Remodelling Social Studies Lessons

Introduction: Social Studies in Perspective

Social studies is nothing more or less than the study of how humans live together as a group in such a way that their dealings with one another affect their common welfare. All of us, like it or not, engage in social study. In our everyday lives, we all attend to, generalize, and reason about how we are living together in our respective groups. We pay special attention to the groups that are of immediate interest to us, but we develop concepts of other groups as well. We make judgments about how our welfare is affected by other groups behaving as they do. We make judgments about the effect of our group’s behavior upon other groups. We gather evidence from experience, from books, and from the media that we use to justify conclusions we come to about our own groups, our own society, and about other groups, including that of other societies.

All children, as a result of thousands of hours of TV watching and thousands of interactions with others, internalize hundreds of judgments about people and groups, and about what is and is not appropriate social behavior, before they enter any school room. Piaget’s studies of children, particularly his study for UNESCO, illustrate this point well. Consider the following excerpts from his interviews of children of different ages from different nations. In them we have evidence that the everyday realities of children’s lives typically have a more profound effect on what they learn about the nature of social behavior than what we think we are teaching them in the classroom:

Michael M. (9 years, 6 months old): Have you heard of such people as foreigners? Yes, the French, the Americans, the Russians, the English ... Quite right. Are there differences between all these people? Oh yes, they don’t speak the same language. And what else? I don’t know. What do you think of the French, for instance? Do you like them or not? Try and tell me as much as possible. The French are very serious, they don’t worry about anything, an’ it’s dirty there. And what do you think of the Russians? They’re bad, they’re always wanting to make war. And what’s your opinion of the English? I don’t know ... they’re nice ... Now look, how did you come to know all you’ve told me? I don’t know ... I’ve heard it ... that’s what people say.
Maurice D. (8 years, 3 months old): If you didn’t have any nationality and you were given a free choice of nationality, which would you choose? Swiss nationalitY. Why? Because I was born in Switzerland. Now look, do you think the French and the Swiss are equally nice, or the one nicer or less nice than the other? The Swiss are nicer. Why? The French are always nasty. Who is more intelligent, the Swiss or the French, or do you think they’re just the same? The Swiss are more intelligent. Why? Because they learn French quick- ly. If I asked a French boy to choose any nationality he liked, what country do you think he’d choose? He’d choose France. Why? Because he was born in France. And what would he say about who’s the nicer? Would he think the Swiss and the French equally nice or one better than the other? He’d say the French are nicer. Why? Because he was born in France. And who would he think more intelligent? The French. Why? He’d say that the French want to learn quicker than the Swiss. Now you and the French boy don’t really give the same answer. Who do you think answered best? I did. Why? Because Switzerland is always better.

Marina T. (7 years, 9 months old): If you were born without any nationality and you were given a free choice, what nationality would you choose? Italian. Why? Because it’s my country. I like it better than Argentina where my father works, because Argentina isn’t my country. Are Italians just the same, or more, or less intelligent than the Argentinians? What do you think? The Italians are more intelligent. Why? I can see the people I live with, they’re Italians. If I were to give a child from Argentina a free choice of nationality, what do you think he would choose? He’d want to stay an Argentinian. Why? Because that’s his country. And if I were to ask him who is more intelligent, the Argentinians, or the Italians, what do you think he would answer? He’d say Argentinians. Why? Because there wasn’t any war. Now who was really right in the choice he made and what he said, the Argentinian child, you, or both? I was right. Why? Because I chose Italy.

The fact, then, that children form much of their thinking about how humans live together in groups as a result of their own native egocentrism, buttressed by the socioecentrism of those around them in everyday life, is one major problem for instruction. But it is not the only problem. The other major problem lies in the fact that when highly intelligent and well educated scholars from different societies study how humans live together in groups they sometimes differ significantly in the conclusions they come to. To put this another way, human social behavior can be studied from different points of view. And the conclusions one comes to about human behavior in part depend on the point of view from the perspective of which one studies behavior. That is why there are different schools of thought in social studies.

We believe that these two major problems for social studies instruction entail an important general strategy for teaching. To combat the first problem, it is essential that the bulk of activities focus on engaging the student’s own thinking, so that the thinking that students actually use on social problems in their everyday lives are explicitly discovered by the students and, where appropriate, challenged. To combat the second major problem, it is essential that students discover and enter into dialogue with more than one point of view, indeed with multiple points of view. These two needs come together if we turn progressively away from a didactic approach to teaching and focus progressively on a critical approach (See Chapter 8, “Thinking Critically About Teaching”, for a fuller account).

The major problem to overcome in remodelling social studies units and lessons, then, is that of transforming didactic instruction within one point of view into dialogical instruction within multiple points of view. As teachers, we should see ourselves not as dispensers of absolute truth nor as proponents of uncritical “relativity”, but as careful, reflective seekers after truth, as involved in a search in which we invite our students to participate. We continually need to remind ourselves that each person has a somewhat different point of view, that each point of view rests on assumptions about human nature, that thinking of one point of view as the truth limits our understanding of the very thing we want to grasp. Practice entering into and coming to understand divergent points of view, on the other hand, heightens our insight into the real problems of our lives.
Children, as we have already underscored, already face the kinds of issues studied in social studies and are engaged in developing views on questions like the following:

What does it mean to belong to a group? Does it matter if others do not approve of me?
Is it worthwhile to be good? What is most important to me? How am I like and unlike others? Whom should I trust? Who are my friends and enemies? What are people like?
What am I like? How do I fit in with others? What are my rights and responsibilities?
What are others' rights and responsibilities?

We humans live in a world of human meanings. There is always more than one way to give meaning to our behavior. We create points of view, ideologies, religions, and philosophies that often conflict with each other. Children need to begin to understand the implications of these crucial insights: that all accounts of human behavior are expressed within a point of view; that no one account of what happened can possibly cover all the facts; that each account stresses some facts over others; that when an account is given (by a teacher, student, or textbook author), the point of view in which it is given should be identified and, where possible, alternative points of view considered; and finally, that points of view need to be critically analyzed and assessed. Of course, the introduction of children to these truths must take place slowly, concretely, and dialogically. We must be on the alert for occasions that facilitate student discoveries in this area. We must be patient and think in terms of their development of insights over a period of years.

Adults, as well as children, tend to assume the truth of their own unexamined points of view. People often unfairly discredit or misinterpret ideas based on assumptions differing from their own. To address social issues critically, students must continually evaluate their beliefs by contrasting them with opposing beliefs. From the beginning, social studies instruction should encourage dialogical thinking, that is, the fairminded discussion of a variety of points of view and their underlying beliefs. Of course, this emphasis on the diversity of human perspectives should not be covered in a way that implies that all points of view are equally valid. Rather, children should learn to value critical thinking skills as tools to help them distinguish truth from falsity, insight from prejudice, accurate conception from misconception.

Dialogical experience in which children begin to use critical vocabulary to sharpen their thinking and their sense of logic, is crucial. Words and phrases such as ‘claims’, ‘assumes’, ‘implies’, ‘supports’, ‘is evidence for’, ‘is inconsistent with’, ‘is relevant to’ should be carefully and progressively integrated into such discussions. We should begin to introduce children to the vocabulary of educated thinking as soon as possible, but we should start from simple, intuitive examples that come from their own experience.

Formulating their own views of historical events and social issues enables children to begin to synthesize data from divergent sources and to grasp important ideas. Too often, children are asked to recall details with no synthesis, no organizing ideas, and no distinction between details and basic ideas or between facts and common U.S. interpretations of them. Children certainly need opportunities to explicitly learn basic principles of social analysis, but more importantly they need opportunities to apply them to real and imagined cases and to develop insight into social analysis.

Children should, in other words, begin to become adept in using critical thinking principles in the social domain as we expect them to become in scientific domains of learning. We, on our part, should begin as soon as possible to foster an attitude of applying sound standards of judgment to every area of learning and we should do so in concrete, engaging ways, so that children begin to discipline their thinking with the skills of critical thinking.
Critical Thinking Handbook: K-3

Traditional lessons cover several important subjects within social studies: politics, economics, history, anthropology, and geography. Critical education in social studies focuses on basic questions in each subject, and begins to prepare children for their future economic, political, and social roles. At the K-3 level, we can but touch the surface of these important domains, but we should not under-emphasize the significance of this introduction.

Some Common Problems with Social Studies Curriculum Materials

• Questions suggested often ask for recall of a random selection of details and key facts or ideas. Minor details are often given the same emphasis as important events and principles. Children come away with collections of sentences but little sense of how to distinguish major from minor points. The time and space given to specifics should reflect their importance.

• Often the answers to review questions are found in bold or otherwise emphasized type. Thus, children need not even understand the question, let alone the answer, to complete their assignments.

• Materials rarely have students extend insights to analogous situations in other times and places. Students do not learn to use insights or principles to understand specifics. They do not learn to recognize recurring patterns.

• Students are not encouraged to recognize and combat their own natural ethnocentricity. Materials often encourage ethnocentricity in many ways. They often present U.S. ideals as uniquely ours when, in fact, every nation shares at least some of them.

• Ethnocentricity is introduced in word choices that assume a U.S. or Western European perspective. For example, cultures are described as “isolated” rather than as “isolated from Europe”. Christian missionaries are described as spreading or teaching “religion” rather than “Christianity”. Cultures are evaluated as “modern” according to their similarity to ours.

• Materials often encourage student passivity by providing all the answers. Children are not held accountable for suggesting answers on their own. Materials usually err by asking questions students should be able to answer on their own, and then immediately providing the answer. Once students understand the system, they know that they don’t have to stop and think for themselves because the text will do it for them in the next sentence.

• Materials often emphasize the ideal or theoretical models of government, economic systems, and institutions without helping children to begin to recognize (hidden) sources of power and change. Materials rarely prepare children to distinguish ideals from the way a system might really operate in a given situation.

• Explanations are often abstract and lack detail or connection to that which they explain, leaving children with a vague understanding.

Some Recommendations for Action

Students in social studies, regardless of level, should be expected to begin to take responsibility for their own learning. This means that they should begin to develop the art of independent thinking and study and begin to cultivate intellectual and study skills.

Discussions and activities should be designed or remodelled by the teacher to begin to develop the students’ use of critical reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Furthermore, students should begin to get a sense of the interconnecting fields of knowledge within social studies, and the wealth of connections between these fields and others, such as math, science, and language arts.

The students should not be expected to memorize a large quantity of unrelated facts, but rather to begin to think in terms of interconnected domains of human life and experience. This includes elementary forms of identifying and evaluating various viewpoints; gathering and organizing information for interpretation; distinguishing facts from ideals, interpretations, and judgments; recognizing relationships and patterns; and applying insights to current events and problems.
Unifying Social Studies Instruction

- What are people like? How do people come to be the way they are? How does society shape the individual? How does the individual shape society?
- Why do people disagree? Where do people get their points of view? Where do I get my point of view?
- Are some people more important than others? From what point of view?
- How do people and groups of people solve problems? How can we evaluate solutions?
- What are our biggest problems? What has caused them? How should we approach them?

Keep in mind that it takes a long time to develop a child's thinking. Our thinking is connected with every other dimension of us. Our children enter our classes with many "mindless" beliefs, ideas which they have unconsciously picked up from TV, movies, small talk, family background, and peer groups. Rarely have they been encouraged to think for themselves. Thinking their way through these beliefs takes time. We therefore need to proceed very patiently. We must accept small payoffs at first. We should expect many confusions to arise. We must not despair in our role as cultivators of independent critical thought.

In time, children will develop new modes of thinking. In time they will become more clear, more accurate, more logical, more openminded — if only we stick to our commitment to nurture these abilities. Social studies provide us with an exciting opportunity, since they address issues central to our lives and well-being.

Of course, it is not easy to shift the classroom from a didactic-memorization model to a critical one, but, if we are willing to pay the price of definite commitment, it can be done. Over time, students can learn to live an "examined" life, one in which they come to terms with the social nature of their lives, if only we will carefully, systematically, and encouragingly cultivate it.
Do Communities Change?
(Kindergarten)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson
The students will:
- practice evaluating community changes
- clarify their values by developing criteria for evaluating changes in a community
- practice fairmindedness

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
First, students review changes that have occurred in their personal lives such as height and weight. Then they discuss a number of common community changes and express their feelings about them.


Critique
This lesson simply asks children to recognize changes and to indicate whether or not they like the changes. The opportunity to evaluate the merits of changes based on reasons other than personal preference is ignored. The original lesson also overlooks the importance of children learning that different people judge changes differently, according to their points of view.

We recommend that the teacher write key words from the children’s responses. This helps make the connection between words and writing. Then, when discussing particular reasons, the teacher could point and read the words out loud reinforcing that connection as well as graphically illustrating the use of writing for keeping track of many ideas.

