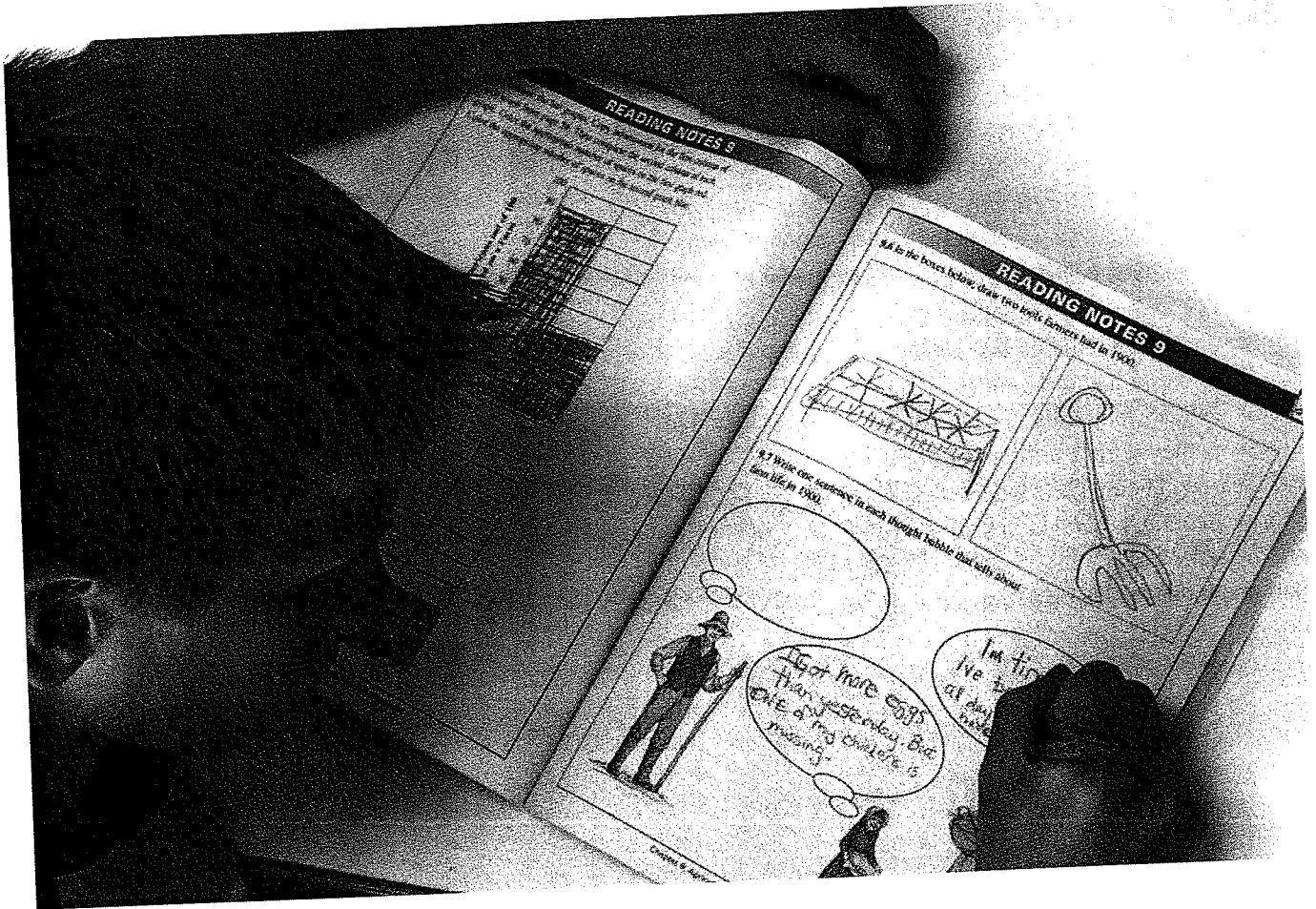


Interactive Student Notebooks



Steps at a Glance

- 1 Appreciate why Interactive Student Notebooks engage students.
- 2 Make Interactive Student Notebooks easy for you and fun for your students.
- 3 Intrigue students with Preview activities that make personal connections.
- 4 Guide reading by having students complete innovative Reading Notes.
- 5 Challenge students to apply their learning through Processing assignments.

