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Teaching Written Primary Sources to Students with Learning Disabilities

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Abstract

Despite deficits in reading ability, students with learning disabilities (LD) in reading are expected to apply skills in reading to text(s) across content areas. One such specific type of text that students with LD will likely encounter are written primary sources in social studies, and teachers need an array of strategies to support comprehension of these sources. This article equips general and special education teachers with information and necessary supports when teaching written primary sources in social studies to students with LD by detailing: (a) learning disabilities in reading from a theoretical context; (b) content literacy in social studies; (c) the importance of written primary sources; and (d) strategies to support students with LD in reading when encountering written primary sources during integrated social studies and English language arts instruction.

Keywords: learning disabilities, social studies, content literacy, written primary sources

Reading ability influences student achievement across content areas (Akbasli et al., 2016; Cooper et al., 2014; Cruz Neri et al., 2021; Duncan et al., 2007; Reed et al., 2017), yet pervasive difficulties in reading affect as many as one in five students in elementary and secondary schools in the United States (Das, 2020). Learning disabilities (LD, henceforth) are a frequent cause of reading difficulty, and of the 7.5 million students with LD in the United States' educational system, 32% receive special education services under the eligibility of specific learning disability (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). Reportedly, reading disabilities account for approximately 80% of LDs in school aged students (Dominguez & Carugno, 2023).

Despite deficits in reading ability, students with LD in reading are expected to apply reading skills to texts across content areas (Sejnost & Thiese, 2007). One such specific type of text in which students with LD will likely encounter are written primary sources in social studies (Bukowiecki, 2014). This article provides general and special education teachers, who are teaching grades ranging from upper-elementary to high school, with information and necessary supports when teaching written primary sources in social studies to students with LD by detailing: (a) learning disabilities in reading from a theoretical context; (b) content literacy in social studies; (c) the importance of written primary sources; and (d) strategies to support students with LD in reading when encountering written primary sources during integrated social studies and English language arts (ELA, henceforth) instruction.

Learning Disabilities in Reading

The simple view of reading theorizes that students with LD in reading have pervasive deficits in decoding (word recognition), language comprehension, or combined deficits in both decoding and language comprehension; all of which interfere with the ability to achieve reading comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Various models of reading (e.g., Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Joshi & Aaron, 2000; Kim, 2017; Scarborough, 2001) build on the simple view of reading by providing additional and bridging variables that contribute to skilled reading (e.g., self-regulation, morphological awareness, reading fluency, vocabulary), and students with LD in reading may have deficits in one or more of these areas, ultimately affecting decoding or language comprehension. It is important to note that reading comprehension is the product, or outcome, of proficiency in decoding and language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990), and instruction that supports reading comprehension for students with LD in reading targets deficits in either or bridging variables. It is also important to note that comprehension is not all or nothing. Reading comprehension ranges from limited, surface-level to contextualized, in-depth understanding of a text or multiple texts (Butterfuss et al., 2020).

Content Literacy in Social Studies

It is widely recognized that ELA and social studies have a reciprocal relationship (Anderson, 1985; Irvin et al., 1995; National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). This reciprocity is contextualized as content literacy, or the reliance upon foundational skills in reading and writing to advance knowledge acquisition in a content area such as social studies (McKenna & Robinson, 1990). Acquired social studies knowledge then further advances reading and writing ability (Hinde, 2005; Hirsch, 2003; Massey & Heafner, 2004). To this end, integration of ELA and social studies instruction is a research focus of both literacy and social studies researchers (e.g., Halvorsen et al., 2012; Heafner, 2018; Huck, 2019; Klingner et al., 1998; Swanson et al., 2016; Yearta, 2019).

In upper-elementary settings, allocated social studies instructional time, on average, tends to be much less than ELA (Tyner & Kabourek, 2021), and social studies content is more likely to be integrated into ELA instruction with the aim of building knowledge and teaching vocabulary (Hwang et al., 2023). In middle and high school settings, social studies courses often integrate literacy with a focus on relevant content-specific texts (Lawrence et al., 2019; Swanson et al., 2016). Across these settings, written primary sources are commonly incorporated into integrated social studies and ELA instruction (Bukowiecki, 2014; Langan & Lawrence, 2021), and teachers will need an array of strategies to support comprehension of these sources in students with LD (Barnes & Cartwright, 2024; Shifflet & Hunt, 2019; Witmer et al., 2017).

Written Primary Sources in Social Studies

Primary sources are "firsthand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic or question under investigation" (Yale University, n.d.). Elaborating on this definition, primary sources in social studies provide firsthand access into otherwise unobtainable insights of knowledge. Significant historical developments often correspond with primary sources (e.g., the Magna Carta and the concept that even a king is not above the law; the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the United States of America), and these sources are commonly documented and presented in a written format such as newspapers, journals, letters, and transcripts (Cantor & Schneider, 1967). Nevertheless, text-based primary sources pose significant difficulty for struggling readers to read when the sources are written in an unfamiliar vernacular that represents a historical period and/ or contain complex syntax and vocabulary. Thus, precisely because of their dynamic nature, without accommodations and evidence-based practices, written primary sources and knowledge they are intended to cultivate may be inaccessible for students with LD in reading. The remaining sections of this article describe several strategies Teachers can draw upon when students with LD in reading are tasked with reading written primary sources in social studies. The Gettysburg Address (Library of Congress, 2014) is referenced throughout as an example primary source.

Plan to Teach and Read Multiple Sources

Instructional planning is an important precursor to providing instruction and intervention for students with LD (Vaughn & Schumm, 1994). When planning supports for students with LD, Teachers should preview the instructional unit and plan to teach and read multiple sources. It is common for several sources to coincide within an instructional unit, and reading of multiple sources supports comprehension of a greater topic, rather than a singular text (Butterfuss et al., 2020). For example, the Emancipation Proclamation is a historical development during the Civil War proclaiming the end of slavery in the United States. The Gettysburg Address is a historical development when the United States president, Abraham Lincoln, addressed the nation after a significant battle, often described as a turning point, of the Civil War. When students read the Emancipation Proclamation and a transcript of the Gettysburg Address as primary sources, they are accessing and synthesizing junctures of Civil War history firsthand from the words of Abraham Lincoln. Teachers should plan to systematically align teaching of multiple, relative primary sources to elicit comprehension with depth and breadth of a topic of study.

Simplify the Written Source to Instructional Level

Unlike most other texts that students interact with, written primary sources are not specially designed for the grade or instructional levels of students. Teachers can address this barrier by simplifying the source to the reading ability of a student (Betts, 1946). This creates an opportunity for a student to read the authentic intent of a primary source instead of solely reading or learning *about* the source or historical event (Wineburg & Martin, 2009). According to Burns

(2007; 2024), the instructional level of a text for a student when reading is when they can read 93-97% of words accurately. When students read texts at their instructional level, it grants them access to efficiently decode, which relieves the cognitive threshold allocated to word recognition and directs the cognitive threshold to comprehension (Crossley et al., 2012). A common, standardized measurement of a student's instructional level in reading is the Lexile scale (Lennon & Burdick, 2004). The Lexile Framework (Lennon & Burdick, 2004) uses a formula of word frequency and length of sentences to determine the complexity (readability) of a text. Students are also assigned a score based on their reading ability which aligns with Lexile scores of texts, and teachers can use these measures when simplifying a text.

Prior to making any adjustments to a written primary source, a teacher should check the Lexile score (https://hub.lexile.com) to see if simplification is necessary (Lexile & Quantile Hub, n.d.). If necessary, most texts can be simplified to an approximate student's instructional level, including primary sources in social studies. Another option to check the readability of the text is by presenting it to the students, asking them to read it, and measuring if they can accurately read at least ninety-three of the first one hundred words. If unable to read at least ninety-three of the first one hundred words, simplification is likely necessary. If the student can successfully read the source at or beyond the instructional level, alteration of the source is not necessary, and the original source should be the text of instruction.

Simplifying a written primary source to an appropriate instructional level of students requires alteration of syntax (sentence structure), length, and possibly the vocabulary considering the reading ability of the targeted students (Crossley et al., 2012). Wineburg & Martin (2009) suggest simplifying a primary source to around 200-300 word chunks for struggling readers to support sustained attention while concentrating on extracting information from the text. During the simplification process, teachers can intentionally select complex vocabulary to remain in the text for instruction while also ensuring that the entirety of the text is readable for the student. Teachers have some options when simplifying the text—ranging from artificial intelligence tools (Araújo & Aguiar, 2023) to an intuitive approach in which the teacher simplifies the text (Crossley et al., 2012). When a text is simplified, teachers can use the Lexile measurement tool (https://hub.lexile.com) to determine if the simplified text matches the student's Lexile level, or if further alterations need to be made. The original Gettysburg address scores in the 1410L-1600L instructional range, while the intuitively simplified (by the author) Gettysburg Address (see Figure 1) scored in the 810L-1000L instructional range.