Strategies used to remodel
S–20 analyzing or evaluating actions or policies
S–15 developing criteria for evaluation: clarifying values and standards
S–13 clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs
S–3 exercising fairmindedness

Remodelled Lesson Plan S–20
In order to allow students to evaluate changes, the question from the original lesson, “How do you feel about this kind of change in your community?” could be followed by, “Is this a good change or a bad change? Why?”
To help the children clarify their conclusions, you could also take note of their responses and discuss each one for its implications. ("One of you said a change was bad because it left less room to play. Is less room for children to play always a bad change, or just in that one case?") When referring to their responses, you can point out the features that good changes have in common, and then do the same for bad changes. "How was reason X like reason Y? What did the good changes have in common? Is that part of why they were good?" Etc. S-15

The class could then discuss why it is important to be clear about these reasons. The children can thus begin to see that knowing what makes a good change good helps when you have to make changes. S-13

In addition, the students could use this lesson to practice fairmindedness. "Do you think someone else might like a change that you didn't? Imagine that someone disagreed with you about this change? Why might someone think otherwise?" If students cannot think of any reason someone would disagree with them, the teacher could provide examples. Discuss at length. S-3

Getting experience in lesson plan remodelling: How can I take full advantage of the strengths of this lesson? How can this material best be used to foster critical insights? Which questions or activities should I drop, use, alter or expand upon? What should I add to it?
How Is My School Like My Home?

(Kindergarten)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- begin to develop intellectual humility by distinguishing what they can reasonably conclude from what they cannot
- give reasons and examine evidence for concluding whether or not pictures depict home scenes or school scenes
- develop confidence in their abilities to figure things out

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
Students discuss some of their basic needs, such as love, food, shelter, and clothing and how they meet those needs. Then they are given twelve pictures of children at home or school having these needs met. Students are asked what need is being met in each. Finally, they sort the pictures into two groups: needs met at home; needs met at school.


Critique

This lesson mixes two concepts together: where needs are met and how to identify school versus home in photographs. This lesson should be introduced by telling the children that they get their needs met both at home and at school. Then the lesson should be divided into two lessons, one focusing on needs and the other on home versus school. The rest of the critique and the remodel addresses the later.

Young children have an especially hard time saying they don't know. They need practice distinguishing cases in which they do have enough information to know, from cases in which they don't. This lesson misses the opportunity to have them do so.

Strategies used to remodel

S-5 developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment
S-33 giving reasons and evaluating evidence and alleged facts
S-9 developing confidence in reason
Remodelled Lesson Plan s-5

We suggest that the teacher encourage suspension of judgment by adding pictures that aren't clearly home or school, such as two children playing on a swing-set. The teacher could ask of each picture "Can you infer or tell if this is at school or at home? Why do you say so?" If the cases aren't clear cases, but there are some clues that point to the likelihood of it being a school or a home, have students give the reasons that they inferred that it was at home or school and help them evaluate their reasons to see if they are solid. For example, suppose a student responds, "The reason I think it is a school, is because there are five children working on a project, and that happens more often at school than at home." The teacher could ask the rest of the class if they agree. If necessary, the teacher could say that the reason given was a good one because it makes sense — one would normally see five children working together at school rather than at home. On the other hand, if a student were to say, "I think this is a school because it has a swing-set in it.", and the other children don't question the conclusion, the teacher could point out that some children have swing-sets at their houses. Then the teacher might ask the student if there is anything else in the picture that might give a clue or evidence that shows whether it is at home or at school. S-33

Even if the picture is clear, the children could be asked to point out other clues in it that support the conclusion. "What else makes you think it's ...? Why?"

After doing this, the teacher can point out to the students that they can often figure things out by thinking carefully. The students could look at family photographs and try to figure out whether they were taken at home or away from home, and explain why. S-9
Tools (Two Remodelled Lessons)

(Kindergarten)

The first remodel below appeared in the first edition of this book. The remodelled lesson was then further remodelled by Susan Lara Fulton during a workshop. Her work follows the first remodel, illustrating how the remodelling process is an on-going critical, not a one-step, process.

First Remodel

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- think independently and analyze the concept ‘tool’ by categorizing examples
- deepen their understanding of the concept by discussing things which are not tools but which are used as tools

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
Students are asked to comment on what tools can be used to make specific tasks easier; to review pictures of tools and tell what jobs they help people do; to state which of the pictured tools are in their classroom; to draw pictures of tools which are in the classroom but not already pictured on their activity sheets; to divide pictures into two categories: “tools in the classroom” and “tools not in the classroom”; to discuss what kinds of jobs tools help people do and whether more than one job can be done by certain tools; and to classify tools as cleaning, cutting, or lifting tools. All of the tools are ones that students are probably familiar with.

from Me, Harlan S. Hansen, et al.,
Houghton Mifflin Company. 1976,
pp. 140–143.

Critique

This lesson is doing too much of the thinking for students by providing the list of tools and the categories for them. Furthermore, the division of tools into those found in the classroom versus those found outside the classroom doesn’t seem particularly useful. The concept ‘tool’ can be further extended by having students discuss objects not usually thought of as tools which can be used as tools.

Strategies used to remodel

S-1 thinking independently
S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
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Remodelled Lesson Plan s-1

To foster independent learning, rather than giving students a set of categories, students can list tools they've seen used and develop their own ways to categorize them. Encourage students to accept multiple sets of categories as appropriate.

Then, in order for children to develop a clear concept of tools and the value of tools, the teacher could add examples of objects not ordinarily thought of as tools. For example, some Latin women use scarves, that we think of as decorative clothing, for carrying groceries and babies. People who lived a long, long time ago used rocks as tools. People pass the hat to collect and carry money. We can use sticks to draw or write in the dirt. We can use a piece of paper as a megaphone.

The students can then think of examples of things they use as tools. They could then be asked whether that use is typical (what the thing was designed to do) or unusual (used in a way not intended in the original design). S-14

Second Remodel

by Susan Lara Fulton, St. Basil's School, Vallejo, CA

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- clarify and analyze the word 'tool'
- understand the defining characteristics of tools through exploring examples, categorizing, and problem solving

Original Lesson Plan

The remodel of "Tools" (see above).

Critique of the Remodelled Lesson

The remodelled lesson above fails to have the students attempt to formulate a definition of 'tool'. This requires in-depth critical thought. Classifying is a great way to use critical thinking, provided the students do their own classifying. It fosters their own independent thinking and encourages them to clarify various ideas about and purposes for tools.
Strategies used to remodel

S-1 thinking independently
S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
S-9 developing confidence in reason

Remodelled Lesson Plan S-1

Rather than beginning the lesson by asking for examples, students are asked first for a definition of the word ‘tool’. It is much more difficult to define by word than to define by example. Whether or not the students are able to define by word, the next step is to define by example. Continue with examples and try to have the students draw out the worded definition by examination of the examples and counter-examples (examples that fit the proposed definition but are clearly not tools). S-14

Classify tools as per the remodelled lesson plan. Then, follow through with the suggestion of adding examples of objects not ordinarily thought of as tools. However, present the examples by asking questions: “Why do you think a stick can be a tool?” or “How do you think a stick can be used as a tool?” Then have the students come up with other examples.

An added extension of this lesson could include a little play acting or problem solving. Present the students with a problem or situation which needs a little creative tool-making and see how they solve the problem. Example: The handle on the cupboard door is wobbly. The screw is loose and needs to be tightened, but we have no tools. How do we fix the door? The objective, of course, would be to find something in the classroom which would substitute for a screwdriver. S-9
Why Did the Girl Say “No”?
(1st Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- practice critical vocabulary
- make plausible inferences regarding people's values based on choices they made

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
Students are asked to examine decisions and figure out what was important to the person who made it. Among the decisions they examine is the following: A teacher chooses between a pair of worn, comfortable-looking shoes and a pair of fashionable, less comfortable-looking shoes. Students are expected to say whether the teacher most values comfort or fashion. Students then look at a picture story (while the teacher reads), of a girl pulling her nice clean wagon while her little brother runs along beside her. He falls in a muddy puddle. The girl imagines two scenarios: she gives him a ride and her mother is happy with her but her wagon is muddy; she doesn't give him a ride and her wagon stays clean but her mother is mad. The girl tells her brother “No!”.

from Things We Do, Frank L. Ryan, et al.

Critique

This lesson fails to seize the opportunity to introduce critical vocabulary. It also overlooks the chance to have children make plausible inferences beyond the most obvious, surface ones.

Strategy used to remodel

S–28 thinking precisely about thinking: using critical vocabulary
S–32 making plausible inferences, predictions, or interpretations

Remodelled Lesson Plan s–28

The teacher could rephrase questions and comments to include critical thinking vocabulary. For concepts that you are introducing, first use the new term, and then words the students are familiar with. For example, ask, “What did the girl's response imply or tell us about what she thinks is most important?” The teacher could also rephrase student responses to include the vocabulary. For
example, if a student says "I think comfort is most important to you.," say, "You inferred from my choice that I value comfort more than looks." Continue this process with the story of the girl.

The teacher can use this exercise to help students notice what things imply beyond what is said. In the first example, one can predict some other kinds of choices the teacher choosing comfortable shoes would make: Can you predict what choice I would probably make between wearing blue jeans and a dress? How were you able to infer or predict this? What other choices does my choice imply? What other choices do you think I'd make? S-32

**In teaching for critical thinking in the strong sense, we are committed to teaching in such a way that children learn as soon and as completely as possible how to become responsible for their own thinking.**
Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday
(1st Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- practice making the distinction between facts and ideals
- practice reading critically by clarifying terms and recognizing assumptions in their text

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
Students are told that January 15 is Martin Luther King's birthday; he was an important leader of African-Americans; he believed in peace; he was given the Nobel Peace Prize. The teachers' text mentions some discriminatory social policies that King opposed.

from *At School*, Virginia Finley, et al.

Critique
The lesson is vague because it does not explain the variety of problems that African-Americans faced and therefore why King was an important leader. It also confuses ideals with actual practice by neglecting to discuss the oppression of many African-Americans today, and therefore may suggest that the race problems have been solved. Furthermore, King was a leader in the Civil Rights Movement; not only African-Americans followed him. The text, however, refers to him merely as a leader of African-Americans.

Strategies used to remodel
* S-30 examining or evaluating assumptions
* S-21 reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts
* S-27 comparing and contrasting ideas with actual practice
* S-7 developing intellectual good faith or integrity
* S-10 refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications

Remodelled Lesson Plan

To help students clarify their texts, you might have them read the lesson and ask, "What does the text mean by 'his people'? What does 'his dream was about a better life for his people' assume about their lives? (That their lives
were not good enough). \textit{S-30} Do you know about any of the problems that African-Americans faced that King was struggling against?" \textit{S-21}

You might point out that among the problems African-Americans faced was the lack of some of our country's freedoms — freedoms all citizens are supposed to have. Discuss a few: many African-Americans weren't allowed to vote, they couldn't get jobs they wanted because of prejudice and inferior education, they often couldn't live where they wanted because Caucasians wouldn't sell or rent houses to them, etc. Stress that these examples show the difference between ideals and actual practices. \textit{S-27} Point out that good citizens work to change the practices that contradict our ideals. You may also want to point out some of the other examples of discriminatory treatment of African-Americans if the students are unfamiliar with them (separate bathrooms, water fountains, restaurants, schools, "back of the bus", etc.) \textit{S-7}

Next, you could ask questions like these: "Why was King an important leader? (He worked, sacrificed, even spent time in jail, in order to bring the country closer to its ideals.) For whom was King a leader?" (He was a leader for most people who supported the Civil Rights movement, whatever their race.) \textit{S-10}

\textit{Telling me that this is an important concept doesn't mean much if you never mention it again.}
Our Country's Birthday
(1st Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- practice critical reading by clarifying statements in their text
- distinguish the phrases 'freedom from England' and 'freedoms of individuals'
- begin to develop a concept of personal freedoms in the U.S.
- practice making the distinction between facts and ideals in their lives and in their country

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
Students read and discuss a passage about the 4th of July. Students are informed that, on July 4, 1776, Americans said they wanted to be free from England and we celebrate the day because we are proud to be free. In the discussion they are told that with freedom comes responsibility, and that freedom can be lost if tyrants take over.

from At School, Virginia Finley, et al.

Critique

This lesson confuses two different senses of 'freedom': 'freedom (of the country) from England' and 'freedom of individual Americans'. The first, we achieved after the Revolutionary War. The second, we must continually strive to achieve and perfect. The text, by skipping back and forth between the two, implies that the struggle to achieve individual freedom ended with our separation from England. Therefore, it confuses actual practice with ideals. Furthermore, by suggesting that the primary danger to freedom is the possibility of a tyrant taking over, the text neglects the more constant problem of some people not having freedoms. Some groups, such as African-Americans, women, and Native-Americans have only recently acquired freedoms equal to or approaching those of other Americans. During the McCarthy era, many Americans lost freedoms. Students need to see how the ideal of individual freedom has been violated in the past, to begin to understand what safeguarding these freedoms really involves.

Strategies used to remodel
S-21 reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts
S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
S-7 developing intellectual good faith or integrity
S-27 comparing and contrasting ideals with actual practice
Remodelled Lesson Plan S-21

After the students have read the text, the teacher could draw the students' attention to the two uses of 'freedom' in the passage. "What does 'free from England' mean?" If they cannot answer, you might point out that when colonists were under English rule they weren't allowed to make many important decisions for themselves because they weren't fully represented in the English government.

