

Integrating Literature and the Arts Using Internet Resources

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The theme of this issue is usually the most difficult for me to develop each year. Two years ago, I recommended websites of world-renowned museums and libraries where students and teachers could take virtual field trips. This year, as I looked through the literature and relevant websites, I decided to go with the basics. I believe these sites can help both in-service and pre-service teachers effectively integrate literature and the arts into their social studies instruction. For teachers who already spend time finding and using Internet resources on this topic, some of the recommended sites may seem too basic. Even so, I think you'll find some interesting and exciting websites to consider.

Social Studies through Literature

www.udel.edu/dssep/articles/fosterwar_article.htm

This site features an article by Carole Wilkinson, a teacher-in-residence at the University of Delaware Social Studies Education Project several years ago. It includes a brief rationale for using literature in the classroom, discusses the challenges facing teachers who try to use the strategy, and presents a very well-planned lesson using a book (*Foster's War*) in grades 4-5. Ms. Wilkinson illustrates several ideas and approaches using this book. She recommends an excellent writing assignment that calls on higher level thinking skills and creativity. Finally, she includes a list of several other books relevant to history and civics.

Cooperative Children's Book Center

www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/areyoua/k12teacher.asp

This is a superb website for teachers at all grade levels and in all subject areas. It is part of the University of Wisconsin's School of Education Library. The rather elaborate URL takes you to the resources page. Click on the "Original booklists" link, then "Complete List" and you will find a wonderful array of lists on dozens of topics including "Books about Family," "Peace and Justice," and "Multiculturalism." Each list contains 40 carefully-selected books. Click

on the title and you will find a synopsis and the recommended grade level. This is a great service to Wisconsin educators, and teachers everywhere can benefit from their research and recommendations.

The ABC's: A Bibliography of Children's Books with Social Studies Themes

www.michigan.gov/documents/Social_Studies_Trade_Books_42259_7.pdf

This 77-page PDF document lists trade books that are keyed to social studies themes. The themes include civics, core democratic values, economics, geography, and history. It is a very good list with two drawbacks: (1) the book descriptions do not indicate grade level; and (2) since it is a PDF document, you can't click on a link to get a more detailed book description. This document was developed by the Michigan Department of Education.

Opening Doors to Social Studies with Children's Literature

<http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/TLresources/units/byrnes-literature/lit.html>

It's great to find a neat link that's been developed by a friend and colleague whom I see at the NCSS Annual Meeting. The link takes you directly to one of many lesson plan compilations by students of Deborah Byrnes, professor of social studies education at Utah State University. All of these

lesson plans were created by students in a 400-level graduate methods course. They are well designed and could be useful to pre-service instructors and students as models as well as practical lessons that can be adapted and used by classroom teachers. They are limited to grades K-6. If you click around, you can find more of Deborah's lesson plan compilations on topics such as Africa and Human Rights.

Open Wide, Look Inside

<http://blog.richmond.edu/openwidelook-inside/>

I think this is the first time that I've recommended a Blog rather than a traditional website. I had to search for the name of the Blog's creator—Dr. Patricia Stohr-Hunt, professor of education at the University of Richmond. Dr. Stohr-Hunt does a great job discussing and integrating poetry into the social studies curriculum. I've always felt that poetry was the most difficult type of literature to integrate into social studies, but she does it successfully. A list of other resources and links is posted alongside the page. The "Social Studies and KidLit" link offers some excellent links to integrating literature into social studies. This page could be a one-stop source for this topic.

Next, I highlight some web resources for integrating visual and performing arts into the curriculum.

University of California Museum of Paleontology

www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/exhibits/index.php

Many museums provide virtual field trips and many other resources available via the World Wide Web for classroom teachers and college-level teacher edu-

cators. Later, I'll describe a website that includes a large listing of these sites, but I want to highlight a couple that especially impressed me. They have several current exhibits that I would have certainly used when I taught world history. Among them is one that could be controversial—"Understanding Evolution"—but I thought it was fascinating. One of the most useful exhibits to teachers is titled "Explorations through Time." It has some very interesting lessons. One, "What did *T. rex* Taste Like?", helps students learn about classifying living creatures and "involves students in posing hypotheses about past life based on evolutionary history."