Teachers should note that the overarching goal of simplifying a written primary source is to provide students with LD the opportunity to effectively decode the text. Although the simplified text may be accessible to students with LD while reading, it is important to introduce the original source alongside the simplified version. If a teacher deems it necessary, students can listen to the original source being read aloud by a teacher or recording. Listening to and discussing the original source prior to reading the simplified version could support activating background knowledge.

Activate and Build Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is any world knowledge that a reader evokes during the process of reading—including prior knowledge from one's schema as well as learned concepts / facts, vocabulary, and text structures (Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978; Smith et al., 2021; Barnes & Cartwright, 2024). Research has shown that students with and without LD comprehend texts better when background knowledge is activated and built upon during reading instruction **(**Carr & Thompson, 1996; Elbro & Buch-Iversen, 2013; Smith et al., 2021). Furthermore, prior knowledge of a topic facilitates storing new information into memory by forming connections with existing ideas and information (Shing & Brod, 2016).

Figure 1

Original and Simplified Gettysburg Address

Original	**Simplified**
Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.	Eighty-seven years ago, the United States was founded on **liberty** and the idea that all men are created equal. Our country is now engaged in a great **civil** war which tests if the United States can continue as a country. We meet on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to **dedicate** a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who died, so that that nation might live. The brave men who fought here are the reason we are here today. We can never forget what they did here, but the work is **unfinished**. It is for us to remember the cause in which the men were fighting for. It is for us to be here dedicated to the to the great task remaining before us. Through honoring the dead, we take increased **devotion** to that cause. The cause that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Note. Gettysburg Address retrieved and adapted from Library of Congress (2014).

Teachers can intentionally activate and build upon background knowledge when teaching written primary sources through asking questions, eliciting a discussion on an upcoming reading, and teaching salient vocabulary (Barnes & Cartwright, 2024). For example, when teaching a unit that includes the Battle of Gettysburg and Gettysburg Address (Library of Congress, 2014), teachers can activate students' background knowledge and vocabulary relating to the American Civil War including the Union and Confederacy, Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation, key events and battles, and other concepts within the relevant social studies unit. Additionally, teaching specially selected vocabulary will support building vocabulary knowledge which contributes to comprehension of the text and topic.

Pre-teach and Reference Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge is a vital component for comprehension of texts and overall reading ability (National Reading Panel, 2000; Torgesen et al., 2007). Historical texts may include unknown and complex vocabulary which are specific to the topic and domain of study (Beck et al., 2002; Cummins, 2015). Pre-teaching selected vocabulary of a text is a method to support reading comprehension by preparing a student for encountering specific words that a teacher deems challenging to read (i.e., multisyllabic and/or irregular) yet essential for understanding the text (Carney, 1984).

Teachers should preview the text (i.e., primary source) and select three to five words to teach prior to reading of the text (Beck et al., 2002). As part of pre-teaching vocabulary, teachers can also explicitly teach derivational and inflectional morphemes that are part of selected complex vocabulary words from the text (Beck et al., 2002). For example, in Table 1, words with derivational morphemes include *unfinished*, *government*, and *devotion*.

Table 1

Selected Vocabulary from the Gettysburg Address

Words without Derivational Morphemes	Words with Derivational Morphemes
liberty	unfinished = un + finished
civil	government = govern + ment
	devotion = devote + ion

Note. '-ed' in 'unfinished' is an inflectional morpheme that changes the tense of 'finish' to past tense and can be reviewed during instruction if necessary.

When teaching the meanings of these words, teachers should emphasize the meaning of the base word (e.g., finish means 'bringing to an end' or 'complete') while teaching that the derivational morpheme (e.g., un) has a unique meaning within the word, and this morpheme alters the meaning of the base word (e.g., unfinished = 'not yet complete'). Furthermore, selected words and associated derivational morphemes should be referenced and reviewed during reading and instruction pertaining to the source and overarching topic.

Repeated Reading

Repeated reading is a reading intervention in which a student orally reads a passage more than once with the goal of increasing reading fluency (Samuels, 1979). The underpinning theory behind repeated readings is that multiple exposures to a text increases word reading accuracy and automaticity, which are key contributing characteristics of reading fluency (Logan, 1997). When accuracy and automaticity of word recognition are present, mental concentration is then allocated to comprehension of a text (Laberge & Samuels, 1979). In a meta-analysis of repeated reading studies which included studies of upper-elementary, middle and high school students, Therrien

(2004) reported initial effectiveness on reading fluency and comprehension for students with and without LD when a passage was read twice and compounding effects on specific passage fluency and comprehension with three and four exposures. If a teacher deems necessary and has time for more readings, considering the stamina of the student, six readings have shown even greater immediate effects of fluency (Ardoin et al., 2009). Further variations of repeated reading could include listening to audio-recorded versions of the text and oral readings by the teacher (Therrien, 2004).

In the case of primary sources, rereading a written source will catalyze increased fluency which improves the ability to comprehend the source. Moreover, written primary sources are often seminal works in history that warrant rereading which aids in better understanding and contextualization. Bickford et al. (2020) incorporated repeated readings of primary and secondary sources as part of a fourth grade social studies inquiry, and overall, reported students having a greater ability to comprehend and synthesize information from the sources into written compositions. To implement repeated reading, a teacher presents a written primary source on a student's instructional level and then begins the procedure of having them consecutively read it multiple times (and multiple occasions if applicable). Students may also reread the source after engaging in other instructional activities, such as creating a graphic organizer.

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are visually organized representations of information (Darch & Eaves, 1986). Kim and colleagues (2004) synthesized twenty-one studies with 848 students with LD across elementary, middle, and high school settings and found that overall, graphic organizers supported reading comprehension of a specific text. In a meta-analysis, Dexter and Hughes (2011) reported similar results affecting reading comprehension while emphasizing that graphic organizers are another modality in which students with LD can access information from text. Furthermore, Darch and Carnine (1986) reported greater comprehension in students with LD in grades 4 and 6 who used graphic organizers when studying content-specific informational concepts in science and social studies. Doyle (1999) reported greater gains in comprehension when students with LD used graphic organizers to help organize information from informational text readings in a secondary social studies class. Ciullo et al. (2015) studied the effects of using graphic organizers alongside explicit instruction during upper-elementary social studies instruction and found that students with LD made strong gains in comprehension of the content. Overall, graphic organizers (e.g., Figure 2) can be introduced by teachers to help students organize information from the primary source. Once completed, the student should utilize the organizer as a reference point throughout instruction or during discussions in small groups.

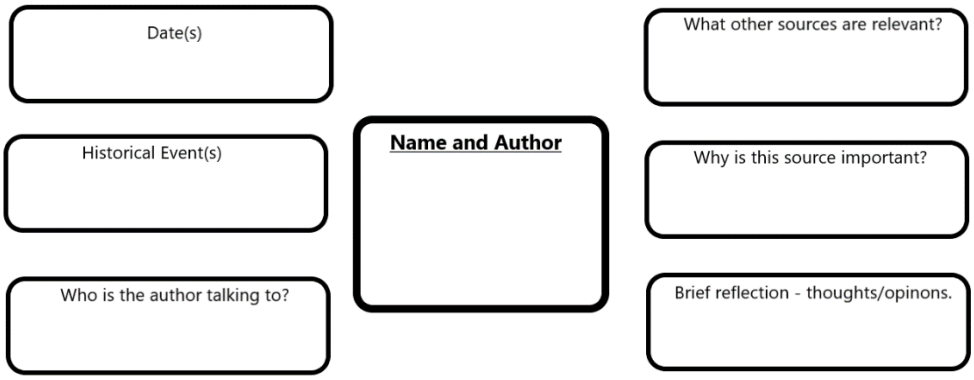
Facilitate Discussions in Heterogenous Pairs/Small Groups

To further elicit comprehension of a written primary source, teachers can facilitate discussions in heterogenous groupings or pairs. Research has shown that small group settings produce favorable academic outcomes for students with LD (Elbaum et al., 1999; Keel & Gast,

1992; Vaughn et al., 2001). Because primary sources are likely situated in rich historical context requiring at least some background knowledge, ongoing discussions in small groups or pairs support a pool of shared knowledge among the students. Studies have shown that facilitating discussions using small group strategies improves comprehension of social studies texts for students with LD (e.g., Klingner & Vaughn, 1996; Lederer, 2000). Teachers can provide students with prompts and questions to further analyze and discuss the written primary source at hand.