Students could then reread the last sentence on the page. "What does the text mean by 'we are proud to be free'? Does the text mean merely that we are proud to be free from England?" Allow time for students to respond. If the students haven't recognized the different meaning of 'freedom', you might mention our individual freedoms. Tell the students about one of our freedoms (such as freedom of religion) and explain what it means (no one can force us to believe in or practice a particular religion). "Do you know of any other freedoms that we have? What? What does that mean? Why is it important or valuable?" You may also supply important freedoms the students miss. S-14

You could then say that having these freedoms is an important American ideal and ask the students if they know what an ideal is — something that we value highly, and try to achieve. Point out that success is a matter of degree (like cold, warm, and hot), rather than simply a matter of all or nothing (like a light switch). "Do you have any ideals that you have trouble practicing?" The teacher may use a personal example here, such as "Being kind and pleasant to my friends is an ideal, but sometimes I lose my temper and snap at them. This makes me feel bad because I haven’t lived up to my ideals. I know I have to try harder. What are some ideals you want to live up to? Why? Are they hard to live up to? Why? Why try?" S-7

Return the discussion to American ideals. "Since we achieved freedom from England we have had these ideals, though in some ways we have not practiced them since then." Use examples here such as treatment of Native-Americans, that women couldn’t vote until 1920, and that in the 1950’s many people got into trouble because of friends they had, or political groups they joined. "Why have we had these problems living up to our ideals as a nation?" S-27
Rules
(1st Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- probe deeply into the nature of rules by comparing different kinds of rules and exploring their purposes
- refine generalizations by analyzing legitimate exceptions to rules and their justifications
- develop insight into egocentricity by exploring people's reasons for breaking rules

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
Half of the lessons in this unit focus on a class planning a field trip and discussing rules they need to make. The rest discuss laws, police, and rules in the home. The unit covers the following points: We need rules to keep us safe, and to give everyone a fair chance. Bad consequences would arise if we had no rules. Laws are necessary. Police help us. Families have rules. Rules help families. Everyone is responsible for following rules.

from At School, Virginia Finley, et al.
pp. 34–39.

Critique

To understand rules deeply, students need to recognize how rules are based on human purposes and therefore can and should be applied or changed to fit those purposes. Students should practice evaluating rules and explaining how to change them and why. They should also discuss how human needs, and a sense of right and wrong, often require suspending or making exceptions to rules. Students should learn to recognize that rules should be changed if they do not meet the alleged purpose, or when the purpose itself should be rejected. In addition, students should think about their impulses to apply rules inconsistently and to break them.

Strategies used to remodel
- S-17 questioning deeply: raising and pursuing root or significant questions
- S-29 noting significant similarities and differences
- S-20 analyzing or evaluating actions or policies
- S-15 developing criteria for evaluation: clarifying values and standards
- S-10 refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications
- S-2 developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity
Remodelled Lesson Plan S-17

The class or small groups of students could discuss rules in-depth.

- What is a rule? What different kinds of rules are there? How and why are they different? Does breaking them have different consequences? Does it follow that it is worse to break one kind of rule than another? (Compare games to safety rules, for example.) Small groups of students could list categories of rules and write short answers to these questions. S-29

- Do you ever make rules? Why do you make them? (Have students discuss a variety of rules and their purposes.) How well does each work? Why? Can they be improved? How? S-20

- Are there good rules and bad rules? What's the difference between good rules and bad ones? (Have students give examples of each and explain why the bad rules are bad and the good rules good.) What is this rule's purpose? Is the purpose worthwhile? Does the rule achieve its purpose? Should the rule be dropped, or changed, or should there be exceptions to it? S-15

- Why is it sometimes OK to ignore or suspend rules? (If the teacher has recently made an exception to a rule in class, students may discuss its justification. Encourage students to give their own examples of legitimate exceptions to rules.) S-10

- Why do we sometimes break rules when we shouldn't? (Students can discuss when they wanted to break or did break a rule.) Why did you feel that way? What were you thinking at the time? What were the consequences? Did you think the rule was a good rule? Do you feel differently when you break a rule than when someone else does, for example, borrowing without permission? S-2

To sum up, students could give examples of rules they would like to change, and have them discuss why they think they should be changed. The teacher could point out to the students when their reasons fall into the aforementioned categories, that is, when the rule doesn't meet the purpose or the purpose should be rejected. Encourage further class discussion of examples given.

When discussing rules, keep in mind the points below.
A. All rules have a purpose.
B. Analyzing the purpose helps us evaluate rules.
C. All rules have advantages and disadvantages.
D. To justify changing a rule you must show that either: 1) the rule doesn't meet the purpose or 2) the purpose should be rejected.
E. All rules have exceptions.
About Families &
Needs and Wants
(1st Grade)

by Mary J. B. Hesser, Gloria Dei
Lutheran School, Sacramento, CA

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
• engage in Socratic discussion about families and about needs and wants
• develop their perspectives on the concept ‘family’
• clarify and analyze the difference between ‘needs’ and ‘wants’
• probe into the nature of needs and wants, and consider the implications of different indi-
  viduals having conflicting needs and wants

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

The unit includes eight lessons discussing the make-up of families, recognizing family structures, differences and similarities in families, how families change, jobs family members may have, wants and needs of a family, and holidays families may celebrate. I have chosen two lessons from this unit, “Recognizing Family Structures” and “Wants and Needs of a Family” to remodel. In the first lesson, students are asked to interpret pictures of families, identify “big” and “small” families, and relate the pictures to their own circumstances (at least regarding size). The second lesson asks students to view various pictures and classify examples of wants and needs. The teacher is directed to introduce vocabulary including money, income, and buying.

Critique

The entire unit can be beneficial to first graders by helping them explore their environment, define and clarify their sense of self in relation to family and society, and compare and contrast others’ experiences of family to their own. However, both lessons I have chosen impose definitions on the students and presuppose their appropriateness. To help students broaden their thinking and interpretation in reference to their experiences of family, I would drop the text’s statements and substitute Socratic questioning strategies to encourage the students to think out their own definitions of family and family structures, how they arrived at those definitions, how they are affected when someone else’s definition opposes their own, and what stereotyping is and how it is practiced.

Lesson 2 would also involve dropping the text and substituting questioning techniques to develop student thinking regarding what wants and needs are, how they change, etc. Ideally, this
Strategies used to remodel

S-24 practicing Socratic discussion: clarifying and questioning beliefs, theories, or perspectives
S-12 developing one’s perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories
S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
S-17 questioning deeply: raising and pursuing root or significant questions
S-35 exploring implications and consequences
S-4 exploring thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts

Remodelled Lesson Plan s-24

Lesson 1

Lesson 1 would include questions to facilitate discussion such as: What is a family? Is _____ a family? Why? Are you part of a family? Are some kinds of family good and some bad? Can one person be a family? Why or why not? How does it feel to be in your family? What if you could choose your family, tell us what you’d imagine about it. S-12

editors’ note: “Who do you think of as members of your family? When you think of family, do you think of your grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins? Why or why not?”

Lesson 2

“The book says people have many needs and wants. What is a need? What is a want? Do people have many needs and wants? Give me some examples of need and wants. Why do you say X is a need? Why do you think Y is a want? S-14 Do different people think differently about wants and needs? How? Can a want change to a need or a need to a want? How? Why? Are other people’s needs and wants important to you? Why or why not?” S-17

“Can groups of people have wants and needs? Can nations have needs? Does the Earth have needs? What if your wants and needs affect what others want and need?” S-35

editors’ note: “Do wants and needs feel the same? How can we tell which are wants and which are needs? Why might the difference between needs and wants be important?” S-14

“How might the way we are thinking affect what we want? Can you think of any examples of how changing the way you were thinking changed what you wanted?” S-4
Emotions: Anger

(1st — 3rd Grades)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- discuss the relationship between thoughts and feelings and analyze feelings using critical vocabulary
- examine assumptions that lead people to feel certain ways

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

We have selected two lessons on anger from a series of lessons on children and emotions. In the first lesson, students are asked to interpret what a boy in a picture is feeling and cite specific context clues to support their interpretations. They then discuss what makes them feel angry. Following this, students review two sets of pictures in which someone is allegedly portrayed as being angry. Students are asked "Why are they angry? When do you feel this way?" In summary, students are asked to mention things that make people angry, and to discuss whether they think everyone is angry sometimes.

In the second lesson, students are asked to describe a picture (of three children working together, shooing away a girl who wants to join them) and infer that the girl is angry. They discuss two ways she could keep from being angry (by playing by herself, by bringing materials to the group to gain admittance).


Critique

Critical thinking requires understanding oneself. When feelings are discussed in terms of the thoughts associated with them, they can be more fully explored. We can probe the bases of our feelings by understanding the thoughts behind them. Thinking about our thoughts helps us better understand our feelings. The reverse is also true. Using the insight that our thoughts and feelings are connected, we can use our feelings to better understand our thinking. This lesson misses the opportunity to develop this crucial insight. Students should practice discussing their feelings and thoughts in relation to one another, and finding the assumptions underlying their feelings.

Strategies used to remodel

S-4 exploring thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts
S-28 thinking precisely about thinking; using critical vocabulary
S-5 developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment
S-30 examining or evaluating assumptions
Remodelled Lesson Plan s-4

This remodel will stress the relationship between thoughts and feelings, and how changing the way one thinks about a situation can change the way one feels.

In the first lesson, follow the question "Why do you think the people in these pictures are angry?" with "What kinds of things are they probably thinking?" Use critical thinking vocabulary whenever possible. The class could use the following format:

What happened?
How did the person feel?
What was assumed?
What was concluded? S-28

In the second lesson, after asking "How do you think the girl who is being told to stay away feels?" and "Why?", encourage different responses, rather than forcing the conclusion that the girl is angry. Some students, for example, may recognize that the girl may feel hurt. For each response ask, "If she feels..., then what is she probably thinking?" S-5 The original lesson asks, "What could the girl do to keep from being angry?" If the students don't mention them, point out that there are two ways to change how you feel: you can change the situation, or change how you think about the situation.

When doing a unit on emotions, the class should discuss as great a variety of emotions as the student can name. For each emotion, have students give examples of when people may feel that way. These examples could also be put into the above format. Then the students can discuss the kinds of assumptions operating behind different emotions. S-30

Examples (using format)

A. Student states, "I got mad at Sally because she pushed me down." Use questions to elicit explanations.
   1. You felt mad.
   2. You felt Sally push you down and it hurt.
   3. You assume that people should not hurt each other.
   4. You concluded that Sally was wrong to push you down.

B. Student states, "I was excited because my birthday was the next day."
   1. You felt excited.
   2. You knew your birthday was the next day.
   3. You assumed that birthdays are fun.
   4. You concluded that you would have fun.

Students could also discuss whether everyone would always think and feel the same way in a given situation.
The Pledge of Allegiance
(1st-3rd Grades)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- discuss the meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance
- begin to develop a concept of 'good citizenship'
- develop an appreciation for 'our republic', 'liberty', and 'justice'
- begin to develop insight into sociocentricity and the need for integrity by comparing ideals to actual practice and comparing U.S. and French ideals
- explore the relationships between symbols and what they represent

Standard Approach

The teacher explains the difficult words in the pledge, and the class discusses the flag and the importance of patriotism.

Critique

The lessons we reviewed on the subject over-emphasized the flag, while de-emphasizing allegiance to the country. They tended to confuse our ideals with our practice, thereby failing to suggest that it takes work to better live up to ideals. The common belief that loving your country means finding no fault with it is a major obstacle to critical thought. Fairminded thinking requires us to consider criticisms.

The lessons we reviewed do not fully explain the ideas in the pledge; therefore, students are making a promise they don't understand. Ideas as important and complex as 'good citizenship' aren't covered in sufficient depth.

Furthermore, many lessons lead students to believe that our ideals are uniquely American, ignoring how many other countries have similar ideals. This practice encourages sociocentric stereotyping of non-Americans. Therefore, we suggest that students discuss ideals that others share with us.

The remodel can be substituted for any lesson on the pledge. Some teachers may also want to have students critique the pledge lesson in their text.

Strategies used to remodel

- S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
- S-32 making plausible inferences, predictions, or interpretations
- S-27 comparing and contrasting ideas with actual practice
- S-7 developing intellectual good faith or integrity
- S-29 noting significant similarities and differences
- S-2 developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity
Remodelled Lesson Plan

We have designed this lesson as a complete third grade level discussion. We believe, however, that the pledge should be discussed as early as the children recite it. For first and second grades, use as much of this lesson as your students can understand.

Teachers of second and third grades may have a pre-activity. Groups of students could use the dictionary to look up the words in the pledge and rewrite the pledge in their own words. We then recommend a thorough discussion of the pledge, such as that described below.