Introduction

Posted on a wall of almost every elementary classroom in the nation, you will likely see the crowded daily agenda: reading, writing, spelling, math, physical education, science, music, art, and sometimes even social studies. With all the subjects elementary teachers are responsible for covering, it's no wonder social studies is taught so sporadically. Consequently, most elementary students get a fragmented view of the subject. It is difficult for them to remember—much less synthesize and apply—what they learn. And it is almost impossible for teachers to measure student growth. This is why elementary teachers across the nation are turning to Interactive Student Notebooks.

Students eagerly take out these notebooks when it is time to begin a social studies lesson. They start with a Preview assignment that connects the coming lesson to their lives. During the main activity, they use Reading Notes to record details of what they learn. Finally, they complete Processing assignments—illustrated time lines, Venn diagrams, colorful matrices, annotated maps, flowcharts, sensory figures, historical advertisements, visual metaphors—to synthesize and apply what they have learned. This encourages them to use their multiple intelligences and critical-thinking skills to organize information in new and engaging ways—and gives teachers portfolios that help them monitor and measure individual growth.

STEP

1

Appreciate why Interactive Student Notebooks engage students.

Teachers who use Interactive Student Notebooks find that their students embrace them enthusiastically: “I used to hate taking notes and filling out worksheets in class,” one student reported, “but I love working in my notebook because it’s fun.” Another said, “My notebook has really helped me get organized. I lost everything before this year, and that hurt my grades and my feelings about myself. Keeping everything collected is great!”

Interactive Student Notebooks engage students for several reasons:

They become a portfolio of individual learning.

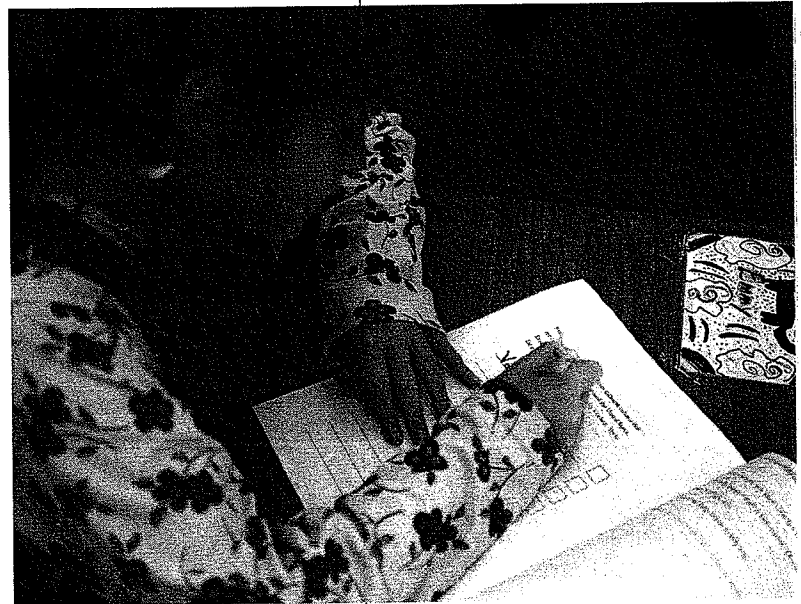
These personal, creative notebooks become a record of each student’s growth. The teacher, students, and even family members can review a student’s progress in writing, illustrating, recording, thinking, and organizational skills.

They help students to systematically organize as they learn. Students can use their notebooks to record ideas about every social studies activity they engage in. They use a variety of organizational techniques—topic headings, page numbers, color-coding, different writing styles—to begin making coherence of what they learn. Gone are the days of homework assignments folded into tight wads and stored in students’ pockets. Now assignments will be kept together in a regular place and in logical order.

They reach out to students, inviting them to become engaged in their learning. Students are accustomed to filling out blanks on a worksheet or taking mind-numbing notes from the board. The Interactive Student Notebook changes all that. Now students are encouraged to accurately record Reading Notes for a *purpose*. They will use this information during Processing assignments that challenge them to really *think* about what they have learned. This helps them become more independent learners.

They encourage students to use a variety of intelligences, not just linguistic intelligence. In these notebooks, students approach understanding in many ways. Interactive Student Notebooks can tap into *visual* intelligence by including such visual elements as graphs, maps, illustrations, pictowords, and visual metaphors; *musical* intelligence by asking students to compose song lyrics or react to a piece of music in writing; *intrapersonal* intelligence by encouraging students to reflect on how key social studies topics affect them; *interpersonal* intelligence by serving as a place to record group discussions and project notes; and *logical-mathematical* intelligence through the use of spectrums, graphs, and charts.

