

Introduction

This book addresses a need by recommending quality children's literature books that are aligned with specific Ohio Academic Content Standard for the Social Studies for grades K – 5. Our intent is to assist teachers in merging what they know to be interesting and constructive pedagogy with outcomes-based standards. Such a resource can help teachers move along a continuum toward using interesting fiction and non-fiction narratives that help students learn more social studies content, retain it longer, and transfer it to new settings. Hopefully, an additional benefit will be an overall increase in the level of interest that students will have in the social studies.

This book may be useful as an additional resource for teachers who are already widely using children's literature in their social studies curriculum. It may also serve as a reference for those teachers who sense that teaching social studies in this way can be done, but lack the structure or the experience to help them "take the chance." To insure that each grade level indicator is taught by using only children's literature is not our objective. We realize that the extent to which a teacher relies on the children's literature suggested here will depend on the availability of the books and his or her own experience.

With this in mind, we have organized the book into nine chapters, beginning with one chapter for each of the first six Social Studies Ohio Academic Content Standards (OACS): history, people in societies, geography, economics, government, and citizenship rights and responsibilities. Each of these chapters contain between 50-70 books, with full bibliographic information and brief abstracts that are related to a particular standard. We chose not to create a chapter dedicated to the final Social Studies Academic Content Standard -- social studies skills and methods -- since this particular standard was designed to cut across all other standards. It is our belief that many, if not all, of the books listed

for each of the other standards could be used to address benchmarks or grade level indicators for the social studies skills and methods standard.

The children's literature selections for this book represent some of our favorites and in no way imply that there are not many other books that could be found to teach a particular grade level indicator as well or better. In fact, we are sure this is the case. It was simply that, with so many good books to choose from, we relied on our own personal experiences and preferences. The reader must keep in mind that none of these books were written with the OACS in mind, and it should not be surprising that many of the books we have selected for any single standard could have easily been placed with other standards. The standard in which we ultimately placed each book was simply the one we believed it fit most directly and clearly.

Recognizing however that some books were especially well suited to teach multiple standards, the seventh chapter is devoted to the 25 books we agreed were most useful for teaching multiple standards at once. The main criteria we have used was that a book had to clearly be able to address at least four of the six content-related standards well. The eighth chapter organizes books that have some portion of their story connected to Ohio. This is followed by a final chapter that lists a number of websites that may be useful for locating or using additional children's literature resources to teach the social studies.

Review of the Literature

The use of children's literature to assist in the teaching of social studies content has a long-established history. Social studies methods books have advocated the use of such books to supplement textbooks for over forty years (Sandmann & Ahern, 2002). In recent years, some teachers and school districts even have moved more toward using children's literature as the primary resource in the teaching of social studies content. This proclivity for educators to exhibit confidence in children's literature to teach social studies might be associated with the following observations.

One of these is the persistent criticism of social studies textbooks, which traditionally have accounted for the bulk of social studies instruction. Social studies textbooks have been characterized as poorly organized and written, encyclopedic and overwhelming, and with little or no consideration of student interest (Sewall, 1988; Middendorp & Lee, 1994). One result is that the “story” is removed from history and the social studies and that students are left with instruction that lacks the detail, passion, and interest that children’s literature can help generate (Edgington, 1998).

Fortunately, the other factor contributing to the increased use of children’s literature to teach social studies has been a significant rise in the amount, quality, and variety of interesting children’s literature available to the social studies classroom teacher. While this trend has provided more incentive for teachers who recognize the advantages of teaching social studies through children’s literature, it also contributes to an additional dilemma for those same teachers -- a point we will touch on later in the chapter.

A review of the literature examining the use of children’s literature to teach the social studies provides ample positive feedback. On a broad level, the use of children’s literature will illuminate a human element that students often might find dry and provide real-life details that help students better understand the concepts and time period under study (Edgington, 1998; Levstik, 1986). This, in effect, allows the literature to become the “lens through which the content is viewed” (Smith & Johnson, 1994, p. 198). Additional benefits include increasing reading vocabulary, providing a catalyst for critical thinking, and increasing student involvement in a format that is more interesting, and often more up to date, than many classroom textbooks (Middendorp & Lee, 1994; Alverman & Phelps, 1998; Marshall, 2000). At the upper elementary levels, children’s literature can be used to increase motivation, aid aesthetic appreciation, and

provide easier and more interesting reading material for less able readers (Carr, Buchanan, Wentz, Weiss, & Brant, 2001).

Much has also been written about the potential advantages of using children's literature for the specific teaching of the social studies. Krey, in *Children's Literature in Social Studies: Teaching to the Standards* (1998), summarizes many of these benefits. She makes the case by using children's literature teachers are better able to create lessons that accomplish the following:

- expand a learner's knowledge of human events by transporting the reader to places, times, and cultures not otherwise possible;
- provide an insider's perspective to the emotions of a human event;
- offer more of a holistic picture of events than the typical survey approach provided by most textbooks;
- offer a better balance between the facts of a particular occurrence and the human characteristics of the people involved; and,
- provides learners with the opportunity to connect events and characters to their own personal experiences (Krey, 1998).