• A pledge is a promise. What is a promise? Why keep promises? How do you feel when someone breaks a promise to you? Is something a promise if you have no choice about whether or not to make it? S-14

• Allegiance is loyalty. (Use ‘allegiance to a friend’ as an analogy to enhance discussion.) So we are making a promise to be loyal. Loyal to what? (Flag and country.) The flag is a symbol of our country. (If necessary, discuss the meaning of ‘symbol.’) To be loyal to the flag is to show respect for it. We do this as a way of showing respect for our nation. (Discuss our country’s name.)

• “And to the republic for which it (the flag) stands.” Our country is a republic. That means that we have the right to pick our leaders. (Compare this to other forms of government.) Do people in every country get to pick their leaders? If we select our leaders, then who is responsible for our government? S-32 Why? (Discuss how the country is made up of land, people, and government, and so we have to care for all three.)

• Our country has ideals, some of which are in the pledge. (Discuss ‘ideals.’) ‘Indivisible’ means something that stays whole, and is not split into parts. (Use households as an analogy to generate a discussion of why unity is important.) (Define ‘liberty’ and ‘justice.’) We say “with liberty and justice for all.” Why are these things important? How do you feel when you are treated unfairly? How would you feel if you couldn’t decide anything for yourself? (Then discuss that last phrase, and ask who is meant by ‘all’?) Is the idea that everyone is free and is always treated fairly a fact or an ideal? S-27 What is the difference between a fact and an ideal? (Discuss) Are freedom and fairness easy or hard for a country to achieve? (Discuss) S-7

• Therefore, when we say the pledge, we promise to respect the flag and be good citizens. Since we live in a republic, the citizens are responsible for the government. So we promise to take care of the land, keep our country whole, and strive to make our government treat everyone fairly and let people be free.

The teacher should point out that the students are not required to say the pledge, that they have a choice to decide whether they want to make this promise this way.

You might want to tell the students that the French people hold the ideals of liberty, brotherhood, and equality. Have the students compare these to our ideals, then ask, “What do French and American points of view have in com-
mon?" (This could be a good place to have students critique the implications of their texts and why it was written that way: the tendency to want to think of ourselves as the only good people.) S-2

The next section is an introduction to the idea of a symbol. It helps the students distinguish between symbols and that which they represent.

**Symbols S-29**

You might begin with our flag, the skull-and-crossbones sign, and traffic lights as examples of symbols. Ask the students for more examples. Then ask, "Is there a symbol for you?" Use the analogy of the students' names as symbols of them in the following discussion: Is a symbol the same as the thing it symbolizes or stands for? Is the symbol as important as what it symbolizes? Why might people get upset when a symbol is mistreated? Is it right to treat or react to the symbol the way you treat or react to the thing it symbolizes? Why or why not?

The purpose of this handbook is to explain critical thinking by translating general theory into specific teaching strategies.
Sue’s Mistake

(2nd Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:

- probe deeper into the concept of ‘learning from a careless mistake’
- develop intellectual humility by avoiding the questionable conclusion suggested by the text

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

The students’ text tells about a student, Sue, who forgot her field-trip permission slip. Her father brings it to her, and she apologizes. The discussion includes the following ideas: Sue’s mistake inconvenienced her father. Everyone makes mistakes. When we make mistakes we should apologize and thank anyone who helps us. We should learn from our mistakes. The reinforcement activities suggest the following situations for role play: a child breaks a window; a child scatters raked leaves; a child leaves his jacket outside; a child forgets to give water to his pet dog.

from At School, Virginia Finley, et al.,
Tiegs-Adams: People and their Heritage,
1983. by Silver Burdett & Ginn, Inc.
pp. 42-3.

Critique

This lesson reinforces a common and damaging confusion between feeling sorry only because someone’s angry, and genuinely regretting an action and so avoiding repeating it. Although Sue apologized, students are not in a position to know if she really did learn from her mistake.

Strategies used to remodel

S-5 developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment;
S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases

Remodelled Lesson Plan

First, since the question “Did Sue learn from her mistake?” encourages students to come to a conclusion when the evidence provided is inadequate, you could replace it with “How could we tell if Sue learned from her mistake? If Sue did learn, how would she behave in the future? What exactly did she do wrong? How could she avoid doing things like that?” S-5 These questions will
give students practice distinguishing learning from a mistake in a practical sense, from substituting verbal rituals for a change in behavior.

Then, after the role-playing exercises in the original lesson (which encourage students to accept responsibility and say "I'm sorry"), have a general discussion of how learning from a mistake involves more than simply apologizing. Such a discussion enables students to analyze the concept of 'learning from a mistake.'

- How can you tell if someone has learned from a mistake? Do you ever say you're sorry, but then do it again? Why? Does saying that you're sorry mean that you've learned from your mistake? What if you repeat the mistake and the apology again and again? When can someone tell that you have learned from a mistake? (When you make things right — as in the text, by raking up the scattered leaves — and when you make an effort to not repeat it.) Have students give other examples from their experience, and ask if the case is one of learning from a mistake. S-14
Schools in India

(2nd Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- practice clarifying the concept ‘school’ by comparing their initial ideas to village schools in India, thereby improving their ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts and socio-centric associations from the concept.

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
The students read and discuss their text, which covers the following points:
- since India is poor, not all children can go to school; not all schools have school buildings; sometimes villagers build school buildings; many adults go to school at night; children in India learn reading, writing, health, and practical skills.


Critique

In order to think clearly and accurately about ideas, it is necessary to distinguish features which are necessarily related to an idea from those which we simply associate with the idea. The original lesson does not emphasize what is fundamental to all schools. We have used this lesson to show how to give students practice in struggling to clarify a concept and distinguishing their socio-centric associations with it from its essential characteristics. This material could encourage stereotyping by giving the impression that all Indian schools are small village schools with no electricity or other modern conveniences.

Strategies used to remodel

S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
S-31 distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
S-2 developing insight into egocentricity or socio-centricity
S-10 refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications

Remodelled Lesson Plan S-14

To explore students’ initial associations with the concept ‘school’, you might begin by asking them, “What do you think of when you think of school? Which of these are necessary for calling something a school? Are any of these things not necessarily related to a place being a school? Which? Why?” (Mark those
items students have identified as irrelevant.) You might have a student or a few students (who need writing practice) make a permanent list of the items for later comparison to material discussed in the lesson. S-31

When the lesson has been read and recapped, the class could again examine their lists. Students could go through their texts again, noting pertinent points. The children are now in a position to analyze and evaluate their original conception in light of what they have read. “Remember the things that you said are necessary for a place to be a school? Which of those things do Indian schools share? Which do they not share? Should we call the schools in India ‘schools’? Why or why not? Were any of your initial ideas about what makes a school a school too limiting? Which? Why? Why isn’t that related to school-ness? What are the most important characteristics of schools? Why are they the most important?”

“Why did you have the ideas about schools that you did before you read? Where did you get those ideas? Do all of the schools you know about have those characteristics? Then why aren’t all of these features relevant?” You might then explain that people have a tendency to confuse their associations and experiences with the real, essential meanings of words. Have students briefly discuss the problems this can cause when people read, hear, or see peoples whose experiences are very different. S-2

To address the possible stereotyping and generalization problem, the class could also consider other kinds of schools in India. “Are all Indian schools like these? Since there are cities in India and schools in the cities, do you think those schools are like the schools in the text? Like ours?” S-10
At the Television Studio

(2nd Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:

- discuss the credibility of ads by exploring their purpose
- learn to recognize common “tricks of the trade” in children’s commercials
- discuss ways of being a smart consumer
- develop critical listening skills by analyzing ads and distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

This lesson shows a woman who works for a television studio, taking pictures of a dog for a dog-food commercial. The text explains that commercial television is funded through the sale of commercials and that a dog food company buys commercial time which pays for a show about pets.

The teacher tells the students that the purpose of advertising is to convince the consumer to buy the product. This is why thousands of dollars are spent on one television commercial. The students are asked why they think people buy things that they see advertised on television and to name some of the things that they have wanted to buy after viewing a commercial.


Critique

This was one of a very few lessons that discussed advertising, so we decided to focus our critique and remodel on that aspect of the lesson. Since most school-age children have been exposed to and influenced by commercials, a lesson on evaluating advertising could be an opportunity to help students recognize manipulative techniques, and so be in a better position to decide how to spend their money.

The most serious problem with this lesson is that it doesn’t explicitly have students follow out the implications of the statement “the purpose of advertising is to convince the consumer to buy”. Therefore it does not cover the ways in which ads are often designed to mislead the audience. When the lesson asks students why people buy products they’ve seen advertised, it should also have students reflect on the adequacy of those reasons. Although it asks the students to name things they have wanted after seeing commercials, it fails to have students examine the ways ads influence them. The students should be asked why they wanted those products and discuss
whether those products met their expectations. Furthermore, rather than using a dog food commercial as its example, it should have used a commercial aimed at children. And finally, by not discussing how a smart consumer would decide which product to buy, the lesson doesn’t help the student overcome the influence of commercials or develop insight into critical listening.

**Strategies used to remodel**

*S-16* evaluating the credibility of sources of information  
*S-35* exploring implications and consequences  
*S-22* listening critically: the art of silent dialogue  
*S-31* distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

**Remodelled Lesson Plan S-16**

Before doing this lesson, the teacher may want to spend some time watching children’s commercials. The class can discuss the following questions: What are commercials and other advertisements? Why are they made? What does this purpose imply about ads? If I want you to buy something, what kinds of things might I say? Would I say anything bad about it? Why not? Have any of you ever wanted something after seeing a commercial for it? Why did you want it? Have you ever gotten something you wanted after seeing an ad? Was it what you expected it to be like? Have you ever been disappointed in a product when an ad had convinced you that you would love it? **S-35**

Point out that although advertisers cannot lie, they can use any misleading or manipulative technique short of an outright, provable lie. If students have trouble understanding this, you might use an example of a child defending herself as an analogy. For example, a child may truthfully say, “I didn’t touch the lamp” when she knocked the table the lamp was on, causing it to fall and break. In a case like this, we would not praise the child for telling the truth.

Students could also brainstorm details in commercials they’ve seen and discuss the techniques used in them. The teacher could summarize these descriptions and comments on the board. “Tell me about some commercials you’ve seen. How do they try to get you or your parents to buy the product or use the service?” (Commercials show children playing with toys and acting as though they are having a great time. They claim that everyone wants their product and suggest that you will be the only one left out if you don’t get it. Announcers and actors use an excited tone of voice. Cereal companies advertise toys and contests that they put in or on boxes. Showing food and showing people eating food makes you hungry for it.) The class or small groups of students could then discuss the items they listed. For each, ask, “Is this misleading? What kinds of things should we look out for when we watch ads?” If the students miss the following points, you could mention them: children in commercials are actors paid to look like they are having fun; there may be no difference between an advertised, more expensive product and an un-advertised, cheaper product; some aspects of commercials have nothing to do with the product (such as cartoon characters designed as advertising gimmicks). “How can we prevent ads from tricking us?” **S-22**
Then discuss what being a smart consumer entails. Ask students how they should decide which product is the best to buy. "How can we find out or figure out what would be worth the money? What kinds of things are good to know about toys or food if we want to be smart shoppers? How can we find these things out?" S-31

Finally, teachers with access to VCR's could videotape commercials for children's products and show them in class for students to analyze. S-22 If you don't have access to a VCR, you could bring in other forms of advertising for children's products.

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Getting experience in lesson plan critique: What are the strengths and weaknesses of this lesson? What critical principles, concepts, or strategies apply to it?
We Need Rules
(3rd Grade)

by Sharon Hochstettler, Prescott
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Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
• discuss what it is to be a good school citizen and a bad school citizen
• clarify concepts of good rules and bad rules through an experiment of creating and following their own rules in the classroom
• discuss their experiment and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of being a rule maker
• transfer the concepts of good citizenship and personal freedoms to the city government level by visiting a judge and discussing a local gun control proposition

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
The students read about rules at home and in the community. The entire lesson explores literal recall of laws, rules, and elections. Students bring in articles, read books, and invite public officials to class to learn who writes the laws. Students are encouraged to read about famous leaders.


Critique

Citizenship vocabulary is introduced. However, most terms are those the student would already know. The manual provides teachers with “right” answers. There is no attempt to involve the student in assessing good and bad laws, nor to apply this information to significant issues in the students’ lives. The text does not discuss the difficulty of making good laws or rules nor the difficulty in following them.

Strategies used to remodel
S-20 analyzing or evaluating actions or policies
S-11 comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts
S-6 developing intellectual courage
S-12 developing one’s perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories
Remodelled Lesson Plan

To clarify the concept of good citizenship, students will contrast a good school citizen and a bad school citizen. Then students will discuss how the school rules are made and the advantages and disadvantages of making such rules. A small group within the class will make up a set of rules to be followed for a week.