Students find taking notes in their Interactive Student Notebooks more personal and immediate than filling out worksheets, which are often turned in to the teacher, never to be seen again.

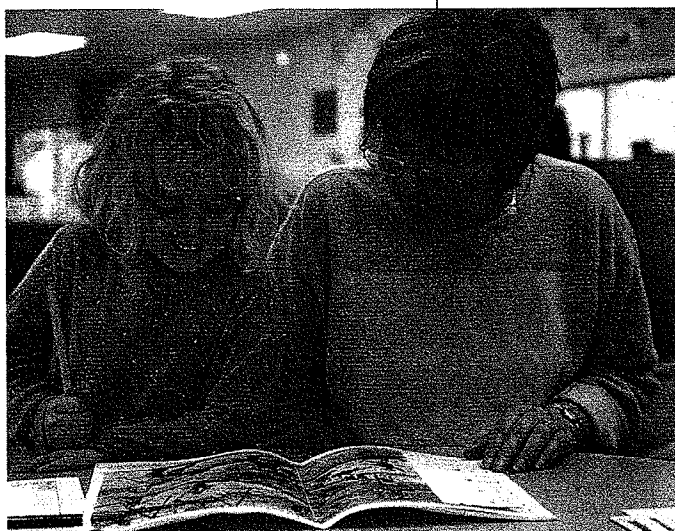


“Interactive Student Notebooks have made my fifth graders more responsible for their own learning. They have become more involved in the lessons, more attentive during the activities and readings, and more precise in their note taking.”

Students' Notebooks Will Improve over Time

Teaching students to use Interactive Student Notebooks takes patience, good modeling, and constant reinforcement. You will discover, however, that after three or four weeks, your students' notebooks will improve dramatically.

The Interactive Student Notebook helps make learning social studies an enjoyable, interactive, successful experience. Teachers are often surprised and thrilled by their students' excitement for the subject.



STEP 2

Make Interactive Student Notebooks easy for you and fun for your students.

You will soon discover that not only are Interactive Student Notebooks fun and engaging for your students, but they can save you hours of time. Here are some quick hints for ensuring that your students' notebooks are as easy for you to use and assess as they are enjoyable for your students:

Materials An abundance of materials—crayons, colored pencils and markers, scissors, glue sticks, and rulers—will spark creativity for notebook assignments.

Covers Introduce the Interactive Student Notebook by encouraging students to create colorful covers that reflect the social studies themes you are teaching. This sends the message that the notebooks will be their own creations that they can take pride in—and help cut down on the number of lost notebooks through the year.

Student Guidelines One of the most important steps for ensuring that your students create successful notebooks is to set clear guidelines. Decide ahead of time what you expect your students to produce in their notebooks, and then clearly communicate your expectations. Most teachers create a list of criteria—when notebooks will be graded, what they will be graded on, what percentage of the social studies grade will depend on the notebook—and ask students to attach that list to the inside cover of their notebooks. Some teachers even include directions for specific types of notebook assignments, class rules, and their grading policy.

Table of Contents You may want students to create a running table of contents for their notebooks. In addition to the list of assignments you expect them to complete, you might add your comments and scores for each assignment. This will help you immensely when it comes time to grade the notebooks.

Author Page Let students create a page about themselves at the front of their notebooks. Their author page could include a portrait or photograph and personal information such as age, height, favorite foods, and family members. Personalizing notebooks will ensure that very few get lost; teachers usually report that only one or two students lose their notebooks over the course of an academic year.

Lost and Found It's a good idea to keep a master notebook so that if students do lose a notebook, they can review the master notebook to see what they need to redo. It can also be used when students are absent or pulled out of your classroom.

Work in Progress You might ask students to tape a manila envelope to the inside front cover of their notebooks as a place for "work in progress." Once an assignment is completed, they can glue it in the appropriate location.

Grading Create a system that allows you to easily grade notebooks every three to four weeks (see pages 74 for tips).

Intrigue students with Preview activities that make personal connections.

