

PASSPORT TO THE MILLENNIUM

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In the grammar school I attended in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was no such thing as Social Studies. Instead, what we had were separate classes in History and Geography. What I recall about these two subjects is that each had big books, boring passages, and endless facts. I remember in seventh grade having to get a new bookbag halfway through the school year because my geography book had burst the buckle on my old bookbag. And I can still see myself sitting at my vanity table every June before final exams, cramming facts into my head for the test the next day, doing very well on the test, and then forgetting the information the day after that.

Many years have passed since my grammar-school days, and now I am a teacher of Social Studies. I am also a lover of travel. I find nothing more fascinating than researching the places I plan to visit and finding out about the people who inhabit these lands. As a teacher, I believe it is my mission to bring material to life for my students. I don't want my students to have memories of Social Studies as a meaningless myriad of minutia. And so I developed the program, "Passport to the Millennium," in the hopes of bringing the study of the world and its people alive for my students.

"Passport to Millennium" is a year-long social studies program that immerses students in world cultures, introduces them to the concept of the global village, and fosters an appreciation of diversity and a realization of similarities among all people. Students become *world explorers* as they *travel* "Around the World in 180 Days," investigating the history, geography, culture, and economy of the people of Mexico, Southeast Asia, Europe, and West Africa. Students at all achievement levels are captivated and challenged by this multimedia, multiple intelligence approach to discovering their neighbors in the global village.

During each marking period, students explore a different region of the world. They begin their journey, as any traveler would, by having their passports stamped. They taste the foods, listen to the music, wear the clothing, and examine the artifacts of the particular countries being studied. Research involves reading literature by native authors and others, watching videos and slides of the region, using maps and globes, accessing Internet websites, and interviewing people who have lived in or traveled to these parts of the world.

As students travel through a particular region, they take notes on various topics, such as the customs of the people they have met, the types of artifacts they have examined, the geographical features they have discovered, and the forms of government they have encountered. When students complete the study of a particular region, as a culminating activity, they share what they have learned

through their experiences in one of many ways, among them travel logs, brochures, power point presentations, folk art, and skits.

Blank, hardbound books are used by students in preparing their travel logs. Students describe and illustrate scenes depicting daily life in the cities and villages of the region being studied. References are made to the climate, the geography, architectural ruins, and modern tourist attractions. Information about the economics and politics of the region is included, as well as vignettes about the people of the area.

Several methods are used to measure the success of "Passport to the Millennium." Traditional tests and quizzes are graded on a number scale for mastery of content. Rubrics are used for projects such as travel logs, brochures, folk art, and skits. These rubrics measure content, appearance, and presentation of written and oral projects. Since self-evaluation is an important part of any assessment, students are encouraged to participate in the creation of tests and rubrics.

"Passport to the Millennium" invites all students to join in a journey of discovery, to get to know their world. It employs Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences as it encourages students and teachers to take risks, to dare to learn in different ways.¹ This program challenges all students, and everyone is successful.

As students travel through the different regions, they compare and contrast examples of artistic and literary expression from around the world. Students analyze differences and similarities among cultures and examine the influence of various cultural institutions on individual decision-making. During this year-long program, students determine how changes in technology affect human activities and give reasons for global interdependence.

"Passport to the Millennium" is appropriate for use by all students in upper elementary, middle school, and high school. It is a year-long program, broken into four marking periods.² As one homeroom investigates Mexico, another explores

¹For a quick introduction to Howard Gardner and his Theory of Multiple Intelligences," see <http://www.newhorizons.org/trm_gardner.html>: "The Theory of Multiple Intelligences suggests that our culture and school systems that reflect our culture teach, test, reinforce and reward primarily two kinds of intelligence: verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical. His theory proposes that there are at least seven other kinds of intelligence that are equally important. They are 'languages' that most people speak, and that cut through cultural, educational, and ability differences. They include visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence. Dr. Gardner has just added an eighth, which he calls 'naturalist.'"

²"Passport to the Millennium" focuses on the integration of New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, and 6.8), Language Arts Literacy (3.3, 3.4, and 3.5), and Visual and Performing Arts (1.3 and 1.5).

Southeast Asia, another studies Europe, and another examines West Africa. The rotation of materials, which are shared by the homerooms, corresponds with the dates of the four marking periods.³

Access to the Internet and to pertinent literature, trade books, reference books, CDs, globes, maps, and artifacts relating to the regions being studied enhance the program. Local museums and libraries have policies for lending materials to schools. Artifacts can also be purchased through organizations such as Cultural Resources for Educators.

Community involvement is important to the success of this program. Parents and relatives of students, staff members, community members, and foreign exchange students from local colleges who have visited or who have lived in the regions being studied are outstanding resources. Their first-hand experiences are extremely valuable.

This is the second full-year I have been implementing "Passport to the Millennium" in my classroom, and each year we have met with great success. Students are enthusiastic about learning about their neighbors in this global village. One of the benefits of bringing this worldwide curriculum to life is to see how aware my students have become of the world around them. Just as we began our study of Mexico in 1999, there was an earthquake and flood in that country. My students raised funds through a school-wide bake sale and made a donation to the United Nations Disaster Fund to be used by the people of Mexico. And in 2000, as we began to explore Southeast Asia, President Bill Clinton visited Vietnam, and we were able to incorporate this momentous step into our study.

As a teacher of "Passport to the Millennium," I have no fear that my students will perceive Social Studies as a class filled with big books, boring passages, and endless facts. I am confident they will see Social Studies for what it is--a chance to get to know and appreciate our neighbors around the world.

A Sample Lesson: Different Ways of Interpreting

Educational Objectives:

- The students will discover poetry as an avenue for expressing difficult emotions.
- The students will read poetry written by children in concentration camps during the Holocaust.

³Materials needed for this program include construction paper, paper bags, sentence strips, pipe cleaners, craft straws, food coloring, markers, colored pencils, glue, laminating materials, and blank hardbound books.

- The students will discuss the meaning of ... *and I Never Saw Another Butterfly* ... written by Pavel Friedmann, when he was a child in the concentration camp in Terezin.⁴
- The students will listen to music from the film *Schlinder's List* as background for a reading of ... *and I Never Saw Another Butterfly* ...
- The students will interpret ... *and I Never Saw Another Butterfly* ... through movement, not words.

Instructional Objectives:

- The students will select poetry dealing with difficult topics from poetry anthologies.
- The students will share powerful images found in poetry that relate to their study of the Holocaust.
- The students will read ... *and I Never Saw Another Butterfly* ... with the entire class and discuss its meaning, line by line.
- The students will listen to music from the film *Schlinder's List* as ... *and I Never Saw Another Butterfly* ... is read, and picture movement which would demonstrate and complement the poem's message.
- The students will break into four small groups, once for each stanza of ... *and I Never Saw Another Butterfly* ... and create movement to express the meaning of the poem.
- The students will share their *moving interpretations of* ... *and I Never Saw Another Butterfly* ...

Evaluation and Student Outcomes:

- The students will reflect on their experiences by writing in their journals.
- The students' journal entries will display their awareness of the power of poetry, both in its written form and in its fluid form, their understanding of the atrocities suffered by children during the Holocaust, and their appreciation for the resilience of the human spirit.

⁴Pavel Friedman, "The Butterfly," in *I Never Saw Another Butterfly. Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*, edited by Hana Volakova; revised and expanded by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1993). You can access the poem on-line at <<http://www.euronet.nl/users/jubo/butterfly.html>>.