After a week, the class will critique the rules, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being a rule maker, and apply the concept of good citizenship to rule makers. “Which of your rules were good rules? Which were bad rules? Why were these good and those bad? What does this tell us about the differences between good and bad rules? What is good about being a rule maker? What is bad about it? What is good and bad citizenship in a rule maker?” S-20

Our school is a block and a half from the county courthouse and across the street from the county jail. Students will next transfer what they have learned in the classroom to their county government. While interviewing a district judge, they will question the judge about advantages and disadvantages of being someone who carries out the laws.

Good and bad laws will be discussed. It is not against the law in Prescott to wear six-shooters. The National Rifle Association is strong in this area and our local state assemblyman has introduced a bill allowing citizens to carry concealed weapons. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such laws. S-11

Finally, students will visit the county jail and explore the consequences of not following laws, whether good or bad. “What are the consequences of not following rules? Is it ever worth the punishment not to follow a rule? Why or why not?” S-6

Following the above projects, students discuss the lives of Americans who have made laws, broken laws, and followed laws. Some famous leaders might include Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Oliver North, or George Washington. S-12
Looking to the Future

(3rd Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- discuss the implications of a passage to determine whether or not the text is misleading, thereby reading critically and developing the intellectual courage to question their texts
- discuss how to evaluate sources of information

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

On two pages, students read about a slum in Washington, D.C. with unsafe housing conditions. Bulldozers came to Lafayette Square and knocked down thousands of houses, replacing them with new houses and apartments for the people to live in.


Critique

This student text may lead students to believe that slums no longer exist in Washington, D.C. By mentioning only one case, a case in which improvements were made, it overlooks the majority of cases in which improvements were not made. It does not mention or allude to the work that remains to be done. Since the student text is misleading, the student should be given a chance to critique it. Students need practice critiquing written material. They need to practice discussing the implications of claims.

Strategies used to remodel

S-21 reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts
S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
S-35 exploring implications and consequences
S-16 evaluating the credibility of sources of information
S-6 developing intellectual courage
Remodelled Lesson Plan S-21

First, students could read the original passage. The teacher can use the following questions as a pre-activity: What is a slum? Why are there slums? Why do people live in slums? What would it be like to live in a slum? Must there be slums? How can people get rid of slums? S-14

Then, the students could read the passage again, and discuss the following questions. “What does the text say about Washington, D.C.? When the text says ‘in one part of Washington, houses were very old ...’ does that imply that the city had only one slum? Does the passage imply that there are no more slums in Washington?” Discuss at length. (The teacher may use a similar example, such as, “One girl in this room has a red dress.” “Does that mean that no other girl in the room has a red dress? Would people usually think that that’s what it means?” [Though a logician would say “no” most people would say “yes”].) S-35

Next, the teacher could ask, “How could we find out about the slums? Why do you think the text was written this way?” The teacher may mention that there are a variety of points of view on the causes of, and solutions to, the slum problem.

For further discussion of slums, or for reinforcement, students could discuss the following questions: Is getting rid of slums a difficult or easy problem? Why? Do we understand the causes of slums? What do we agree about? Disagree? How is this problem different from one like who should get to pick which TV show to watch? How can we find out what a city is like if we can’t go there? What different sources of information might we find? Which of these would most likely leave out problems like slums? Which of these would be most likely to include such problems? Why do you think so?” S-16

“When can you assume that what you read is true? Under what conditions should you be skeptical and check other sources? (When someone is ‘selling’ products or ideas or wants to make things look good.) What kinds of materials can you trust? Why? Have you ever not believed what you heard or read? Have you ever tried to mislead someone? Why?” S-6

Critical thinkers realize that everyone is capable of making mistakes and being wrong, including authors of textbooks.
Does Earth Move?
(3rd Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- discuss the importance and difficulty of openmindedness and intellectual courage by discussing Galileo’s trial
- evaluate behavior and discuss thoughts underlying feelings of various parties involved
- relate the issues raised to their own lives

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

This lesson covers the following points: Copernicus disagreed with others and said that the Sun, not the Earth, is the center of the solar system; later Galileo began to agree with Copernicus; some people got mad and had Galileo arrested. Students discuss the differences between the old and new ideas about the solar system and perform an experiment which shows why it is hard to say which theory is correct. Students play-act “Galileo’s Trial” and discuss whether or not people forgot about Galileo’s ideas after he had been put under house arrest.

from Who Are We?, Sara S. Beattie, et al.

Critique

This lesson misses the opportunity to discuss the importance of openmindedness and intellectual courage. Galileo’s life presents an excellent example of someone who was punished for having a good idea, because the people around him were closedminded and refused to listen. Yet the lesson, because it doesn’t relate the material to the students’ lives, fails to foster insight into the importance of putting aside prejudices and fears, listening openmindedly, and speaking out for one’s beliefs. Nor does it foster insight into the students’ egocentricity by having students reflect on times when they have closedmindedly rejected a new idea.

Strategies used to remodel

S-6 developing intellectual courage
S-4 exploring thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts
S-7 developing intellectual good faith or integrity
S-20 analyzing or evaluating actions or policies
S-2 developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity
S-34 recognizing contradictions
Remodelled Lesson Plan s-6

When discussing Galileo's trial, encourage students to reflect on the importance of intellectual courage and openmindedness, by having the class discuss what their text describes.

- Why did people get mad at Galileo? What were they assuming? (That is, what might they have been thinking that made them angry?) S-4 Who was in a better position to know if he was right, Galileo or his critics? Why?
  What should have happened?
- If Galileo was punished for speaking out, do you suppose other people felt free to say they agreed with him? If you had lived then and knew about this, would you have spoken out for his ideas, or kept quiet to keep out of trouble?
  How might you have felt about that? Which do you think is wiser, saying what you think or staying out of trouble? S-7
- Should Galileo have changed his mind or kept quiet because everyone disagreed with him? S-20
  - Have you ever gotten mad when someone questioned a belief of yours? Is that a good thing to do? Why or why not? S-20 Did you ever miss out on learning a new idea because you were angry and wouldn't listen? What can you do about this problem? S-2
  - Have you ever been in Galileo's position where you said something that everyone disagreed with? How did the other people react? How did you feel?
    Why? Did you change your mind? Why or why not? Was it hard to speak out? Why or why not? S-4
  - Is there something wrong with believing that other people should listen carefully to you, and take your ideas seriously, but you don't have to listen to them? S-34
An Oil-Drilling Community

(3rd Grade)

by Sharon Hochstettler, Prescott
U. S. D. #1, Prescott, AZ

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:

- exercise fairmindedness by considering negative aspects of petroleum use left out of the text
- critique the presentation in the text
- transfer what they learn about oil to the local question of a copper mine

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

The student text describes vocabulary related to oil drilling, such as: petroleum, derrick, Alaskan pipeline, non-renewable resources and renewable resources. Where oil is found and how it is used are described. Students use maps and graphs to see where oil is found and what places (states and countries) have the most oil. Students are asked to explain why the Alaskan pipeline is raised above ground level.


Critique

This lesson focuses on literal recall of minor details and ignores one of the most profound problems facing our environment today. It presents a biased view of the Alaskan pipeline. The student can easily see what conclusions are expected.

Strategies used to remodel

S-3 exercising fairmindedness
S-21 reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts
S-11 comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts
S-12 developing one's perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories
Remodelled Lesson Plan s-3

Since the two biggest problems in the original lesson are one-sidedness and lack of application to the students, my suggestions focus on addressing them.

Before beginning the unit, students will bring in current articles and pictures pertaining to the uses of oil and the damage oil drilling and transportation have caused. Since our community is presently involved in a heated debate over the development of a copper mine in the area, articles pertaining to the mine including reference to the environmental impact study should also be included.

Students will read the text, and identify the various uses of petroleum that it mentions. "How is the oil obtained? What is life like on the offshore oil platform? What is life like on the land near the offshore oil platform? How is life changed for people living far from the drilling site? For animals? What assumptions did the text make about these questions? In what ways did the articles agree and differ from the text?" S-21

Students in small groups will then write charts showing the benefits of oil. A subsequent activity will be a chart outlining problems caused by our dependence on oil. These charts will then be compiled by the entire class. Next, the class will do the same activity for copper mining in Prescott, Arizona.

“What might life be like in a copper mine? What might life be like for people living near the mine? How is life changed for people and others living far from the mining site?" S-11 Local speakers, for and against the mine, would be invited to present their ideas to the class. Students would then choose a concluding writing activity, such as letters to companies, editors, poems, creative writing stories. S-12

Editors' note: Students can sum up with a general evaluation of our petroleum use by examining charts of positive and negative points. "Given the pluses and minuses of our heavy use of petroleum, do you think continuing to use so much of it is a good thing? Why or why not? If you think it's a bad idea, what could we do instead?"

Small groups of students could take items from the list of uses of petroleum and try to think of ways to cut down on petroleum products.

“What bad things about petroleum use were mentioned in your text? What other bad things did we discuss? Why weren't these mentioned in the text?" S-21
Farms Yesterday and Today
(3rd Grade)

by Joanne Alford, Edwina Monroe, and
Alice Newell, Greensboro
Public Schools, Greensboro, NC

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- name ways in which farms have changed
- state reasons why farms have become more productive
- pursue root questions by exploring the effects of technology on life on farms through re-
  search, writing, and discussion, thereby developing intellectual perseverance and confi-
  dence in reason
- transfer insights from this lesson to future discussions regarding technology

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
Students compare how farms started, grew, and changed to meet the needs of the community. They study a variety of farms and products, learn how machines produce more products on fewer farms, and make a survey to determine what products are grown in which states. Nine vocabulary words are highlighted. Visuals are provided to compare and contrast. There are check-up questions for recall and critical thinking. Research idea: locate present-day farm machines (plows, tractors, harrows, and planters) and compare them with those used long ago.

Critique

The basic idea of helping students to be more aware of practices concerning a real social issue involving an old and new point of view, is good. Empathy building exercises help students appreciate the progress of modern technology by looking at how it affects the industry today. Students could also develop other ideas about technological advances on the basis of what they know. They should also examine the conclusion that things have improved over time through the education of the farmers and scientific breakthroughs.

Strategies used to remodel
S-17 questioning deeply: raising and pursuing root or significant questions
S-33 giving reasons and evaluating evidence and alleged facts
S-13 clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs
S-9 developing confidence in reason
S-8 developing intellectual perseverance
S-23 making interdisciplinary connections
S-11 comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts
The remodel will focus on the question: Are modern farms more productive than farms in the past?

Students will brainstorm about farm life in the past and present. After a discussion which would include vocabulary, visuals, and reports, the teacher will introduce questions. "Are farms more productive? Why or why not? (Put their reasons on the board.) Are these good conclusions? Explain."

Finally, ask, "If we agree that farms are more productive, then what evidence can we give that supports our conclusion?" *S-33*

**editors' note:** To address the criticism that the standard approach doesn't have students examine the conclusion that things have improved, the question could be broadened to, "Are modern farms *better* than farms in the past?" The class could brainstorm about the question's meaning and break it down into sub-questions: Are farms more productive or efficient? Are farms more fun to live on? Do farms produce better food? etc. *S-13*

Students could form themselves into groups each of which will explore one sub-question in an extended activity that has them read, write a rough draft, discuss these drafts, and rewrite them into a group paper. The teacher could duplicate these papers for the whole class to read. *S-9*

Class discussion of these papers could then explore the question, "In what ways have farms changed, and which are changes for the better?" *S-8*

Each student could write two drafts of an individual essay (you could also tell students that they can use the group papers as references). *S-9* Make all essays available for student perusal. This project (longer than the original) includes reading, research, writing, science, technology, economics, environment, and critical thinking and is a more neutral exploration than the original. *S-23*

This topic could be even further expanded to, "How has technology changed things — in what ways for the better and in what ways for the worse?"

Later in the year, when the class discusses technology in general or some specific technological advance, the teacher could remind students of this lesson. "How does what we said about farms and technology apply here? What does our work then tell us about this case? How is this different?" *S-11*
City Park

(3rd Grade)

Anonymous

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- practice independent thinking by making their own list of things that they like in parks
- exercise fairmindedness by considering features other groups of people might want in a park
- give reasons for their park design
- analyze and evaluate the park design policies
- develop intellectual perseverance by revising their park designs after getting feedback from the class
- discuss and analyze their methods and processes, thereby deeply exploring social studies

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
Students are given the task of designing a park (within budget). They have its dimensions and a price list. They are told that it has a hill, a stream, a small tree, and a large tree (which they can place wherever they want). They are told to list the features they want, star their favorites, and make sure they are within budget. Students draw the natural features on butcher paper, draw and cut out pictures of materials and equipment, and glue them to the design of the park.

Critique

editors' note: To fairmindedly consider the needs of the other age groups that might use the park, students should engage in extended discussion. Students could assess the various parks designed by their classmates and revise their work. By changing the lesson from an individual to a collaborative effort, students will have more ideas to work with, can produce a better product, and can analyze the methods they used — the design process and the group management process. Thus, the lesson becomes a more realistic version of what adult group planners do, including the social aspects.