Figure 2

Example Graphic Organizer for a Primary Source



Conclusion

Due to a dynamic range of complexity, written primary sources may be inaccessible for students with LD in reading without accommodation and evidence-based practices. This article explored strategies teachers can employ when students with LD are tasked with analyzing and reading written primary sources in integrated social studies and ELA instruction across upper-elementary, middle, and high school classroom settings. Teachers should consider using these strategies sequentially for deep reading of a seminal primary source. For example, a teacher could implement the following instructional sequence:

1. plan for the instructional unit and primary source(s);
2. simplify the source(s) if necessary;
3. activate background knowledge including pre-teaching of vocabulary;
4. repeatedly read the source on instructional level;
5. have student(s) create a graphic organizer;
6. facilitate discussions in pairs or small groups.

In closing, the described strategies are useful strategies to support reading comprehension of any text, but specifically, using these strategies when teaching written primary sources have the potential to simultaneously support acquisition of knowledge in social studies while providing reading intervention. Thus, the goal of using these strategies when teaching written primary sources to students with LD in reading is twofold: (a) support comprehension of the

primary source and social studies topic at hand; and (b) build skills and knowledge in support of overall reading ability.

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Teaching History and Civics with Environmental Art

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Abstract

This article explores inquiry-based teaching and learning with environmental art in secondary history and civics. The study of environmental art raises awareness of critical issues, such as deforestation, industrial pollution, mining, and climate change. For this article, extensive research was conducted in the collections of two national art museums and one library in the United States. The author presents 12 works of art, which are appropriate for instruction at the secondary level, as well as original prompts to address the need for curricular materials on environmental topics. Arts integration as a pedagogic practice is examined.

Keywords: social studies, environmental education, arts integration, history education, civic education

Arts integration has transformative potential in social studies education. Through cross-disciplinary teaching and learning, students gain appreciation of the interconnectedness of knowledge. The study of environmental art raises awareness of critical issues, such as deforestation, industrial pollution, mining, and climate change. Environmental artists depict the past and present, envision the future, and seek to influence viewers. When engaging with their work, students hone their analytical skills.

This article addresses an essential question: Which works of art in the public collections of the United States would be appropriate for inquiry-based instruction on environmental topics in history and civics at the secondary level? As a result of extensive research in the online collections of the National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. as well as the Library of Congress, which is the national library of the United States, 12 works of art were identified. Because many works of art in these institutions are discoverable online but are not on display, the investigation was conducted virtually.

At the start of the research process, keyword searches were done to find the relevant holdings. On the sites of the museums, the queries were not restricted to specific types of art. By contrast, due to the diverse formats of the sources in the Library of Congress' digital collections, searches were limited to photographs, prints, and drawings. Variations of keywords such as *environment, earth, climate change, global warming, deforestation, logging, lumber, pollution, plastic*, *industry, factory, mining, endangered,* and *extinct* were entered into the search engines of the institutions. Additionally, the names of creatures, such as *penguins* and *frogs*, which are at risk due to climate change, were included. The searches collectively yielded hundreds of images. During the examination of the findings, paintings, drawings, and photographs became the foci.

In many middle and high schools, geography is interwoven in world and United States history courses. Geographic concepts are taught using five themes: location, place, human-environment interaction, movement, and regions (Bednarz, 2016). For this article, works of art were selected based on these criteria: the artwork's relevance to the theme, human-environment interaction; the artwork's appropriateness for use in history and/or civics instruction; and the online accessibility of the artwork to educators and students in- and outside the United States.

Pursuing knowledge through questioning is a process that is central to the teaching of social studies in the United States today (Swan et al., 2018). At the heart of the *College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework*, the national, nonbinding standards for social studies, is an Inquiry Arc comprised of four dimensions: developing questions and planning inquiries, applying disciplinary tools and concepts, evaluating sources and using evidence, and communicating conclusions and taking informed action (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013). This article was prepared to fill a need for inquiry-based curricular materials on environmental topics. In addition to increasing environmental literacy, art analysis has the potential to hone social and communication skills, to foster empathy and the recognition of diverse perspectives, and to promote creativity

The artwork and prompts for inquiry-based, instructional practice

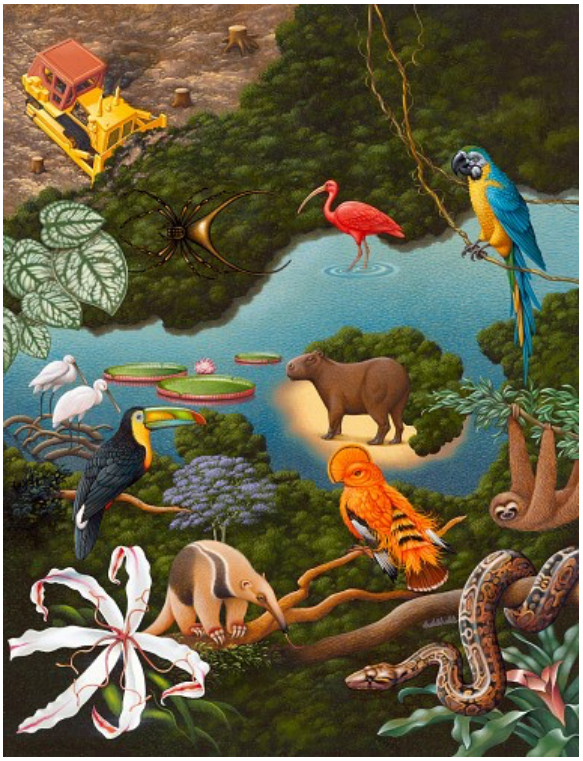
Nine paintings, one lithograph, and two photographs in the holdings of the National Portrait Gallery, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Library of Congress were identified for use in secondary social studies education. Artists often work in collaboration with journalists to inform the public and to raise awareness of pressing issues. From *Time* in 1978, the National Portrait Gallery received in donation about 800 works of art, which had been made for the magazine's cover. Some of the artwork, which was donated by *Time*, addressed environmental topics. Artist Bradlt Bralds created the oil painting, *Amazon*, in 1982 to raise awareness of the threats which clearcutting posed to biodiversity (see Figure 1).

Bralds' painting illustrates how human activity has jeopardized a complex web of plant and animal life. *Amazon* would enhance environmental studies in world history classes. The students' visualization of biodiversity and habitat destruction would promote critical thinking. Questions for students are:

- About what environmental issue did the artist, Braldt Bralds, create this painting? How do you know?
- What types of animals, birds, and insects do you see?
- What are the impacts of the clearcutting?
- What does the artist suggest about the long-term effects of unmitigated logging?

- In which part of the painting would you prefer to be? Why?

Figure 1
Amazon



Note. From Braldt Bralds, 1982. [Oil on board]. NPG.84.TC5. Gift of *Time* magazine. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Copyright by Braldt Bralds.

Figure 2
Torching the Amazon

Note. From Robert G. Giusti, 1989. [Acrylic on canvas board]. NPG.90.TC9. Gift of *Time* magazine. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Copyright by Robert G. Giusti.

Fire was and still is employed in the clearing of trees in order to prepare land for farming and ranching. For *Time* magazine, Robert G. Giusti made the painting, *Torching the Amazon*, in 1989 (see Figure 2). He depicted the burning process starkly. The viewer's eye is guided by the path to a ghostlike skeletal image. Teaching with this painting would require students to decipher the meaning of a symbol. Questions for students are:

- What do you see in the billows of smoke at the end of the path?
- What is the artist's view of the burning of the Amazon forest?
- Who and what are endangered by the fires?

In history and civics education, students analyze multiple sources of evidence to gain comprehensive understanding and to draw informed conclusions (Nice, 2023). Giusti's painting

could be combined with recent satellite photographs of fires in the Amazon by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (2020). Despite warnings by artists and scientists, the pursuit of economic interests has resulted in continued deforestation.

