit and oral presentation. Each student receives a large reinforced cardboard display board which will serve as the structural centerpiece for the exhibit. On it, students attach their term papers, their historical newspapers, whatever visuals they chose to display (whether self-produced or reproductions), and an “historical relevancy” essay. In this report, the students must justify the historical import of their exhibit topics, explaining why someone today should care about something that happened so long ago. Of all the work the students do during Expo, this is the assignment the social studies teacher considers the most challenging and valuable, for it requires the students to address the fundamental historical issue of significance through time.

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Next, classes go on a trip to a nearby historical museum, where they learn about “effective” museum design. Back at school, students “officially” start to work on their projects, with class time divided during the following four weeks between project work and more traditional “coverage” instruction. Time set aside for project work as the museum opening approaches and almost completely takes over the final week.

Student Initiatives

Perhaps the most striking thing one notices while watching the students work on Expo is the freedom with which they move about, not only within their own classrooms, but between English and social studies, and throughout much of the rest of the school as well. Sometimes they work alone and sometimes in small, self-selected groups, but almost all the time they decide just where that will be, whether at their desks, at one of the computer stations in social studies, in the library, at a large conference table in English class, in the resource room, the computer lab (if it’s free), or simply in some quiet spot in one of the school’s hallways. Permission must be given to leave the assigned classroom and that usually involves a brief discussion with the teacher about the reasons for making the request. But permission is rarely denied.

During the final planning stage, the teachers fine tune, or “trouble shoot,” what is now a nearly finished project assignment. They try to visualize what a particular activity will actually look like and make suggestions for improving the assignment’s overall design. Issues about space, specifically how best to configure the learning spaces the students will use, seem to come up most frequently, but many other issues arise as well. Most involve only minor refinements in one thing or another, but some are more significant, necessitating the substantial overhaul of much that had already been planned, or on infrequent occasions, scrapping the entire project. The teachers continue this trouble shooting process throughout the entire course of the project, right up until the day the students present their final work.

Expo helps turn the school into an extended, integrated educational community, where adults work collectively with students, toward goals that are widely, openly and frequently discussed. Ultimately Expo’s success, whether measured in terms of individual student outcomes or institutional community building synergy, is attributable to all the careful, creative planning involved in its original design.

Final Preparation

Expo’s final week of preparation begins following a four-day weekend. In the days that followed the teachers repeatedly reassured the students of their expertise and readiness, but also repeatedly reminded them of the need to work hard, indeed extra hard, in the short time that remained. Trying both to buoy the students’ confidence but also heighten their sense of urgency this way was purposeful, and something they did regularly, not just during the final week of units like Expo. As they saw it, the two sides of this seemingly mixed message were actually parts of a single, critically important, yet intricately complex teaching responsibility that of challenging and motivating their students, while at the same time nurturing, coaching, and encouraging them. Striking that balance just right with each class and each student was as complicated as it was crucial, however, for there seemed an ever shifting, often conflicting tension between the two sides. Thus, they sometimes felt caught in a Scylla and Charibdis-like dilemma, one which the additional responsibility of having to judge the students’ work only made that much more difficult to navigate. But the crisscrossing currents that these multiple responsibilities entailed seemed especially precarious when working with students on extended, student-centered projects such as those involved in Expo. How could they possibly do all that they needed to do to help each student prepare for an Expo-like performance or presentation, only to turn around at the end and judge the results as if they had not been part of the process? This seemed an impossible predicament, one potentially destructive of the trust they knew they needed with their students, in general, but again, especially in Expo-like instructional situations. That was one of the reasons they had the students present their work to an audience other than themselves at such times, for this seemed an effective and acceptable way of minimizing the tensions so easily engendered by trying to fulfill the roles of coach and judge themselves.

Installation Day

“Installation Day,” the day the students actually went to town hall to set up their exhibits, took place the day before the museum opened to the public. Many students were clearly excited when they arrived at school that morning, with a few trying one last time to convince the teachers that everybody in both classes should go to the hall all together immediately after morning announcements. That is how the teachers had

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organized the installation the first time they taught Expo, but never again. Having so many students working on their exhibits at the same time proved too chaotic. So since then they had coordinated a kind of daylong relay system instead. While one teacher remained at school supervising a very loosely structured study session for the two classes, both crowded into a single classroom, the other took successive groups of eight to ten students at a time to

the hall to work on their exhibits, each for 30 or 40 minutes. For any students who failed to finish the installation in that time, the teachers spent about two more hours at the hall together that afternoon. And many stopped by, much as they had in previous years, the teachers said, but most, it seemed, had done so less to work on their exhibits than simply to be there, at their museum, now nearly fully set up.

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