

# social studies and the young learner

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## editor's notes



**Dr. Sherry L. Field**

The theme of this issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner* is “Reading Challenges.” Are students learning about George Washington’s historic battles? Are they discussing current events? Are they discovering a children’s game from China? Or are they articulating the rules of their own sidewalk games? In all of these scenarios, students can be challenged to extend their reading and critical thinking skills while they are learning social studies content.

The first article, “Letters from Trenton, 1776: Teaching with Primary Sources,” describes one of Theresa McCormick’s inquiry investigations, designed for fifth grade students, which “provides real and meaningful reading experiences through primary documents. Groups of students examined historical eyewitness accounts (in newspaper articles, diaries, and letters) of the Battle of Trenton during the American Revolution.”

In “Rethinking Classroom Management,” Devon Metzger observes that “well-planned lessons that include engaging, relevant, and active student involvement greatly influence positive student behavior. Poorly planned lessons, dull learning activities, irrelevant content and passive student involvement are excellent predictors of student misbehavior.”

In “Childhood as a Topic of Social Studies,” Janet Alleman and Jere Brophy illustrate how a unit of study on childhood can provide “a natural segue into substantive social studies content that will draw heavily from the social science disciplines and deepen students’ understanding and appreciation of their community.” Such a unit focuses “on the idea that all people share some common experiences as they progress through and beyond childhood, yet everyone is also unique in some ways.”

Nancy P. Gallavan has a similar message in her article “Integrating Time, Place, and Play.” She describes activities that “focus on the concepts of time (history—games played by children in the past) and place (geography—games played in other parts of the world), as well as the social and cultural connections that can be made about various forms of play.”

In the Pullout section, Raymond C. Jones and Steven S. Lapham offer “How to Do It: Teaching Reading Skills.” They give six specific examples showing how social studies teachers can fully exploit the reading-related features of their methods and materials so that students’ literacy is enhanced and improved.

In the first Children’s Literature piece, “The Joe Joe Series: A Culturally Responsive Resource,” Nichelle C. Boyd and Kantaylieni Hill-Clarke examine, through fictional but realistic stories, how “students are introduced to the real accomplishments of a variety of influential African Americans.” The students also witness Joe Joe, a primary-school-age boy, “taking the knowledge and inspiration he has gained from learning about historical figures and applying them to challenges in his own life.”

In a second Children’s Literature piece, Alden W. Craddock recommends a handful of books in “Rediscovering Ukraine in the Spring.” These books serve as resources for teaching about a different nation, Ukraine, which “has experienced great episodes of turmoil, but also enjoyed periods of abundance, enlightenment and enrichment that have produced unique and rich cultural traditions.”

Finally, in Perspectives, “Bones of Contention: Teaching about Controversial Issues,” Elizabeth Hinde gives her opinions and suggestions with regard to discussing current events, which are bound to be part of children’s concerns and conversations these days.

So put on your reading glasses and get ready to travel to distant lands, past events, or centers of current controversy. It’s time to wake our students up with the challenges of social studies! 🌍