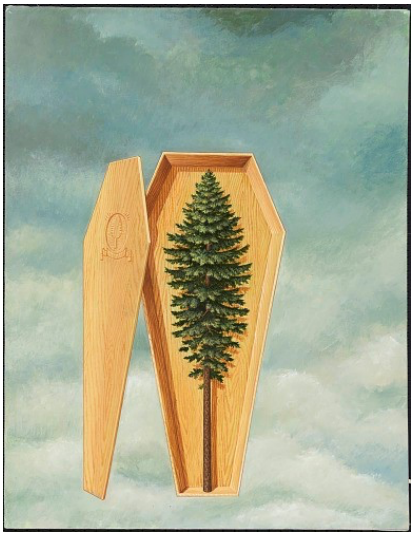
Figure 3
Northwest Logging

Note. From Ernest Ralph Norling, ca. 1938. [Watercolor on illustration board]. 1962.8.55. Smithsonian American Art Museum. In the public domain.

Figure 4
Falling a Tree

Note. From Russell Lee, 1941. [Safety film negatives]. LC-USF33-013178-M5 [P&P] LOT 126. Library of Congress. In the public domain.

Figure 5
Dying Forest



Note. From Mark Hess, 1985. [Acrylic on canvas]. NPG.90.TC44. Gift of *Time* magazine. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Copyright by Mark Hess.

Human demands for wood and land have led to the felling of trees for centuries in different parts of the world. As a result, ecosystems have been radically altered. During the Great Depression in the United States, artists were employed to create public works of art (Kennedy, 2009). Around 1938, as a mural study for the post office in Bremerton, Washington, Ernest Ralph Norling prepared a watercolor painting titled *Northwest Logging* (see Figure 3). In history lessons, the painting could be coupled with a photograph of logging, which was taken about three years later, by Russell Lee (see Figure 4). In the photograph, on the ground to the right, is a two-man, crosscut saw that is similar to the one depicted by Norling. When studying the two images, students would respond to these prompts:

- Look at each human figure in Ernest Ralph Norling's painting. What roles did people play in logging?
- In the painting, how was lumber transported from the logging site?
- How would you describe the trees in the painting and photograph?
- What equipment did lumberjacks use in 1938 and 1941? Give specific examples from the painting and photograph.
- Based on what you see in the painting, how do you think the site looked after the completion of the logging? With colored pencils, create an illustration.

Mark Hess' painting, *Dying Forest,* was among the works of art that *Time* magazine donated to the National Portrait Gallery (see Figure 5). In recent years, the death of forests has been hastened by climate change and the proliferation of pests such as bark beetles. In its use of symbols, this work of art is accessible to learners. Prompts to use when teaching with *Dying Forest* are:

- Why do you think Mark Hess created this painting?
- Ironically, of what material is the casket made?
- Did the artist convey his message effectively? Why or why not?
- Based on news reports, write an article on current threats to forests.

By observing and representing the world around them, artists create visual records. Their depictions of steel plants, coal mines, and factories offer insights into the historical roots of climate change. Frank C. Kirk, a social realist, painted *Industry,* which is now in the Smithsonian American Art Museum (see Figure 6). When analyzing Kirk's work, students would consider these questions:

- How would you describe the location of the steel factory?
- What does the painting suggest about the impact of the factory on air quality?

- Identify the main colors used in the painting. What do the colors convey?
- How do you think the factory affected the lives of people?

Figure 6
Industry

Note. From Frank C. Kirk, n.d. [Oil on canvas]. 1964.19.3. Smithsonian American Art Museum. In the public domain.

The center of U.S. steel production is Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Between 1935 and 1940, Elizabeth Olds made a color lithograph of the city (see Figure 7). The print pairs well with a historic photograph, *Steel and Smoke*, by Chao-Chen Yang (see Figure 8). When comparing the artist's representation to the picture, the students would delve deeply into the third dimension of the Inquiry Arc: evaluating sources and using evidence. In U.S. history classes, they would address these prompts:

- Look closely at Elizabeth Olds' lithograph. Why do you think Pittsburgh became the center of steel production?
- Based on the print, how would you describe the life of a steelworker in Pittsburgh in the 1930s?
- How realistic is Olds' depiction of the steel industry? Compare her print to the photograph, *Steel and Smoke*, by Chao-Chen Yang.

Figure 7
Pittsburgh

Note. From Elizabeth Olds, ca. 1935-1940. [Color lithograph on paper]. 1984.31.39. Smithsonian American Art Museum. In the public domain.

Figure 8
Steel and Smoke

Note. From Chao-Chen Yang, 1939. [Gelatin silver print]. 2023.31.3. Smithsonian American Art Museum. In the public domain.

Figure 9
Changing Shifts

Note. From Maurice Kish, 1942. [Oil on canvas]. 1977.82.2. Smithsonian American Art Museum. In the public domain.

Maurice Kish's oil painting, *Changing Shifts*, reflects the significant role that the coal industry played in the United States economy (see Figure 9). As large numbers of coal miners exit the mines on underground trolleys, new workers arrive to relieve them. The harshness of the working conditions is rendered by the stern expressions on the men's faces, the leafless trees, and the dark color palette. Students will notice details, such as the lights, which are affixed to the miners' helmets. When facilitating the study of the coal industry, educators would pose these questions:

- What is happening at this coal mine?
- What does this painting suggest about the importance of coal to the economy of the United States in the 1940s?
- Based on this painting, how would you describe the working conditions of coal miners in the early 1940s?

Figure 10
Manifest Destiny

Note. From Alexis Rockman, 2004. [Oil and acrylic on wood]. 2011.36A-D. Smithsonian American Art Museum. Copyright by Alexis Rockman.

In addition to recording the past and present, artists envision the future. Alexis Rockman depicted the potential multifarious effects of climate change and pollution in a futuristic, dystopian image of the waterfront in Brooklyn, New York. *Manifest Destiny* would be a strong springboard for students' exploration of environmental questions and creative problem-solving (see Figure 10). For the instructional use of the painting, the following prompts were written:

- How would you describe the Brooklyn waterfront in Alexis Rockman's painting?
- What sources of pollution do you see?

- What feelings do the colors in the painting evoke?
- How could people protect this environment?
- Please draw the waterfront as you would like it to be in the future.

Figure 11
Repaying Nature's Riches

Note. From Jean Carlu, 1941. [Gouache on paperboard]. 1984.124.47. Smithsonian American Art Museum. In the public domain.

Figure 12
Emperor Penguin, Admiralty Inlet Snow Hill, Antarctic

Note. Frank Wilbert Stokes, n.d. [Oil on canvas]. 1950.8.14. Smithsonian American Art Museum. In the public domain.

As students complete the Inquiry Arc, they communicate conclusions and take informed action. Engaging students in the creation of environmental artwork is recommended at this stage. They might advocate for the planting of trees or the protection of endangered species. Inspirational paintings include Jean Carlu's *Repaying Nature's Riches* and Frank Wilbert Stokes' *Emperor Penguin*. Exhibiting the students' artwork would offer positive reinforcement and enrich the learning environment. The questions on *Repaying Nature's Riches* and *Emperor Penguin* are:

- Look closely at *Repaying Nature's Riches*. According to the artist, Jean Carlu, what actions should people take to support nature?
- How does Carlu's work relate to the theme, human-environment interaction?
- What thoughts do you have when you look at Frank Wilbert Stokes' painting, *Emperor Penguin*?

- How would you describe the habitat of the emperor penguin?
- Why would global warming pose a danger to the penguin?

Art, discursive teaching, and literacy

The National Portrait Gallery, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Library of Congress have numerous works of art that support environmental education in history and civics classes. To foster understanding of environmental exigencies, the employment of diverse sources in instruction is necessary. Art on environmental subjects has enormous potential to inform, influence, and inspire.

Art lends itself to discursive teaching methods. Students consider how subjects are represented. Among the social skills that derive from engagement with art are perspective-taking and empathy (Winner et al., 2013). When studying the works of art which were selected for this article, students will consider competing economic and environmental interests. Amy Charleroy and Pamela Paulson (2017) observed, "By joining together different disciplines and looking at an issue or idea from multiple perspectives, a new understanding or new level of creativity is often developed" (p. 39).

Arts integration utilizes diverse modalities and offers "multiple entry points," thereby making learning more accessible (Cowan & Leigh, 2021, p. 12; Diaz & McKenna, 2017). As the term, *multi-literacies,* suggests, texts take different forms, including images (New London Group, 1996). Representation and visualization enhance the learning process and the acquisition of literacy skills (Cowan & Leigh, 2021). Merryl Goldberg (2021) has written about the arts as "languages of learning" in diverse content areas, including the social studies (p. xv).

