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Making More Time For Social Studies: Intergrating Social Studies into Reading Instruction Through Whole Class Read-Alouds

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Making More Time for Social Studies: Integrating Social Studies into Reading Instruction through Whole Class Read-Alouds

Krista M. Felten Educational Studies Illinois Wesleyan University 2012

Main Research Question: How do students respond to the reading of children’s literature and picture books as a way to discuss social studies content area learning?
Data Collection: Reconstructed field notes, post-teaching reflections, and student reflection assignments.

Just a Dream by Chris Van Allsburg, *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry, *A River Ran Wild* by Lynne Cherry, and *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton

Background

- My study took place in my second grade student teaching classroom with 26 students.
- My inspiration came from the fact that instruction in subjects such as social studies is often limited in favor of increasing time spent teaching literacy and mathematics since those subjects are heavily favored on standardized tests.
- I studied the practice of using read-alouds and discussion during literacy time to introduce and reinforce social studies content.
- My study was conducted in conjunction with the “Using Our Resources” chapter from Harcourt Publishing’s *People We Know* social studies textbook. Lessons within this chapter included: “Land and Water Resources,” “People Settle,” and “Our Changing Environment.”

Review of Literature Highlights

- “Using the time during the literacy block to teach social studies content, while also teaching reading skills and strategies, is a way to ensure mandated standards in reading and social studies are being taught” (Kinniburgh & Busby, 2008, p.61).
- “Children’s literature has the potential to teach in the context of what is familiar to children, thereby helping them to make connections to the real world” (Wells & Zeece, 2007, p. 286).
- Teacher-researcher, Tonia Villano concluded that “educators should consider that reading aloud...appears to be one of the most comprehensive ways to help expand students’... knowledge base and gain schemata to scaffold new information and learning” (Villano, 2005, p. 129).

Findings

- Read-alouds allowed my students to gain social studies knowledge while also helping them to make text-to-world connections, text-to-text connections, and to work on vocabulary development.

Conclusions and Implications

- The integration of social studies into reading instruction was an engaging and practical way to expand students’ exposure to and knowledge of topics in social studies.
- Read-aloud selections shared during reading instruction time prepared students for social studies lessons.
- Teachers can maximize instruction time in the teaching of one subject area during the allotted time of another.

“You can learn a little social studies without even a social studies book.”

Text-to-World Connections

- *Just a Dream* by Chris Van Allsburg
 - “Taught me not to use trees for useless things like toothpicks.”
- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
 - “The Lorax talked about how the land could get worse because he keeps biggering is factory. In social studies we learned about not making big smokes and stuff.”
 - “It helped me to learn that you can set things right using your resources. I like this book because it teaches you about social studies.”
- *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry
 - “The man was trying to use the tree for something without even thinking.”
 - “This book helped me to learn that trees have oxygen and it would be a problem if they were cut down.”

Text-to-Text Connections

- *A River Ran Wild* by Lynne Cherry
 - “The animals had to go like in *The Lorax*” because the pollution was so bad.
- *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton
 - “They took down trees to build a factory in *The Lorax*, here to build a city.”
 - “[There was] smoke from the factory in *Just a Dream*, smoke in this story from the city” and both caused problems.

Vocabulary Development

- *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton
 - “[The book] helped me to learn rual (rural), subray (suburb), and city.”
 - “The city came to the rural area and built on it. Pollution can go anywhere.”
 - “The rural place was very good and then it turned busy like a city.”
 - “In the rural area, the country, the Little House could see the stars because there wasn’t much traffic.”
 - “If it’s crowded then it’s a city, if it isn’t it’s wrarel (rural).”