Strategies used to remodel
S-1 thinking independently
S-3 exercising fairmindedness
S-33 giving reasons and evaluating evidence and alleged facts
S-20 analyzing or evaluating actions or policies
S-8 developing intellectual perseverance
S-17 questioning deeply: raising and pursuing root or significant questions
Remodelled Lesson Plan

Present the problem. The size of the proposed park is 300 feet by 200 feet. Compare this to some known landmark such as the school yard or a football field.

With the whole class, brainstorm a list of features they like in parks. S-1 You may want to talk about features other groups of people like. “Who will use this park? For what — what would they like to do there? What would these people need to be able to use the park that way? What would little kids like to have in the park? Teen-agers? Grown-ups? What would be a fair way to decide how to give everyone some things they want?” S-3

Put students into groups of 3 or 4. Tables are helpful, but students may also work on the floor. Give students butcher paper, rulers, paper, felt pens, scissors, tape or glue, and the worksheets.

Allow ample time when the plans have been completed for each group to make a presentation to the class explaining the merits of its project. “Why did you include those things? Why did you put this there?” S-33 Encourage questions from the rest of the class to analyze and evaluate each project, and compare the parks. “What do you like about this design? Why is that good? How would this be used? Can you see any problems arising from this design? Is one of the designs better than the rest?” The teacher could help students see the values presupposed in the various designs and evaluations of the parks. S-20

The class could do one of the following extensions:

Take a field trip to a nearby park and sketch its layout.

Redesign the school playground.

Draw a park exactly to scale.

Make a three-dimensional model of your park.

Research the actual cost of materials and equipment to build your park.

Write an essay explaining the merits of your park design.

After discussion of the plans, allow interested students to make revisions that will improve their parks and re-submit them to the class. “What changes did you make? Why? Why is that better? Is anything lost by making that change? Why didn’t you do it that way before?” S-8

editors’ note: This lesson has rich potential for deeply exploring social studies at the “micro-level”. To take advantage of this, the teacher could have the class discuss the processes used by each group — how they divided the task into sub-tasks, how they addressed disagreement, etc. “What did your group do first? Why? Then what? Did you have any problems? (disagreement within the group, forgetting a crucial element and so having to completely redo the design, not keeping track of the budget, etc.) What? Why? How did you solve it? How would you avoid that problem in the future? Did any other groups have the same problem or a similar problem? How did you deal with it? How did that work? Did any other group approach the task differently than this group? How? What did you do first? Why? Now that you’ve finished this project, what would you do differently if you did it again? Why? What would you do the same way? Why?” S-17
The Health Department
(3rd Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- pursue basic questions regarding the functions of government and the need for regulatory agencies
- develop insight into egocentricity by exploring why people who work with food might be careless by comparing their perspective to that of Health Department workers
- practice reference skills by using their texts as a reference

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

The student text describes a number of functions of the Health Department, including these: testing for germs; checking the quality of food and the cleanliness of workers and machines; working in clinics. The “Providing background” section in the teacher's notes explains the progress in disease control and medicine, offers the word 'epidemic', and mentions our longer life span.


Critique

This lesson is a missed opportunity to have students discuss one of the most profound problems in human nature. The need for regulatory agencies is a symptom of a greater problem than poor food quality and lack of cleanliness; it is a symptom of our tendency to ignore the rights and needs of others when our own interest is involved. Using a specific example like the need for the Health Department can highlight for students the ideal of government as a protector of peoples' rights from people with more narrow interests. This helps lay the foundation for students' views on the purposes and functions of government. Since this is a key area, we have included several of the innumerable possible extensions. Teachers using this text may want to rob time for some of these by dropping trivial lessons and activities.

Strategies used to remodel

S-17 questioning deeply: raising and pursuing root or significant questions
S-2 developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity
S-25 reasoning dialogically: comparing perspectives, interpretations, or theories
S-19 generating or assessing solutions
S-23 making interdisciplinary connections
S-21 reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts
S-8 developing intellectual perseverance
**Remodelled Lesson Plan S-17**

Before introducing the original lesson on the Health Department, students could reflect on the problem of egocentricity by discussing times they knowingly broke rules, weren't as careful as they knew they should be, or showed little or no concern for the legitimate rights of others. Students could discuss why they did as they did, what they were thinking at the time, and what they think about it now. S-2

You might then tell the students that they are going to read about one solution to the problem of people being careless or selfish in ways that can hurt other people's health. It's one of the solutions involving government. Students could then read the original lesson on the Health Department. (You may also want to mention penalties for non-compliance with public health standards.)

To probe deeper into the need for regulatory agencies, the teacher can supplement the original lesson with the following questions: Why do we need the Health Department? In what ways does it help all citizens? In what ways does it help consumers? Businessmen?

- Why do Health Department workers have to check places where food is stored, processed, sold, and served? Why don't workers at those places check health conditions? Could the Health Department workers simply ask the people who work with food whether the rules are being followed? Or their bosses? Would some people ever ignore the rules? Why?

- How do you think the people who own and work in places the Health Department checks feel about the Health Department? Why? Would they all feel that way? Why or why not? If you owned a store and Health Department workers told you some of your meat was bad and that you couldn't sell it (you had to throw it away), how might you feel? Why? What might you think? If you felt that way, how are you looking at the situation? What seems most important to you? How does that compare to how the Health person sees things? S-25

- Why does the government do this? Could someone else do it instead? Which would be better? Why? S-19

- What does this lesson tell us about government and some of the reasons we have governments? What other reasons for government do we know about? Are they like these in any ways? How could we explain all of the reasons for government that we know about?

This topic could be extended several ways:

In an extended project, the class could relate the Health Department to other ways in which government tries to protect the rights of citizens. Students could develop or practice their research skills by looking in their texts for other governmental agencies or references to government. "How could we find out where else our book talks about this? What words should we look for in the contents and index? Let's look some up. What other books could we look in? Where? How?" Small groups of students could look up a few references each and take notes to share with the class. S-23 "From all of our
sources, what things did we find out about what government does? What does this tell us about government?" S-21

The language arts or research aspect of this activity could be further extended by having students discuss their research processes, successes, and failures. "What did you look up? How? Did you find anything? Why do you think you didn't find what you wanted there? Where did you find what you were looking for?" S-8

This material could be related to science through health lessons, what germs are, what shots are for, etc. S-23

Students could relate science and history by finding out about past epidemics, their causes and effects, or the history of medicine (perhaps through biographies of those who contributed to major medical breakthroughs). S-23

Judgment is best developed, not when told what, how, and why to judge, but by repeatedly judging and then assessing those judgments.
Starting from Scratch
(3rd Grade)
by Michael Ormsby, Bennett Valley School District, Petaluma, CA

Objectives of the remodelled lesson
The students will:
• raise and pursue root questions about law, government, leaders, and cooperation
• develop insight into their egocentricity and transfer those insights to the situation of the shipwrecked people
• begin to see the need for global understanding
• generate and assess solutions to the problems of the stranded people

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
The text provides selections from a diary of a group of people shipwrecked on a deserted island. The entries for Days 1, 2, 5, 10, 15, 25, and 26 chronicle the difficulties the people had in working together. Day 26 ends with, "Nobody could agree last night. Today all work has stopped. What are we going to do?" The text tells students that groups need rules, that one way of making rules is to vote, and that communities often need leaders. The lesson ends with several questions on comprehension and evaluation.

Critique
The lesson doesn't allow students to discover for themselves the necessity of having rules regulating behavior for the common good. The introductory paragraphs tell the student what he or she is supposed to learn in the lesson. This makes the lesson uninteresting and not very effective.

The diary itself is very interesting and its brevity, which in other lessons in the text makes for oversimplification, raises a number of questions which require reading between the lines. The need to have rules need not be imposed on the student, but rather should be something they discover for themselves through the understanding of deeper issues: seeing other people's points of view; recognizing one's selfishness; seeing the need for global understanding.

editors' note: The text unfairly pushes two conclusions on students: the people on the island should have voted (as opposed to using consensus, for example), and that they needed a leader (as opposed to, say, having different people responsible for particular tasks). The text fails to raise the questions of whether there should be punishments for not working (mentioned in the diary), and whether jobs should have been imposed by the leader without discussion or people should have had some choice of which jobs to take. On the whole, the discussion fails to take advantage of the multitude of significant questions raised in the diary which could be used to have students begin to consider the functions of government.
Strategies used to remodel

S-17 questioning deeply: raising and pursuing root or significant questions
S-19 generating or assessing solutions
S-2 developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity
S-11 comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts
S-21 reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts

Remodelled Lesson Plan S-17

The teacher and students read the diary part of the lesson together. Begin discussion by asking who wrote the diary and why. Then explore the specific events in the diary:

- Why did the signal group go swimming? What would have happened if a boat came along while they were swimming? Should they have gone swimming? What should they have done?
- What do you think was happening to the food (why was it missing)? What other possibilities, theft etc.? How could they have found out for sure?
- When the food gatherers went cave exploring was it fair that other people had to go hungry? What would have been the most fair way to handle this problem? The least fair? S-19

Now turn the discussion to the crucial point of egocentricity. Ask students who were the most selfish or shortsighted people in the group. Explore the different roles of the people — followers, leaders, rebels, people who didn’t care about anything, people who only cared about themselves, people who only cared about immediate fun. With an understanding of their egocentricity, move the students’ discussion to the need for a global and long-range point of view:

- What is the responsibility of each person to themselves and to the group? How does this story relate to your own experiences? Have you been in a situation where people weren’t doing what they needed to, and people were arguing about how to solve the problems? What happened? Why? S-2 How do you think it should have been handled? What do your examples tell us about what the people on this island could have done? S-11

At this point, students should be able to consider the usefulness of establishing rules and who should be deciding on those rules. “What ways do you think the group could have prevented the problem of no one working together on Day 26? Are rules harder to follow if you haven’t had a hand in making them? Why? Is that right?”

Have students write or describe two different scenarios for Day 35.

editors’ note: To take even more advantage of the issues raised in the diary segments and the text, the lesson could be extended in several ways. Students could explore the different positions taken on the island about how to solve the problems: Why did one say, “Who asked you to be leader anyway? We’re not on the ship anymore, you know.”? What was the point? Do we know what this
person wanted? What did each person who spoke want? Which of these ideas were the most reasonable? Least reasonable? Why?"  

- Was the captain a good leader on shore? Why or why not? Why did some people agree with the captain? Why did others resent him? What kind of person would make a good leader for these people? Why? What does this tell us about the differences between good leaders and poor ones?  

Students could practice generating and assessing solutions by getting into small groups and imagining themselves on the island. They would discuss what to do to survive and have a chance of being rescued. "What do we need? Who should do what? How could we prevent the kinds of problems the people had? What should we do if people don't do their jobs?" Groups could share their results and processes, along with the problems they had.  

Small groups of students could define the problem. The groups could then share formulations, and explore and argue for many possible ways of looking at the problem. Taking some reasonable ways of understanding the problem, students in groups can come up with possible solutions and justifications for the solutions they prefer. S-19  

- What does the text say was the problem? Did the group lack rules? A leader? Would voting solve their problem? Why or why not? What do you think is the problem? Why does the text explain the problem the way it does? S-21  

- What does this story tell us about government, its purposes and its problems?

I discover what I think by expressing my thoughts in words.
City Government in East Bend
(3rd Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- clarify the concepts of good citizenship and good public official by contrasting opposites of each
- discuss the difficulty of voting intelligently
- distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts for choosing a candidate
- discuss what sources of information a voter should rely on
- practice clarifying and critiquing claims in their texts which confuse ideals with actual practice

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
The students read about the mayor of East Bend. They read that she went on TV to try to convince citizens that some new plans will be good for the people of the city. The students read that she talks and listens to many different people, and has the help of city workers who are paid with tax money. The class discusses the importance of citizens and city workers working together. Students learn that mayors are elected and are asked whether or not the mayor is good at her job.


Critique

Although a number of important concepts are introduced in this lesson, none of them are made sufficiently clear for students at this level. Since the lesson neglects to contrast 'good citizen' with 'bad citizen', many of the important details of citizenship are overlooked. Among these is intelligent voting as the basis of a free and democratic society. As early as possible, students should begin to understand the demands of citizenship in a democracy.

Students are asked if the mayor of East Bend is a good mayor without any discussion of the criteria for judging mayors. The lesson lists some of the mayor's duties, but nowhere suggests that the list is incomplete. This lesson also confuses facts with ideals by saying that city planners listen for ideas from citizens, rather than saying that good city planners listen to citizens and take their concerns into account.

Strategies used to remodel

S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
S-10 refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications
S-31 distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
Remodelled Lesson Plan

To highlight the fundamental characteristics of good citizenship, the teacher might help students contrast ‘good citizen’ with ‘bad citizen’. Say, “Since a good citizen of a city helps the city to be better, a bad citizen either doesn’t help the city, or does things that hurt it.” Then ask the students, “What can people do to help or hurt their city?” Possible contrasting examples include the following:

Show concern for their city.
Don’t care about their city.

Work for change whenever necessary.
Don’t work for needed changes. Hinder needed changes.

Have a high regard for the function that good laws serve.
Have no regard for the laws of the city.