When studying art, students identify metaphors. They recognize that symbols represent and convey different meanings, and they engage in analogic thinking (Cowan & Leigh, 2021). When art analysis is combined with artmaking in history and civics classes, students explore new forms of expression. "The arts provide languages that afford students a variety of ways to express understanding," wrote Don Glass and Lisa Donovan (2017, p. 47).

Arts integration, national standards, and the Four C's

When teaching with artwork on environmental topics, educators address national standards in both the social studies and the arts. *The College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework* and the *National Core Arts Standards* emphasize analysis, interpretation, and communication (NCSS, 2013; National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014). In the latter document, Anchor Standard 8 recommends that students "interpret intent and meaning in artistic work" (n.p). Anchor Standard 11 calls for students to "relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding" (n.p.).

In knowledge-based economies that rely on innovation, there is a need for people, who can develop creative solutions to complex problems. Creativity and innovation, critical

thinking and problem-solving, communication, and collaboration are the Four C's that have been identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009). Environmental literacy is among the Partnership's core subjects and themes. By engaging students in examinations of environmental art, educators encourage investigations of critical issues. Textbooks alone are insufficient for the study of global environmental challenges (Özdemir, 2022).

Art, equity, and community

All students deserve to have access to powerful teaching through art. Students from low- income families have historically not had equal access to deeper learning experiences (Mehta & Fine, 2019). Families, who have limited resources, are often unable to provide opportunities to build children's social capital (Cowan & Leigh, 2021). Low-income students and students of color are also more likely to live in communities, which are experiencing environmental degradation (Banzhaf, Ma, & Timmins, 2019).

By providing outlets for self-expression and reflection, art exhibits build a sense of community (Engdahl & Winkelman, 2017). As students view art in hallways, cafeterias, and other sites, they learn from one another. The interaction is generative. In the process of teaching and learning, visibility also leads to accountability and dialogue among both students and educators
(Meha & Fine, 2019). "Habits of responding, analyzing, and reflecting are also authentic artistic processes, and including these in arts-integration plans may allow for deeper cross-disciplinary investigations," wrote Charleroy and Paulson (2017, p. 38).

Creativity and deeper learning

When students create artwork on environmental topics, they transfer knowledge (Taylor, 2020). Participating in creative processes cultivates intrapersonal skills, such as initiative and self- direction, that are associated with deeper learning (Manalo, 2020). Creative work requires planning, persistence, and organization (Ivcevic & Nusbaum, 2017). Reformulations are part of the process (Ivcevic & Nusbaum, 2017). In addition to facilitating expression, creative commitments contribute to resiliency (Barbot & Heuser, 2017). Baptiste Barbot and Brianna Heuser (2017) argue that creative thinking fosters identity formation. Creativity can be developed (Karwowski & Brzeski, 2017).

Creative people are initiators, who influence others (Simonton, 2017). The artists, whose works were selected for this article, utilized their talents to warn, to record, and to inspire. Positive emotions are inherent in innovative processes (St-Louis and Vallerand, 2015). Artists often seek to make products that are pleasing emotionally, intellectually, and/or morally (Luria & Kaufman, 2017). Six dynamic forces or needs are experienced by creative people: beauty, power, discovery, communication, individuality, and pleasure (Luria & Kaufman, 2017). Interestingly, experiencing art positively affects brain systems, including systems of reward and motivation, executive control and attention, and emotional regulation (Stixrud & Marlowe,

2018).

Creative people engage in a process of discovery that may result in cultural and/or intellectual contributions to communities (Luria & Kaufman, 2017). Because people derive pleasure and meaning from the arts, artistic engagement in schools could have societal benefits (Winner et al., 2013). The study of environmental art has the potential to inspire students to address environmental challenges. Charleroy and Paulson (2017) wrote, "At the core of arts integration is the notion of alignment: that arts and non-arts content and practices are merged in the service of a common good" (p. 29).

Collaboration and cross-disciplinary work

"The arts provide a means and form to express our understanding of the world in an aesthetic as well as objective manner. Just as we can learn subject matter through the arts, the arts can teach us about the world in which we live," wrote Goldberg (2021, p. 223). To use a plurality of methods effectively in the teaching of environmental topics in history and civics courses, collaboration and professional development are needed. Many content-area teachers have yet to integrate the arts (Mears et al., 2017). Partnerships between schools, colleges of education, and museums hold promise. Teaching and visiting artists offer valuable insights and skills (Ayers, 2018; Barnum, 2017). "Collaboration is a powerful teaching and learning tool, allowing the strengths of each partner to inform the other's practice," wrote Barnum (2017, p. 133).

Conclusion

The use of visual art in history and civics courses has the potential to advance students' understanding of complex historical, civic, and environmental topics. The analysis of environmental art sheds light on the impacts of human behavior. Environmental arts integration supports critical thinking, mastery of content, creative expression, and, potentially, solution design. By facilitating work that is at disciplinary intersections and by offering intertextual experiences, educators will foster comprehensive learning. Environmental arts integration is a pedagogic practice that warrants the consideration of educators.

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Bridging Disciplines - Driving Change: Promoting Classroom Activism by Utilizing Children's Picture Books and the Inquiry Design Model in Educator Preparation Programs

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Abstract

Embedding inclusive strategies and practices into Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs), can ensure that future social studies teachers are well-equipped to create dynamic, inclusive, and empowering learning environments for all students. The Inquiry Design Model (IDM) provides a framework for encouraging social studies preservice teachers to explore activism and social change through the lens of children's picture books. Such inquiry is essential for promoting equity, enhancing learning outcomes, and fostering critical thinking and empathy, while also preparing teachers for diverse classrooms and for meeting legal and ethical obligations to provide inclusive education for all students.

Key Words: Educator Preparation Program (EPP), Inquiry Design Model (IDM), Children's Picture Books, Activism, Social Justice, Elementary Classrooms

In today's rapidly changing world, the call for activism and social change resonates louder than ever. Today's teachers have a unique opportunity to empower the next generation of leaders by cultivating their academic knowledge and their passion for making a difference in the world. As such, Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) play a pivotal role in developing preservice teachers who are prepared to teach all students by equipping them with the tools and strategies needed to create inclusive, inquiry-based learning environments.

The Inquiry Design Model (IDM) provides students with opportunities to develop authentic critical thinking skills as they engage in inquiry-driven exploratory activities to evaluate information, problem-solve, and participate in discussions in order to make informed decisions about a given topic (Swan, Grant, & Lee, 2018). As students collaborate with their peers, they gain a deeper understanding of diverse topics and learn how to explore them from multiple perspectives (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017). EPPs can help preservice teachers harness the power of cross-disciplinary connections and promote activism both inside and outside of the classroom by carefully modeling how to create high-quality IDMs and by providing preservice teachers with authentic tasks and direct and explicit practice with the model. Focusing specifically on selecting children's picture books that address activism can also help elementary

students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to become civically engaged through these inquiry-driven activities (Serriere, 2013).

EPPs can play a key role in guiding preservice teachers as they design their own IDM and select children's picture books to foster critical thinking, collaboration, and advocacy among elementary students. In this article, we delve into the transformative potential of the IDM as a catalyst for promoting activism across disciplines in the elementary classroom. We explore how the IDM fosters critical thinking, collaboration, and creative problem-solving skills among students, and how it empowers them to become informed, engaged, and proactive citizens. Using practical strategies and examples centered around the topic of activism, we provide a rationale for why EPPs should actively engage preservice teachers with the IDM. We also highlight practical suggestions for actively equipping preservice teachers to utilize IDMs with their own students so they are prepared to ignite passion, inspire action, and effect change in the classroom and beyond.

Introducing the Inquiry Design Model (IDM)

The Inquiry Design Model (IDM), developed by Grant, Swan, and Lee (2017) is a one-page template that contains key components inspired by the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Inquiry Arc Framework (NCSS, 2013; Swan, Lee, & Grant, 2014), making it highly effective for fostering inquiry-based learning. Central to the IDM is a primary, *compelling question*, derived from state and/or national *standards and practices* (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017). This compelling question serves as the driving force of inquiry that sparks curiosity and encourages students to explore significant and complex issues (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017). Students begin thinking about the complex question through a process called *staging the question*, before exploring secondary, *supporting questions*, which are aligned with specific *formative performance tasks* that scaffold learning and guide students through steps to build understanding and apply their knowledge (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017).

