

Our conversation with you about “It’s a Small World”...



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We selected the title of this issue with more than a little irony. Upon hearing the phrase “It’s a small world,” it’s hard not to find oneself humming the familiar tune and picturing the animated children of the world dolls from the Disney attraction, created in 1964 for the World’s Fair, and a fixture at Disneyland since 1966.

Interestingly, this soundtrack was originally to feature the national anthems of the countries represented throughout the ride all playing all at once; however this “cacophony” was rejected by Walt Disney in favor of his desire for “one song that can be easily translated into many languages and be played as a round.”¹ The ride travels through a variety of rooms, each with different peoples dressed in native costumes (pre-refurbishment in 2009, the two American characters were a cowboy and an Indian), singing the theme song in their native tongue. In the final room, representatives from all of the cultures of the world sing the song in English in unison.

The history of this song and ride, whose slogan promises “the happiest cruise that ever sailed the seven seas,”² turns out to be instructive for teachers of global issues. The rejection of multiple national anthems in favor of one sing-song tune in English and stereotypical depictions of peoples of the world reminds us of the importance of helping students arrive at more thoughtful and accurate understandings of our diverse world.

As the articles in this issue reveal, it is possible to help elementary children shatter stereotypes and connect to global issues in ways that they can understand. In addition, sustained study of the world can bring out the global citizen in our students.

In “**Yellow Ducks Overboard: A Lesson in Geography and World Citizenship**,” Paul Nagel and Donna Beauboeuf demonstrate, with the help of a hands-on model of ocean flotsam, that first graders are able to recognize their power as citizens of a global community to help solve big problems.

The article “**Little by Little: Global Citizenship through Local Action Inspired by Wangari Maathai**” by Erica M. Christie, Sarah E. Montgomery, and Jessica Staudt describes

how fourth grade students use the example of the Kenyan Nobel laureate to frame their thinking about acting to better their own communities.

Laura J. Quaynor and Carrie Hamilton emphasize the importance of gathering varied cultural information and making community and home connections when “**Providing a Global Education for Refugee Students: Activities about Personal Budgeting**.”

Jeannette Balantic and Erica Fregosi’s short piece “**Strengthening Student Thinking and Writing about World History**,” illustrates that writing about world history necessitates thinking critically, for “history is messy,” and that’s part of what makes it interesting. The **Pullout** consists of three accompanying handouts and a rubric.

Merry Merryfield’s piece, “**Four Strategies for Teaching Open-Mindedness**,” highlights methods that she has learned from exemplary global educators. “The true test of progress is when students are no longer satisfied with hearing one point of view,” she states.

In “**Learning Global Citizenship: Students and Teachers in Belize and the U.S. Take Action Together**,” Sara Fry, Shari Griffin, and Jean Kirshner describe a community-to-community service-learning project that has turned into an ongoing relationship between teachers and children at schools in Colorado and Belize.

Ben Jacobs’ book review, “**Around the World in 80 Pages: Notable Trade Books through the Lens of ‘Cosmopolitan Education**,” reminds us, elementary teachers and students, alike, to examine critically the pictures books we read that depict children around the world.

These articles provide examples of classrooms that foster critical thinking about the responsibilities of global citizenship, which, in turn, prompts us to think critically about how to best prepare students for their lives in their global community:

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- What kinds of concrete experiences have you been able to give primary students to allow them to recognize their power as citizens of a global community?
- How satisfied are you with students' writing about global history and issues?
- What strategies have you found to be successful in raising the level of students' thinking and writing about global history and issues?
- To what extent do you provide your students with opportunities to engage in cross-cultural interaction?
- To what extent do you and your students seek out non-American sources for information on people and events around the world?
- How do you handle stereotyping when it arises?
- To what extent do you look to global role models for your students?
- What global figures have had an influence on your students?
- To what extent do you use multiple biographies and sources to explore people who made change in their communities?

- What children's literature do you find to be most effective in supporting the idea of children as citizens of the world?
- What resources do you use to help children understand their own place in the world while also appreciating the place of others?
- How well do you know your students?
- How competent do you feel in ESL instruction?

The New York State Department of Education has created useful resources for third grade teachers "World Communities: What is a Culture?" at www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/grade3.

We look forward to the thoughtful conversation about teaching in our small world, but, unlike the ride at Disneyland, we look forward to transcending stereotypes and honoring a variety of perspectives at NCSS Connections. Please join us!

—Andrea and Jeannette 🌍

Notes

1. "It's A Small World by Disneyland Children's Sing-Along Chorus," Song Facts, www.songfacts.com.
2. Dave Smith, *Disney A to Z: The Official Disney Encyclopedia* (New York: Disney Editions, 2006), 354.



INTERNATIONAL **SO**CIAL **ST**UDIES CONFERENCE 2013

Understanding the Near East and the dramatic events of the Arab Spring are important content for today's social studies classrooms. Whether it is the democratic revolutions in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia or the push for reforms in Morocco, the people of these North African countries have taken a stand for freedom and democracy. This is just the latest chapter in the centuries-old history of human occupation of these lands that stretch back before the Roman Empire.

Join NCSS, in partnership with Maryville University of St. Louis and the Moroccan Center for Civic Education, in Fez, Morocco next summer for **Education for Democracy and the Arab World** to get a first-hand understanding of the issues and region.

The conference will feature speakers from the Middle East, expert panels, breakout sessions, tours of world heritage sites, school visits, cultural activities, and networking opportunities. For all the details, and to register, visit

www.socialstudies.org/morocco2013