Work to change laws that don’t meet the peoples’ interests.
Break laws with no attempt to change them.

Keep the city clean.
Make the city messy.

Help the city government make good decisions.
Try to get city government to make bad decisions (usually for self interest).

Try to vote for the best people for each elected position.
Don’t vote, or vote without knowing or caring what is best for the city.

When voting, know what the elected position requires.
Don’t understand the nature of elected offices.

Know about the candidates.
Don’t know much about the candidates. S-14

Next, the students could focus on elections and how to decide who to vote for for mayor. Before students read, the teacher could ask them to look for what makes a mayor a good mayor. Small groups of students could share their lists, brainstorm more entries, and list opposites for each entry. The class could share all lists.

Below are some ideas that could be contrasted in the discussion. We have distinguished those which were mentioned in the text (but not contrasted) from those which were not mentioned. You may have to point out that how good a mayor is, is a matter of degree. S-10

In book

tells citizens plans
inaccessible, secretive

works hard
is lazy, takes long breaks,
inefficient

talks to lots of different citizens,
doesn’t listen or care, or cares only about friends

is a good listener, cares

works with city planners and other skilled people
doesn’t get help from relevant people

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Not in book
makes wise appointments
gives jobs to friends, appoints wrong people
is fair and honest
is unfair, dishonest, takes bribes
uses funds efficiently
misuses or wastes funds
has authority
can't get people to listen or obey
shares the citizens' goals
doesn't share citizens' goals

S-14

After this discussion, the students could talk about the difficulties of voting for a mayor. You might ask, "What do we need to know about the candidates to be able to decide who would make the best mayor? What facts are relevant? How can we find out what the candidates are like? What facts are irrelevant to our decision? (nice smile, good looking, kisses babies, funny) Why do you think so? S-31 If I want you to elect me, I'll try to make myself seem good, and make the other candidates look bad. What do candidates say they will do if elected? What kinds of things will candidates not mention? What sources can we trust to give us accurate information about candidates? Why?" S-16 The teacher could emphasize the importance of looking at the candidates’ past performances, especially evidence regarding their honesty, fairness, and efficiency.

To sum up the lesson, you could ask the following questions: Is voting wisely easy or hard? What is hard about trying to be a good citizen? Or the students could review the text and write an evaluation of it. "What does the text include? Leave out? Do we know enough about this mayor to judge whether or not she is a good mayor? S-21 Do all city planners listen to citizens? Is the claim that they do, a fact or an ideal? How could we rewrite the sentence so that it states a fact?" S-27
Knighthood

(3rd Grade)

by Linda M. Newton, Marin County Office of Education, San Rafael, CA

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
- develop intellectual perseverance by learning about the Middle Ages through books, two viewings of a movie, and discussion
- raise root issues by identifying the class structure of the Middle Ages
- practice listening by watching a movie for a definite purpose and analyzing what they hear
- relate the purpose of knighthood to the necessity for protection in the Middle Ages
- transfer the insight into class distinctions to the present day and to their lives

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract
This lesson is part of a thematic unit entitled “Old Folktales at Home” and the sub-unit “The Princess and the Pea”. The latter focuses on castles, chivalry, and heraldry. The task the students are to perform is as follows: List the stages of becoming a knight. Describe the responsibilities of each stage.

In class there are various library books the children may peruse. A film, Medieval Knights, about a boy who becomes a knight, will be viewed. The main body of information the children will need is presented in the film. It depicts two boys beginning as pages, playing jousting games and being taught by the lady of the manor. Their training in horseback-riding and tilting the quintain is emphasized. Only one of the boys becomes a knight — the one of noble birth. In advance of the film, the children are told what the task is. After viewing, the children tell what each stage is, the usual age, and the duties. The teacher records this on the board. There is a discussion which takes place as well. The thrust of the discussion is the warning aspect of knighthood. Previously, the purpose and history of castle architecture for protection have been studied. The discussion on knighthood is linked to that.

Critique

While this task is basic information (in Bloom’s taxonomy, knowledge and comprehension) it doesn’t begin to have the children think in any depth about the facts. More attention should be placed on the aspect of the warrior class as an offshoot of the needs of the people in the Middle Ages. This would include the idea of a class society and the education the different classes received. There are implications for our day and age with respect to socio-economics and prejudice.
Another idea that can be further developed regarding an aspect of protection — loyalty, since knights had to swear an oath of loyalty to their lords. Of all the themes mentioned here, this value is closest to the children’s lives.

There is no reason why this task should have to be completed in one lesson or the film shown only once. Actually, the film is full of details and omissions supporting the concept of a class society. For example, a priest is recording the boy’s history by hand and in calligraphy. Left out is who provides the food for the feast or who the lord commands. There is more to mention before viewing the film than just the task, and there is more to discuss and do afterwards that could enrich the students’ understandings of the task. The seeds for future discussions on personal actions are embedded in these concepts.

**Strategies used to remodel**

*S-8* developing intellectual perseverance  
*S-17* questioning deeply; raising and pursuing root or significant questions  
*S-22* listening critically: the art of silent dialogue  
*S-16* evaluating the credibility of sources of information  
*S-6* developing intellectual courage  
*S-7* developing intellectual good faith or integrity

**Remodelled Lesson Plan s-8**

A day or so before viewing the film, the children will brainstorm the terms people were called during the time of castles (king, queen, prince, knight, duke, etc.). From that list it is possible to put at least some of them in order. The kind of order will have to be elicited, but it will probably be in hierarchical order. At that time, the word ‘hierarchy’ would be introduced. Some positions left out would be elicited by the teacher, such as, “Who grew the food or repaired items, etc.?” The terms could then be supplied by the teacher. The question of why the children didn’t know the term ‘serf’ would be explored. (They weren’t important; they weren’t leaders; they aren’t interesting; they didn’t lead fascinating lives; etc.) This can’t be left like this. The truth of their answers needs to be addressed by asking: How do you know they aren’t important, etc.? What was the importance of serfs? What would the kings and queens have eaten and worn if there hadn’t been serfs? How do you know about kings and queens? (There are lots of fairy tales and movies about them, etc.) The difference in the excitement level can be seen along with the idea that we hear a lot about our present leaders in the news but not about ourselves and neighbors, generally speaking. This establishes the idea of classes. *S-17*

On the day of the film, prior to viewing it, the children will be asked what they already know about knights (fighters, wear armor, etc.). Another question to tie the above lesson with the film would be: Where were they in the hierarchy? Then there would be the questions that would prepare the children for the film. “What did knights do when there wasn’t a war? Would they want a war to start? Who did they fight for? How could the king be sure the knight would fight only for him?” To assist them in developing critical listening skills, the children would be told to look for the answers to these questions and for the stages in becoming a knight and their responsibilities.
After the film, the discussion could begin with checking the answers to the above questions. Regarding the last question, the children in the third grade usually do not know the word ‘loyalty’ and their understanding of the concept is limited. First, the part of the knight taking an oath would be looked at. It could be likened to the Pledge of Allegiance. The synonyms of loyalty and faithful are helpful: true, constant, devoted, and trustworthy. They suggest a long attachment to a person, country or cause. Of these words, ‘trustworthy’ would mean the most to third graders and could be built on. In any case, connecting the concept with loyalty to a friend could be made. “What do you do to show a friend or your family that you’re loyal?” The children could write and share these.

Depending on the attention span of the children, the next part of the lesson could take place at this time or on another day. A chart or mind-map could be used to list the stages of knighthood. It would include: name of the stage, age, responsibilities, studies, teacher(s), and social class. These categories could be elicited from the children. Then the children could write a sentence summarizing each stage. At that point they might be ready to draw some conclusions about knighthood: What sort of people made the best knights? What else besides fighting were knights prepared for (what other jobs)? Why do you think the people of the Middle Ages needed a warrior class? What do you think about having a warrior class? **S-22**

Another day, the film might be shown again to refresh everyone’s memory. The purpose of this lesson is to examine a class society. Twice before classes have been introduced and discussed. The children could be told to pay special attention to who gets to do what in the film. Afterwards, questions can be asked that help the children see this. **S-22** “In the film, who wrote the history? (priest) Who did he tell about? Why? (He knew him; he liked him) What does that tell us about writers of movies or histories? (They write about what they know and are interested in.) Why didn’t a serf write the story? Why didn’t the priest write about a serf?” Some of the class distinctions can be made here regarding education and separation of classes. “What might the higher classes think of the lower classes since they were uneducated and did the farming and other labor? (dumb, not able to be in charge) How do you know?” **S-16**

As these are delved into, the elements of transfer to the present can be brought in. “How is any of this like our life today? What do you think of people who do different kinds of jobs? What classes do we have? Do we have a warrior class? Do we have people who are uneducated? Have we ever? (slaves) What has happened to the children and grandchildren of slaves? What kinds of people don’t you want to associate with? Should they be in a separate social class and treated differently? Why or why not?” **S-6**

Children are usually very sensitized to the value of fairness. They can now examine their own practices in being fair. They could write in their journals about how they exclude certain classmates and the effects this has on those classmates. **S-7** At another time this lesson can be used as background for discussions on Martin Luther King and Abraham Lincoln and what their lives stood for.
Problem Solving

(3rd Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:
  - generate and assess solutions by applying a three step problem solving technique
  - clarify the issue
  - practice suspending judgment when they have insufficient information
  - gather and use information to help solve problems
  - evaluate proposed solutions through dialectical reasoning

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

Students read about some of the problems caused by un-planned growth in the city of East Bend. They review five steps for solving problems, and mention possible solutions. Then they read different citizens’ ideas about city problems, and see how some ideas conflict. They discuss the importance of people planning together.

The steps for problem solving are:

1. State the problem clearly.
2. Make a list of possible solutions.
3. Gather and examine information.
4. Choose the solution that seems best.
5. Test the chosen solution to find out if it really solves the problem.


Critique

This lesson is typical of the lessons on problem solving we reviewed. It provides a technique for problem solving, yet never applies it or has the students apply it to problems. At most, in any given problem solving lesson, the text or student applies two of the five steps. Students can’t be expected to learn how to use a technique which they never practice in its entirety. Although learning to apply the problem solving technique to a city problem would be too difficult for children, they could use it first on problems within their experience.

Furthermore, the technique they suggest has significant problems. Although step 1 of this technique calls on students to state the problem, it fails to recognize that the first statement of a problem is seldom best. A problem cannot be stated accurately until the relevant information has been reviewed. In the above technique, information gathering is left until step 3. Stating the problem requires a process in which the problem becomes increasingly clearer in the light
of accumulated information and analysis. The more completely, clearly, and accurately the problem is formulated, the more effective is the discussion of its solutions. Moreover, information gathering should include finding out the results of others’ attempts to solve similar problems. No problem solving lesson we reviewed suggested this idea. Discussion of possible solutions should not precede information gathering. If we don’t know what’s going on or why, how can we suggest reasonable, helpful solutions? By ignoring this point, the standard approach inadvertently undermines students’ insight into the need for historical background.

Also, the technique fails to mention the criteria by which solutions are to be judged, except that of “seeming to be the best”. As vague and arbitrary a criterion as this, leads students to believe that they have evaluated solutions when they have not. Calling a solution “best” implies a comparison to other solutions, a comparison that presupposes criteria. Furthermore, students are asked to judge which solution is best without first considering “best for whom”. Thus their method encourages students to assume one perspective, at the expense of considering others. Therefore, the technique in this lesson misses the opportunity to have students practice fairmindedness, dialectical reasoning, and the analysis of issues.

**Strategies used to remodel**

*S-19* generating or assessing solutions  
*S-13* clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs  
*S-5* developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment  
*S-29* noting significant similarities and differences  
*S-26* reasoning dialectically: evaluating perspectives, interpretations, or theories

**Remodelled Lesson Plan S-19**

We developed an alternative set of problem solving steps, to substitute for the five-step technique outlined in the original lesson.

1. **Define the Problem:** Make a provisional statement of the problem. Raise questions about the details and causes of the problem. Are any concepts unclear? What kinds of facts do we need? How can we find these facts? Is anything being evaluated? If so, what are the standards we will use to evaluate? Gather and examine the information needed to settle those questions. Restate the problem more clearly in light of that information. Continue this process until you can answer questions like the following: What, exactly, is wrong? What happens in the situation? Why is this bad? What causes this to happen? Who and what are involved? How do the others involved see the problem? What other problems are related to this and how?

2. **Analyze the Problem:** Reflect on the final formulation of the problem and answer the following questions: What would each person involved consider necessary to solve the problem? How will we know when we’ve solved the problem? What further facts do we need to know to pick a solution?

3. **Decide on a Solution:** Find out how others have tried to solve similar problems. Brainstorm possible solutions. Compare your situation to those of others. In what ways are their situations like and unlike yours? What were the effects of their solutions? Would any of these solutions satisfy everyone involved in the problem?
If not, have students argue with each other about different solutions. They should listen and respond to arguments for incompatible solutions. In the discussion, students should point out and evaluate their own, and others' assumptions, use of concepts, and the implications and consequences of the proposed solutions. The students should listen carefully to others and modify their ideas in light of the strengths of opposing arguments. Stress the idea that this is not a contest among solutions; rather students should look together for a solution, or combination of solutions, that minimizes bad consequences and maximizes relief from the problem.