Next, students are presented with *featured sources*, such as primary documents, images, and multimedia resources, which provide authentic, diverse perspectives, and encourage students to engage in critical evaluation and analysis (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017). The model culminates into a final step for students as they complete a *summative performance task* to demonstrate their learning, and they engage in *taking informed action* as they synthesize their learning and apply it to real-world contexts, fostering civic engagement and problem-solving skills (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017). This portion of the template allows students to participate in a variety of authentic activities, such as contacting local government officials, creating student journalism and media, delivering presentations on the topic to the public, or working towards changes in public opinion or politics (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017; Levinson & Levine, 2013). The IDM's key components provide a systematic approach to inquiry-based learning that emphasizes the real-world application of critical thinking and historical analysis (Acar & Tuncdogan, 2018), and its structured framework enables teachers to offer specific levels of support as they effectively scaffold these skills for their students.

Understanding and Explaining the IDM Framework

Though the IDM's structured, one-page template may appear simple, a great deal of intentional thought and planning is required to develop a *compelling question* that aligns the inquiry and resources within the template (Swan, Grant, & Lee, 2017). The key components of the IDM work cohesively to create a dynamic learning environment that supports the development of authentic critical thinking skills, and students engage deeply with content as they evaluate evidence, collaborate with peers, and construct informed responses to complex questions. Therefore, EPPs and their preservice teachers must familiarize themselves with this design process since IDMs require thoughtful development not only of *compelling questions*, but also in aligning content, identifying *supporting questions*, selecting *featured resources*, and designing tasks to support student success.

Swan, Lee, and Grant's (2018) *Inquiry Design Model: Building Inquiries in Social Studies* is an excellent resource for EPP's who may be unfamiliar with the IDM, or who may be looking for additional tools for explicitly teaching, modeling, and practicing the IDM with preservice teachers. This resource provides a thorough explanation of each section of the IDM and discusses how the IDM should be built, beginning with determining a content angle and point of inquiry, drafting a *compelling question*, and testing the compelling question through the *summative performance task* before moving on to the remaining parts of the inquiry (Swan, Lee, & Grant, 2018). By familiarizing themselves with the various sections of the IDM, their purposes, and the ways in which the sections support each other, EPPs can position themselves to effectively model and explain the framework to preservice teachers who will in turn, feel confident using the IDM with their own students in the classroom.

Initiating Inquiry and Supporting IDM Design

After familiarizing preservice teachers with the IDM framework, EPPs should provide authentic opportunities for them to design their own IDMs. This ensures that preservice teachers have a solid grasp of the IDM structure and alignment, that they are aware of the importance of identifying solid *compelling* and *supporting questions*, and that they are able to curate high-quality resources. Designing an effective inquiry requires the careful curation of multiple ideas, skills, and resources, and creating strongly aligned inquiries is a complex activity that necessitates practice, even for seasoned teachers (Hennessy, et al., 2021). Therefore, preservice teachers should receive hands-on practice during their EPP to ensure that they have some foundation (and hopefully classroom-ready resources) upon graduation to implement this strategy in their future classrooms in order to help students take charge of their learning, and to work toward becoming active and engaged citizens.

Social studies instruction in today's elementary classrooms is often limited or even eliminated to make room for other subjects (Fitchett, et al., 2014; McGuire, 2007), and many schools require the use of scripted curriculum, which limits teacher and student autonomy,

critical thinking, and intellectual engagement (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2019). Consequently, many preservice teachers are not given adequate opportunities to observe or practice providing high quality social studies instruction, leaving them uncertain about how to diversify curriculum or expand on social studies topics. Therefore, they may not feel confident in their knowledge of the content, or in implementing instructional strategies like the IDM in the classroom. Due to their limited classroom experiences, preservice teachers may struggle when asked to identify possible topics for inquiry, and when crafting a *compelling question* as they begin the initial IDM design process. They may seek out suggestions as a starting point, submit topics that are not aligned with learning standards, or propose topics that while compelling, are not developmentally appropriate for elementary students (e.g., the Holocaust) as they cycle through multiple topic ideas before finding a suitable one to expand upon.

One way that EPPs can mitigate this issue and support preservice teachers who need help understanding the social studies content and/or identifying a point of inquiry is to provide a suggested list of social studies topics appropriate for elementary-age students that align with national and/or state learning standards. Such inquiries and their corresponding *compelling questions* may include topics like worker's rights (*Who protects workers?*), refugees (*Why do some children have to leave their homes?*), or school integration (*How did Sylvia Mendez affect Civil Rights?*).

Prior to beginning the inquiry, the EPP can ask preservice teachers to submit their proposed topic and *compelling question* for approval so it can be checked for age and grade-level appropriateness. The EPP can also review crucial components of the template, such as the alignment of resources to activities and supporting questions; tasks preservice teachers often struggle with, particularly when designing their first inquiry. If a preservice teacher wanted to focus on the topic of activism, for example, they could create an IDM based on Lindstrom's (2021) children's picture book *We Are Water Protectors*. This IDM focuses on the *compelling question* "Who keeps our water safe?" and aligns with *supporting questions* and tasks that invite students to provide a definition for "water protectors," to identify potential concerns around pipelines, and to consider ways that people may become involved in protecting our waterways (See Appendix A for an IDM example that can be shared with preservice teachers).

Additionally, providing ongoing feedback can help preservice teachers improve their inquiries, which EPPs can provide directly, or by facilitating peer critiques with classmates. Breaking the design process down into distinct, systematic steps can help scaffold the inquiry creation and help preservice feel more confident as they develop their skills and knowledge. It can also provide a practical, real-world model for how preservice teachers can introduce and scaffold the use of IDMs with their own students in the future.

Grounding the Inquiry with Primary Sources

In addition to understanding the IDM's overall structure and how to initiate the point of inquiry with a *compelling question*, preservice teachers must locate appropriate *featured*

resources to more deeply examine and to expand on the topic (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017). However, identifying appropriate primary and secondary sources that align with the point of inquiry can be challenging, and preservice teachers may need guidance locating and vetting resources for both quality and appropriateness. When preservice teachers begin curating resources for their IDMs, EPPs may need to revisit the differences between primary and secondary sources and how and when to use them. Since the purpose of these *featured source*s is to provide information from multiple perspectives about a given topic (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017), the sources must be varied, and the primary sources in particular must be accurate, and gathered from multiple, trusted origins, like The Library of Congress or The National Archives. Similar to the students they will teach, preservice teachers may have received minimal social studies education in elementary school (Fitchett, et al., 2014; McGuire, 2007), thus limiting their experience with resource analysis. Resource analysis can help students realize that popular media such as books, movies, and television shows may present unreliable or biased information, so primary sources are essential to providing a complete and accurate understanding of the topic. Reviewing the characteristics of primary and secondary sources, providing suggested sites for locating high quality primary sources, and providing assistance as students determine the reliability of their sources can provide helpful scaffolds as preservice teachers select resources for their IDMs.

Children's Picture Books as Gateways to Inquiry and Activism

While the importance of primary sources cannot be understated, the IDM can also include secondary sources that help support students' understanding of the topic of inquiry, and can help inform a counternarrative. In particular, we highly suggest that EPPs encourage the use of children's picture books as *featured sources*, as they are a readily available, familiar staple in every elementary school classroom. Picture books are accessible to children of all ages and reading levels, and use simple language with vivid illustrations to convey complex ideas, which makes them a perfect resource for introducing multifaceted topics to even the youngest learners.

For example, teachers can use the children's picture book *All the Way to the Top* (Pimentel, 2020) to make the topic of activism more concrete for young students. This text shares the story of eight-year-old Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins, the youngest activist in the 1990 "Capitol Crawl;" a demonstration that drew awareness to the architectural barriers individuals with physical disabilities often encounter. The vivid illustrations, coupled with the empowering written narrative showcase the determination and courage Jennifer felt as she crawled up the steps of the Capitol. The story demonstrates how text and illustrations work together to create a powerful insider's perspective and message of empowerment and activism that even young children can understand and gain inspiration from.