The Smart Museum at the University of Chicago

<http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/smart-kids/home.html>

What a fun museum this is to visit on the Internet! The above link, takes you to the "Smart Kid's" section. You are welcomed by four students of upper middle school and high school age. When you click on the girl on the left, she takes you to meet an artist, visit a studio, and see some great art. The boy next to her shows you different ways to look at art and how to tell a story using art. The art includes photography, sculpture, painting, and other genres. Teachers can use the "Hands On" art activities to look at the "Artwork of the Month" and see how it relates to history and social studies.

Virtual Field Trips Open Doors for Multimedia Lessons Electronic Visits

www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/TopicoftheWeek.html

This is an article from a recent issue of *Education Week* that discusses virtual field trips to museums and similar sites. A good list of potential virtual field trips in social studies is included in the article. However, the article focuses on Scott Mandel, creator of the "Teachers Helping Teachers" website which is certainly worth your review. It's located at www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/. Clearly, Mr. Mandel is making a living from his

writing and consulting activities, but he has an excellent set of social studies lesson plans at varying grade levels. All of the lessons are submitted by classroom teachers from around the country; so, if you have a great lesson plan that you would like to share, here's your chance.

The Kennedy Center ARTSEDGE


<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/>

I'm closing this column with what I think is the most interesting and useful site of the set. The above link takes you directly to the teacher resources available through the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. But the arts aren't limited to just the performing arts. Click on the "Lessons" link and you will find a dizzying array of very well-designed lesson plans. You choose the type of art—dance, music, theater, or the visual arts. Then select "social studies" and the grade level. There are 167 lessons fitting those criteria. In "What Does the Song Really Say?", students listen to, sing, and read the lyrics to various African American spirituals. They learn the coded messages of the lyrics and the purpose of these codes. Students then write and perform their own songs with coded messages. In another lesson package, "Uncovering the Legacy of Ancient Greece" (again appealing to my world history nature), there are five 45-minute lessons. The lessons are tough, but would work very well in an Advanced Placement program. Finally, there is a section titled WebLinks that provides teachers and students with direct links to some outstanding organizations and agencies that have resources for integrating all kinds of art into the social studies curriculum. The link titled "Cleopatra: A Multimedia Guide to the Ancient World" is very creative and examines art from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Italy. Lesson plans keyed to specific curriculum areas are available for teachers to download and use. All lesson plans specify how they meet national arts standards.

As I've said before, one criterion I use when selecting a site for the column is how many additional interesting and useful

links they include that can further your own exploration of these topics. Many of the ones discussed above meet this goal. While I don't always look forward to the arts/literature issue, the 2009 version has been enjoyable to both research and write.

On another topic, I would like to recommend that you take a look at Edutopia (www.edutopia.org). Founded by filmmaker George Lucas—of *Star Wars*—one of the world's richest people, this site proposes improving the U.S. educational system with a set of "Core Concepts." It presents research, implementation strategies, and success stories about (1) Project Learning; (2) Integrated Studies; (3) Social and Emotional Learning; (4) Technology Integration; (5) Teacher Development; and (6) Comprehensive Assessment.

If you listen to National Public Radio, you may have heard this site mentioned as a frequent underwriter of NPR news broadcasts. I like this site because many of the recommended strategies and teaching methods remind me of the "New Social Studies" era of the 60s, 70s and 80s—when project-based learning and integrated studies were both widespread and effective. Being a social studies teacher back then was fun and both personally and professionally rewarding. Lucas recently testified before Congress, advocating discounts for schools using Internet resources. Check out his site—there are free training modules, videos of teachers and students using the strategies, and some neat opportunities for professional development. 

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