Other researchers note that children's literature can contribute to a more complete understanding of critical social studies concepts (Farris & Fuhler, 1994; Findlay, 2002; Guzzetti, Kowalinski, & McGowan, 1992; Smith, 1993) help foster critical thinking and problem solving skills (Brozo & Tomlinson, 1986; Davis & Palmer, 1992; Donoghue, 2001), enable young readers to make important links between past and present events (Fuhler, 1991; Owens & Nowell, 2001; Palmer & Burroughs, 2002), and assists students to better visualize the past (Harms & Lettow, 1993). Children's literature can motivate students in their grasp of key geographic and economic ideas (Lorrie, 1993; Savage & Savage, 1993; Macken 2003; VanFossen, 2003) and promote increased overall civic competence (Hicks, 1996).

Yet another essential component of the social studies is the appreciation of social and cultural differences. Here again, children's literature can be a powerful tool in assisting young readers to grasp multicultural concepts (Pugh, Garcia, &

Margalef-Boada, 1994). Children reading multicultural trade books have demonstrated both greater social sensitivity and an enhanced ability to view issues through multiple perspectives (Garcia, Hadaway, & Beal, 1988; Tunnell & Ammon, 1996; Kim & Garcia, 1996). Students are also exposed to wider insights into new worlds, ideas and cultures that more traditional media provides. Children reading multicultural literature demonstrate increased social sensitivity, a greater recognition of people's similarities and differences, and by doing so, have a better understanding of themselves (Norton, 1990; Willet, 1995; VanFossen, 2003)

Connections to the Ohio Academic Content Standards

All of these areas are vital to the social studies and, not surprisingly, embedded in the various OACS. It would seem then that it would be a natural fit to use children's literature to teach many of the social studies standards teachers are expected to cover in their curriculum. Yet, despite this match, and the fact that many teachers already have an intuitive sense of what the literature abundantly reveals to us on this topic, why do so many still hesitate to move beyond textbooks and worksheets toward a more extensive use of children's literature? We believe this is due to a couple of logical reasons.

One is the fact that there has been an increase in the past decade of the pressure put on teachers and administrators to perform well on standardized tests. For some, this added level of quantitative assessment creates a tension between a need for efficiently increasing test scores and using more-preferred classroom pedagogy. Stated differently, the desire to teach through the extensive use of children's literature is offset by the concern for reaching specific instructional objectives and the lack of confidence that a heavy reliance on the use of children's literature will reach that desired outcome. This is exacerbated

by the fact that many high-stakes tests have an additional unintended result of moving social studies more and more into the background of the overall school curriculum, taking time away to teach as one would wish (Owens & Nowell,

2001). This, in turn, is related to the second reason for the underutilization of children's literature in the social studies -- the added time required for teachers to teach this way.

Teachers are extremely busy, and it takes time to locate and align appropriate children's literature books to one's curriculum. Hence, it is important to note that the recent explosion of social studies children's literature available to the classroom teacher (as exciting as this may be) has another side to it. The availability of so many books does not necessarily help an overextended teacher decide which books to use to address specific grade level indicators. Few would disagree that, ultimately, the value of using children's literature to teach social studies is dependent upon two key factors -- the quality of the books being used and the proper connections of these books to the classroom curriculum. In other words, while the potential and opportunity for improving social studies learning is certainly there, the ultimate success remains dependent upon the already overworked classroom teacher. This teacher must find the time to locate, edit, and sort the "right" books from the thousands of available choices each year, and then to connect those books selected to one's course of study or state standards. Despite one's best intentions, there is usually not enough time or money to peruse even a representative sampling of each year's new offerings, let alone to determine the quality, the proper fit with one's curriculum, and the most effective use of these books. The result is that a teacher can quickly get overwhelmed and resort to the continual use of some old favorites where these books seem to work best.

While one could point to a number of resources that can help teachers filter all of this rich material (The Notable Social Studies Books link on the National Council for the Social Studies website - www.ncss.org - and Krey's 1998 NCSS Bulletin come to mind), such resources are typically focused and aligned with national standards rather than any particular state's standards. This means

that, although helpful, teachers are required to do additional steps to adapt them to their own particular setting. The result is that one often finds these resources to be of limited usefulness for directly helping to match children's literature to one's day-to-day curriculum needs.

With that in mind, we present here over 300 quality children's literature books that are already aligned with specific benchmarks in the Ohio Academic Content Standards for the Social Studies. It is our hope that this book can be of use to the overworked elementary social studies who wishes to use more children's literature in their classroom. Enjoy!

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