Today's teachers are faced with the challenge of covering important social studies concepts (Fitchett, et al., 2014; McGuire, 2007), which often involves teaching content that is considered "challenging or divisive" (Kitchen & Taylor, 2020). Children's books can provide a

familiar and unobtrusive way to introduce difficult topics to students (Pennington & Tackett, 2021), and when used in tandem with the IDM, they can provide a powerful and effective way to introduce young students to important social, environmental, and civic issues (Adkins, 2024). While primary sources support topics by providing historical context and background, children's picture books provide a gateway to inquiry by allowing students to step into the shoes of diverse, historical and present-day characters to help them better understand and empathize with the different perspectives, experiences, and ideas of others (Colantonio-Yurko et al., 2022). Additionally, including a variety of books with diverse characters and perspectives models and encourages inclusivity in the classroom.

Pairing children's picture books and primary sources within an IDM can provide opportunities for preservice teachers to practice multiple skills, including resource analysis, identifying counternarratives, locating appropriate primary and secondary sources, lesson alignment, and creating student centered activities. Levison and Levine (2013) argue that students need sustained, experiential social studies education in order to learn and work together as citizens. These hands-on experiences allow students to collaboratively investigate a variety of causes and to create an argument addressing the *compelling question*.

An essential part of the IDM is developing an inquiry that breaks the dominant perspective commonly found in social studies curricula, or provides a counternarrative to a given social studies topic. Children's picture books portray diverse characters and cultures, which provide insight into different communities and social issues. By presenting the diverse perspectives found in children's picture books, preservice teachers can spark critical conversations that challenge the dominant narrative, and enhance student understanding of the world around them, making history "an asset rather than an afterthought" (Tackett, et al., 2022, p. 75).

Children's picture books specifically about activism, for example, often feature young characters who take action to address societal issues in the environment, in the social justice arena, or in the context of diverse topics/experiences. These stories can inspire students to believe in their ability to make a difference, to see themselves becoming an agent of change, and to empower them to take action in their own lives (Olstead, et al., 2023). Effective activism requires critical thinking skills, including the ability to analyze information, question assumptions, and evaluate different perspectives. Children's picture books prompt readers to consider complex issues from multiple angles, and can help students develop these skills from a young age, laying the foundation for informed and thoughtful citizenship (Adkins, 2024). By combining the storytelling power of children's picture books with the inquiry-based structure of the IDM, preservice teachers can gain a more nuanced understanding of global issues and how they intersect with education, preparing them to create inclusive, engaging, and impactful classroom experiences for all students.

EPPs can support preservice teachers as they consider sources related to specific topics by providing suggested book lists or websites (such as Lee and Low Books) and by ensuring that at least one children's book is available to support their selected topic. Providing similar sample

topics, book lists, and exemplars can also benefit preservice teachers who struggle to identify topics, and can help ensure that their IDMs are focused on appropriate texts that meet the counternarrative criteria (for examples of resources and suggested children's books about activism that can be shared with preservice teachers, see Appendix B and C).

EPPs may also ask preservice teachers to submit selected resources, such as children's picture books and accompanying primary sources for review in order to ensure that they are on the right track with text selection. Offering individual feedback on the resources, and/or facilitating whole class discussions that allow preservice teachers to share their topics and resources, while offering critiques and asking questions of their peers may also be helpful as preservice teachers practice curating and vetting instructional resources. Whole class share-outs also provide the added benefit of introducing a variety of topics and resources to everyone, while also allowing space for critical analysis of resources from peers or through instructor modeling. This can help preservice teachers hone their skills for resource analysis; a skill necessary in all content areas.

Fostering Inclusivity, Equity, and Social Justice

In addition to selecting topics that allow students to examine multiple perspectives and counternarratives, preservice teachers must also select topics and resources for their IDM that focus on equity and diversity. IDMs play a crucial role in helping preservice teachers become more inclusive by providing a framework for designing learning experiences that accommodate diverse learners and promote equity (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). Representation of students' race, ethnicity, and culture in the classroom curriculum is essential for fostering equity and inclusivity, especially for students of color. When students see their identities reflected in the content, it helps affirm their sense of self-worth and belonging, which are critical for engagement and academic success (Gay, 2018). Moreover, a curriculum that reflects diverse cultural perspectives counters the historical marginalization of certain groups and promotes mutual understanding and respect among all learners (Banks, 2015). This representation is not only beneficial for personal growth but also encourages critical thinking, by exposing students to multiple perspectives, thereby preparing them to navigate and address complex social issues (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The IDM's flexible design allows for easy integration of diverse cultural, social, and historical topics, resources, and viewpoints into the curriculum. This allows preservice teachers to tailor the inquiry, resources, and assessments to meet the needs of diverse learners, ensuring that all students feel seen and valued as they engage in critical discussions to deepen their understanding of these perspectives. Finally, curating texts and resources that include diverse cultural, social, and historical viewpoints can help all students feel their own cultures represented in the content (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Children's picture books in particular, provide preservice teachers with the tool for providing authentic opportunities for students to actively explore issues of social justice (Oyler, 2011), and for understanding how they can become activists not only in their future, but in the here and now. By engaging students in critical discussions about power

dynamics, privilege, and systemic inequalities, preservice teachers can empower their own, future students to become agents of change and advocates for social justice (Adkins, 2024).

Pairing Primary Sources and Children's Picture Books with Examples

EPPs can support preservice teachers throughout the IDM design process by providing a variety of examples showcasing how primary sources can be paired with children's picture books, and also providing examples and opportunities to experience these resources firsthand. For example, there are multiple topics and resources on activism that preservice teachers can utilize to help students learn how to take informed action, foster inclusivity, and embrace empowerment, all while breaking the dominant narrative and focusing on counternarratives.

For example, when introducing environmental activism, photos from the 2016 Standing Rock/Dakota Access Pipeline protests can be examined as primary sources alongside the children's picture book, *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom (2020), which describes the contemporary struggles of indigenous peoples while also illuminating environmental harms. Pairing these two sources allows students to compare visuals from the protest to the book illustrations, providing real life examples of the topic discussed in the book.

Additionally, texts such as *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Maker's Strike of 1909* by Michelle Markel (2016) or *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by Kathleen Krull (2013) allow students to explore working conditions and workers' responses to those conditions. Pairing these books with primary sources such as Rose Cohen's testimonial about her experience working in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory (Testimonial, n.d.), or Cesar Chavez's Letter from Delano (Chavez, 1969) provide students with firsthand accounts to support the texts, (though preservice teachers will need to select excerpts from Chavez's letter to make it more accessible for elementary students).

Similarly, preservice teachers can expand their knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement beyond Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks and develop a counternarrative by reading children's picture books like *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer: The Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement* (Carole Boston Weatherford, 2019) or by reading *The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist* (Cynthia Levinson, 2017). Additionally, myriad primary sources exist that would further expand on these topics by providing first-hand information. For example, news articles about Hamer's thoughts on medical care for African Americans, or being refused a place on the Democratic National Convention ballot in 1964 can be located in *Memphis World*, while FBI files containing arrest records for Hamer and others for trying to use a bus terminal bathroom in 1963 are also available (Digital Public Library of America, n.d.). Similarly, Bob Adelman, a photographer present in Birmingham in May, 1963, has a collection of photos featuring the Children's March that may supplement the Levinson (2017) text, and provide strong real-life examples of the events discussed within the book (Adelman, 1963).

Building Cross-Disciplinary Connections

Infusing the IDM with children's picture books can also help build a bridge between language arts skills and social studies topics. The IDM's structured framework provides an opportunity for preservice teachers to foster inquiry-based learning experiences across disciplinary contexts (Tackett et al., 2022), and to promote active and authentic opportunities for developing critical thinking skills and informed learners in both disciplines (Massey, 2017). For example, integrating science and social studies allows students to explore climate change by examining both its scientific causes and its social consequences throughout different societies. Likewise, integrating math and social studies allows students to explore quantitative analysis in the realm of economics around the world or through policy studies. Such integration encourages critical reading, writing, and research skills while engaging students in historic events and narratives (Oyler, 2011).