Before students attempt to apply this problem solving technique to adult problems, they should practice applying it to some of their own problems. After students have discussed a number of problems they typically encounter, the class should decide on one for problem solving practice. Below is an example of how the problem solving technique might be applied to a student problem.

**Provisional statement of the problem:** My brother and I fight over T.V.

**Step 1) questions to define the problem:** When do you fight? When do you not fight (what shows do you both like)? What happens when a fight occurs; what do you say? What do you do? What does he say? What does he do? What is the result of the fighting? How do the fights end? Why don't you like the situation? How do you think your brother sees the problem?

Reformulations will vary, depending on the answers given to these questions. Here is an example of one possible clearer formulation of the problem.

**Reformulation of problem:** It makes my brother and I unhappy when, on Saturday mornings and Tuesday nights, we argue, wrestle, and push each other around, hurt one another, and miss parts, or all of our favorite shows. S–13

**Step 2) questions to analyze the problem:** What do you and your brother agree is necessary to solve the problem? What do you both think a fair solution would mean? Is there anything else we need to know about the situation? Which shows are most important to each of you? Least important? What might one brother do while the other is watching his favorite show? (This lesson will require a homework assignment at this point, in order for the student to gather information. "We can't solve this problem until we have the answers to our questions.") S–5

**Step 3) Deciding on a solution:** Does anyone know of a problem similar to this one? Was it solved? How? How is that situation like this one? Unlike it? What changes in the solution are required by the differences between the situations? S–29

Then the class could brainstorm other possible solutions: How do you think it could be solved? (Put all solutions on the board. These may include, for instance, giving up less favorite shows to watch the most favorite, alternating each week, or getting another special privilege for giving up a favorite show.) Have the class discuss the most likely consequences of the solutions offered. The teacher may
have students role-play the parts of the two brothers discussing the suggested solutions, or allow two or more students to argue for their favorite solutions. Students could form groups to argue for solutions. S-26

Then, the child involved can decide which solution to try first. If it works, the lesson is finished with his report to the class. If not, another solution should be tried.

Finally, sum up using the following questions: What did we do? (First, next, last?) What was important for us to keep in mind? Which parts were easy? Hard? Why? Did we solve the problem? Would this solution work for everyone?

After the class has used the problem solving steps on student problems, you could introduce the idea that cities also have problems. Have the students read the text. Ask them to describe the problem. Ask how it is like and unlike the child's problem. You may point out important similarities and differences which they missed. S-29 Then attempt to apply the problem solving technique to this problem. You could summarize this lesson by using the same questions as the sum-up above.

Or students might write an essay in which they argue for a solution to the city problem, or in which they compare the personal problem to the city problem.

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Teachers who can formulate and articulate what attitudes and behaviors they are trying to foster, why they are important, and how they foster them in their classrooms, are more likely to be able to create an appropriate atmosphere and to structure classroom activities that lead to good student thinking.
An American City with a Problem

(3rd Grade)

Objectives of the remodelled lesson

The students will:

- engage in dialogical and dialectical thinking as they analyze and evaluate various arguments about a low income housing project
- clarify the basic issue and various claims made regarding the project
- use critical vocabulary while examining perspectives, assumptions, and assessing reasons
- distinguish what they know from what they don’t know about the claims made and consider how they might find out, thereby practicing intellectual humility

Original Lesson Plan

Abstract

This unit focuses on a low-income housing project built in Forest Hills to move some poor people out of a New York ghetto. First, the students discuss the problem of over-crowding, learn what ghettos are, and discuss why people would want to leave them. Then the students learn about the Forest Hills plan, and discuss why Forest Hills was probably the chosen site for new housing. They discuss various forms of aid and choose which kind of aid they would prefer receiving.

Next, the students read what some residents of Forest Hills said about why they didn’t want the project there. The students are asked to determine which statements are “facts” and which are “opinions”. They are then asked if they agree that it was unfair that Forest Hills residents weren’t consulted about the project.

The students read what some people outside Forest Hills said about the project. Students are asked if people outside Forest Hills have a right to an opinion about the project. The class discusses the needs and wants of ghetto and Forest Hills dwellers, points out conflicts, and discusses possible compromises. Students are encouraged to come to their own conclusions about the worth of the project. Then the class discusses other big city problems.

In an activity on prejudice, the teacher explains how the two parts of the word, ‘pre’ and ‘judge’ together mean “judging something or someone before you know much about him, her, or it.” A student is asked to read aloud the following passage: “Many people in the ghetto are black. Almost everyone in Forest Hills is white. Those people in Forest Hills are just prejudiced against black people.” Then they are asked to rewrite the last sentence without using the word ‘prejudice’. In an alternative activity on prejudice, students are asked to read the same quote then make lists of two or three kinds of people or foods they are prejudiced against. The teacher encourages an open discussion of the list, in which students try to convince others that their prejudices are in error.

Critique

We chose this lesson because it provides students with practice discussing a real social issue that involves arguments from more than one point of view. The empathy building exercises help students appreciate the seriousness of the problem by seeing it as those most affected might see it. Although the activities have such headings and objectives as “analyzing and evaluating arguments”, they do not require students to rationally consider and judge the arguments. Instead, students are asked only to “distinguish facts from opinions”, to guess who said what, and to agree or disagree with one idea.

This lesson inadvertently discourages critical analysis and evaluation by asking students to classify all statements as fact or opinion, thereby implying that facts are true (and therefore there is no room for discussion) and everything else is (arbitrary) opinion and discussion is pointless.

The text requires students to state who said what with no discussion of the possible relevance of this question. For instance, if we know that the person who said, “The government won’t let criminals into the apartments” was a government official, the statement could be taken as an expression of policy. Whereas a ghetto dweller would probably not be in a position to know government intentions or procedures on this matter. Furthermore, the question misleads students into believing that they can tell who said what, when, in most cases, they can only guess.

Although the text includes a number of arguments, students discuss only one. Therefore, they are not in a strong position to evaluate the project when asked to do so. Of that argument, students are simply asked whether they agree or disagree with it, with no discussion of its worth or the justification of their reactions to it.

Students do not apply any useful tools of analysis or evaluation, such as examining assumptions or judging relevance. They do not discuss how to determine the truth or reasonableness of the various ideas presented. Nor do they discuss the relevance of the arguments to the main issue. They don’t discuss the two points of view in relation to each other, and therefore they get no practice in comparing or evaluating opposing perspectives.

Finally, the text requires students to come to a conclusion regarding the housing project when, given the students lack of knowledge of the relevant facts, it should be encouraging the students to hold their conclusions tentatively.

Strategies used to remodel

- S-26 reasoning dialectically: evaluating perspectives, interpretations, or theories
- S-18 analyzing or evaluating arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or theories
- S-30 examining or evaluating assumptions
- S-33 giving reasons and evaluating evidence and alleged facts
- S-13 clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs
- S-25 reasoning dialogically: comparing perspectives, interpretations, or theories
- S-5 developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment
- S-35 exploring implications and consequences
- S-34 recognizing contradictions
- S-28 thinking precisely about thinking: using critical vocabulary
- S-3 exercising fairmindedness
Remodelled Lesson Plan S-26

There are a number of ways to use the arguments given in this chapter: each student could read and note down comments to share in small groups or with the whole class, small groups could read together and share their initial ideas and perhaps answer some prepared questions, or the class as a whole could read and discuss the arguments before writing or small group discussion.

Below, we quote each argument from the original lesson and offer some discussion questions.

Ideas from Forest Hills: S-18

Argument 1: “Why did they decide to build those apartment buildings here? No one asked us if we wanted them. That’s not fair!”

Questions: Is it fair to move a lot of people into a neighborhood without asking the people who already live there? How is this situation like and unlike other times people move to a new neighborhood? What does this person assume? S-30 How do you feel when someone makes a decision that affects you, without asking what you think? If you lived in a nice area like Forest Hills and learned about the project, what would you think about it? Why? How is this argument related to the main issue? Is this a good reason to abandon the project? Why or why not? S-33

Argument 2: “Think of all those people moving into those big buildings! Our subways and schools will be even more crowded than they are now!”

Questions: Is this a good reason to abandon the project? Why or why not?

Argument 3: “Most crime in New York is in the ghettos. If those people move here, there will be more crime here. I think we should help poor people, but I’m afraid of them.”

Questions: Is there more crime in the ghetto? Why? What does this argument assume? Are these good assumptions? S-30 How could we find out whether crime is likely to go up? (Here, if the students do not think of it themselves, the teacher could point out that we could find out what has happened in similar cases.) S-13 If the claim is true, does that mean that the project should be dropped? Who is this person afraid of and why? Is this a good reason to drop the project? Why or why not? S-33

Argument 4: “I don’t believe in moving people out of the ghettos. We should spend that money to fix up the old buildings in the ghettos.”

Questions: What reasons might this person give for his idea that money is better spent on other ways of helping the people living in ghettos? (Note that this issue is related to the questions students were earlier asked [see abstract] about what form of assistance they would prefer. Point out the relationship between the answer given to that question, and agreement or disagreement about this point.) How is this question related to the main issue?

Ideas From Outside Forest Hills S-25

Argument 5: “Many people in the ghetto are black. Almost everyone in Forest Hills is white. Those people in Forest Hills are just prejudiced against black people.”
Questions: What does this person assume? Is it a good assumption? How could we find out if this idea is true? S-30 Suppose we learned that the claims in arguments 1–4 were false. How would we find out whether prejudice was the reason for the Forest Hills people’s response? (If they were prejudiced, they wouldn’t change their conclusions in light of new evidence.) Does this argument refute 1–4? How does this argument relate to the issue? Is this a good reason to continue the project? S-33

Argument 6: “People in other parts of New York will feel just the same way as the people in Forest Hills. Everyone thinks the apartment buildings are a good idea. But nobody wants them in his or her neighborhood.”

Questions: Is this true? Probably true? Unlikely? S-5 What does it imply? What follows from it? (This person may think that since no one wants the project in their area, the complaints of the Forest Hills people should be ignored.) If the claims are true, what do they mean for the project? Should it be abandoned, or should the Forest Hills people’s wishes be ignored? Why? S-35 (Discuss this argument in relation to arguments 1–4.)

Argument 7: “People in Forest Hills are afraid of black people and poor people. But most of them don’t know any black people or poor people. After the apartment buildings are built, the black people and the white people will get to know each other. Then they will like each other.”

Questions: What is the difference between this argument and argument 5? (The prediction that Forest Hills people will change.) What does this person assume? S-30 How can we find out if this person is probably right? (Related cases, and studies on people of different races living near each other.) S-13 Is this argument relevant to the issue? How? Do we have any evidence of the truth of this claim? Suppose these claims were true, why would the Forest Hills people be afraid? What assumption would they have to be making that would lead to fear, as opposed to some other emotion? S-30

Argument 8: “They won’t let criminals into the apartment buildings. They will check everyone who wants to live there. People in Forest Hills won’t have to worry about more crime because of those buildings.”

Questions: Is this true? How could we know? S-5 What argument does this contradict? (Argument 3) S-34 How could the government know which people are criminals? What does this argument assume? S-30 How does this argument relate to the main issue?

Argument 9: “I live in a ghetto now, but I would like to live in a place like Forest Hills. That part of New York is much prettier and safer than here. But I would be afraid to go there. Those Forest Hills people act dangerous. I’m afraid they would throw a rock through my window if I lived there.”

Questions: Does this person have good reason to be afraid? Why or why not? What does this person assume? Is it a good assumption? S-30 How does this argument relate to argument 7? To argument 4? Does either side have good reason to be afraid? Why or why not? S-33 How does this point relate to the main issue? What does it imply for the issue? S-35
**Tying it together S-26**

Next, have the students discuss the following questions (write their answers on the board): What is the issue? Is this question clear? How could we rephrase it? What is the purpose of the project? Is the purpose worthwhile? What facts are relevant? What kinds of facts do we need to know to decide if the project would achieve its purpose? S-28 How could someone get these facts? Can you think of any problems this project might cause? Can you think of a better project than this? S-13 You might also ask students if there are any important ideas overlooked in the above arguments.

The students could discuss the relevance and relative importance of the different arguments: Which arguments do you think are strongest? Why? Is this project worthwhile? With which perspective do you most agree? Why? Discuss at length. If a student doesn’t listen to another, that student could try to restate the other’s argument. S-3 Encourage students to reach a compromise, or come up with a better plan.

Finally, the students could write an essay stating and defending their positions on the question: Is the Forest Hills project a good idea? Point out that assuming that you know more than you do weakens your argument. Encourage students to qualify their claims and use ‘if’. S-5
One cannot develop one's fairmindedness, for example, without actually thinking fairmindedly. One cannot develop one's intellectual independence, without actually thinking independently. This is true of all the essential critical thinking traits, values, or dispositions. They are developmentally embedded in thinking itself.