In this line of cross-disciplinary inquiry, students might analyze historical documents, literature, and multimedia resources to understand different perspectives of key historical events through the lens of both social studies and language arts. Drawing on a variety of resources not only provides students with the tools to develop critical thinking skills, but also helps them practice applying these skills as they make informed decisions about social studies topics (Odebiyi, 2021). Through these experiences, students can begin to see themselves as agents of change not only in the classroom, but also in their communities, and ultimately, in the world (NCSS, 2017). By applying principles of inquiry-based learning within an interdisciplinary context, the combined use of children's picture books and the IDM enables students to make connections across different subject areas, fostering a deeper understanding of complex issues, and promoting critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

Encouraging Active Engagement and Reflection

Finally, a major goal of the IDM is to encourage students to become active rather than passive learners, and to help develop student-centered classrooms. Implementing IDMs in the classroom allows teachers to prioritize active student participation and engagement (Cuenca, 2021) which fosters deeper comprehension and retention across disciplines (Massey, 2017). Rather than passively receiving information, students learn how to take ownership of their learning process by conducting research, collaborating with peers, and presenting their findings. These active learning experiences position students to better understand the significance of their studies beyond the classroom, which enhances motivation and helps fosters a sense of purpose for their learning (Lai, Carlson, & Heaton, 2018). Similarly, EPPs can replicate this active learning environment by providing preservice teachers the opportunity to explore authentic, relevant issues related to social studies through their ongoing IDM design, and by asking them to reflect on their growth throughout the learning process.

In addition to active learning, IDMs incorporate opportunities for differentiated instruction and provide opportunities for students to engage in reflection and metacognition. As part of the *formative* and *summative performance tasks* and *taking action* components, students are encouraged to think critically about their learning process, to identify areas for growth, and to set goals for improvement. This type of reflection also fosters self-awareness and self-regulation, empowering students to become lifelong learners and proactive consumers of knowledge (Virtanen, Niemi, & Nevgi, 2017). By emphasizing reflection and metacognition throughout the inquiry process, EPPs can encourage preservice teachers to not only acquire social studies content knowledge and pedagogical acuity, but to become active, thoughtful participants in their learning journey. Supporting preservice teachers as they design their IDMs and encouraging active verbal and/or written reflection throughout the process can provide the structure needed to balance EPP guidance with preservice teacher autonomy, ultimately empowering them as learners who take ownership of their education, and will empower their own students to do the same.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the transformative potential for EPPs that ask preservice teachers to integrate children's picture books into IDMs designed for the elementary classroom cannot be understated. The strategic use of picture books as educational tools encourages critical discussions of activism and social justice, and helps students explore the diverse perspectives of others in the world in addition to their own, lived experiences. Meanwhile, the IDM framework empowers teachers to guide students through inquiry-based learning, promoting compelling questions to foster critical thinking for more informed decision making, to promote empathy, and to understand their current and future role as an activist not only for themselves but for others as well.

Students who are taught the importance of asking questions to analyze the world around them build bridges between language arts and social studies skills. By combining these resources, future educators can be equipped to inspire classroom activism and to lead essential conversations that enable students to become compassionate, informed, and active members of society. Ultimately, this approach paves the way for a new generation of teachers who can skillfully bridge academic disciplines, promote change, and positively impact their communities.

By embedding these practices into EPPs, preservice teachers not only deepen their pedagogical skill set but also cultivate a mindset that views education as a pathway to global citizenship. Preparing future educators to integrate children's picture books alongside the IDM framework ensures they can effectively guide students through structured, inquiry-based learning experiences that promote critical thinking, empathy, and action. The IDM's focus on developing *compelling questions* and fostering evidence-based exploration empowers students to analyze global challenges and consider their roles in creating solutions. When preservice teachers internalize these approaches, they are better positioned to guide their students toward becoming

proactive participants on the global stage, ready to address complex issues with compassion, informed decision-making, and a commitment to positive change.

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Appendix A
An Example IDM Focusing on Activism

Inquiry Design Model (IDM) Blueprint™			
Compelling Question	**Who keeps our water safe?**		
Standards and Practices	D2.Civ.2.3-5: Explain how a democracy relies on people's responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate. D2.Civ.10.3-5: Identify the beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and values that underlie their own and others' points of view about civic issues. D2.Civ.14-3-5: Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.		
Staging the Question	Display "Pipeline Spill" (https://www.npr.org/2016/12/15/505658553/pipeline-spill-adds-to-concerns-about-dakota-access-pipeline) photo to students. Students will complete the "See, Think, Wonder" (https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/See%20Think%20Wonder_3.pdf) thinking routine and answer the questions: What do you see? What do you think about that? What does it make you wonder? (See references for links to all online sources listed within the IDM).		
Supporting Question 1	**Supporting Question 2**	**Supporting Question 3**	
What is a water protector?	**Why are some people concerned about oil pipelines?**	**How can people help protect waterways?**	
Formative Performance Task	**Formative Performance Task**	**Formative Performance Task**	
Write a definition of water protector. Include a picture or example of a water protector	**Make a list of reasons people might be concerned about oil pipelines. Include a brief explanation with each reason.**	**Summarize ways that people can help protect waterways.**	
Featured Sources	**Featured Sources**	**Featured Sources**	
***We Are Water Protectors* (Carole Lindstrom, 2021)** **Getty Images Standing Rock Protests gallery (teachers will need to select appropriate photos for class use).**	**Pipelines** https://earthworks.org/issues/pipelines/	**How we protect watersheds** https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/protect-water-and-land/land-and-water-stories/how-we-protect-watersheds/ **Help your kids protest safely** https://learningliftoff.com/family/society-and-culture/6-ways-to-help-your-kids-protest-safely-and-advocate-for-change/ **How youth can make their voices heard** https://www.kqed.org/education/530784/how-youth-can-make-their-voices-heard	

Summative Performance Task	**Argument**	Create an argument (poster, brochure, detailed outline, etc.) with evidence that addresses the compelling question "Who keeps our water safe?" Make sure to explain why this might be necessary and how people may contribute to this cause.
	Extension	What happened with the Dakota Access Pipeline? Research what has happened since the 2016 Standing Rock protests and create a timeline of events.
Taking Informed Action	**Understand:** Research what other areas of the United States have had similar struggles with pipelines. **Assess:** Examine the advantages and disadvantages of the pipelines in these areas. **Act:** Write a letter to a newspaper (or, if this issue is in your state, to a local representative) that outlines support or opposition to the pipeline.	

A note from the authors: The Creative Commons License (Creative Commons, n. d.). permits educators to share the IDM template so long as no changes are made to the original format and attribution is credited to Grant, Lee, and Swan (2014) and College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Teachers (https://c3teachers.org/).

Appendix B
Examples of Children's Picture Books About Activism

Title	Author	Description
Something Happened in Our Town	Celano, Marianne, & Collins, Marietta	This book addresses issues of racial injustice and police brutality in an age-appropriate way, encouraging conversations about empathy, justice, and activism.
Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez	Krull, Kathleen	This story about Cesar Chavez, who was America's Civil Rights leader, tells the tale of how he led a 340-mile peaceful protest march through California. His activism helped to improve the lives of thousands of migrant farmworkers.
The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist	Levinson, Cynthia	This book tells the story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, the youngest known child to be arrested for a Civil Rights protest in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963.
We Are Water Protectors	Lindstrom, Carole	This book highlights the importance of water conservation and environmental activism, empowering children to stand up for the protection of natural resources.
Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Maker's Strike of 1909	Markel, Michelle	This picture book is the biography of Clara Lemlich, who was an immigrant in America in the early 1900s. It describes her fight for equality and justice.
One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia	Paul, Miranda	Based on a true story, this book follows Isatou Ceesay's efforts to address plastic pollution in her community by repurposing plastic bags into beautiful accessories.
The Word Collector	Reynolds, Peter H.	While not explicitly about activism, this book celebrates the power of words and communication, inspiring children to use their voices for positive change.
The Lorax	Dr. Seuss	A classic tale about environmental activism, The Lorax tells the story of a creature who speaks for the trees and warns against the dangers of environmental destruction.
Separate is Never Equal	Tonatiuh, Duncan	A true story about Sylvia Mendez, a young girl who fought for school desegregation in California in the 1940s, promoting the importance of civil rights activism.
Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer: The Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement	Weatherford, Carole Boston	This book chronicles the life of Fannie Lou Hamer, a Civil Rights activist, from her life as a sharecropper in Mississippi and includes her work with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.
Malala's Magic Pencil	Yousafzai, Malala	Based on the life of Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, this book inspires children to advocate for education and gender equality around the world.

Appendix C
Suggested Resources for Children's Picture Books About Activism

Website Resources for Children's Picture Books About Activism
https://diversebooks.org/
https://diversebookfinder.org/content/activism/
www.goodreads.com
https://www.harpercollins.com/blogs/harperkids/childrens-books-about-courage-activism
https://www.leeandlow.com/collections/social-activism-collection
https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/
https://www.weareteachers.com/books-about-activism/
https://www.wildrumpusbooks.com/activismmiddlegrade