Once your notebook system is in place, begin each social studies unit with a Preview that helps your students make a personal connection to what they are about to study. These are usually very short assignments (10 to 20 minutes at the lower-elementary level, 15 to 30 minutes at the upper-elementary level) that are intriguing and fun for students. Some Previews challenge students to predict what the unit will be about; others draw a parallel between a key social studies concept and students' lives. The goal is to activate prior knowledge, tap a wide range of intelligences, and set students up for success with the rest of the unit. Here is a sampling of Preview assignments:



The Geography Song

*Every community big or small
Has its own geography.
With many different features,
I know what they're called.
Listen... I can name them all.
Mountains are the tallest land
the earth has seen.
Valleys are low places in between.
Deserts are hot, dry places.
Some have sand.
A plain is a large, flat piece of land.*

Singing About Geographic Features

This Preview is for a unit in which students learn that communities have different geographic features and that physical maps show these features. Students read along with the lyrics as they listen to "The Geography Song," which mentions such key geographic features as mountains, valleys, deserts, and plains. After students have sung the song and seen pictures of each feature, they annotate a copy of the song in their notebooks with a drawing of each key feature.

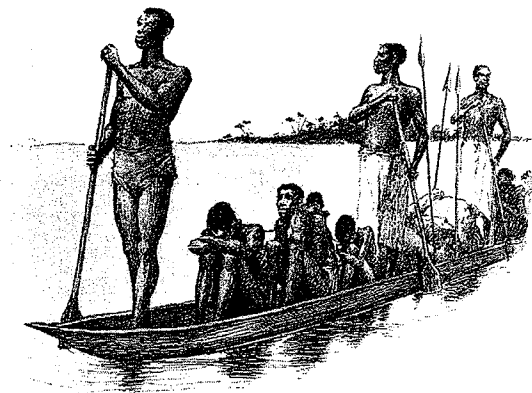
Using a Graph to Predict Farming Trends This Preview is for a unit on how Midwest agriculture changed from 1800 to today. Students begin by graphing the average number of people a farmer could feed in 1870, 1920, and 1950, and then they predict what happened in 1960 and 1970. They are then given data for those two decades and see clearly that, as the years have gone by, fewer farmers have been able to feed more people. Finally, they hypothesize why this might be and what changes in agricultural practices have enabled this to happen—questions they will explore in the coming activities.

Understanding What a Dilemma Is This Preview is for a unit in which students learn about slavery from the perspective of West Africans facing difficult dilemmas as European slave traders force them from their homelands. Students learn that a dilemma is a situation requiring one to choose between evenly balanced and usually unattractive options. They are given an example of a dilemma they might confront, such as choosing between eating a dinner they don't like or going to bed hungry. They then write a description of a dilemma they have faced recently and how they responded to it. Finally, several volunteers share their answers.

Spotlight Student Notebooks

Once every two or three weeks, randomly choose five or six notebooks for a "gallery walk." As your students circulate around the classroom looking at their peers' work, have them look for good ideas they can use in their own notebooks.

Using a Preview activity to encourage students to explore a dilemma they have faced will help them empathize with the dilemmas West Africans faced during the slave trade.



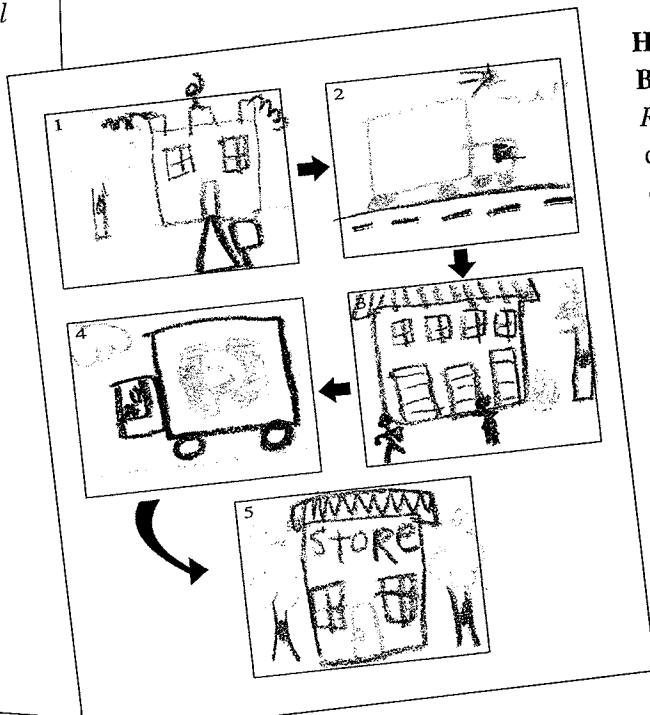
“Because the notebooks belong to them, the students want to do a good job. They are eager to add color to illustrations, highlight vocabulary, and take additional notes—all habits and organizational skills that they will carry with them.”

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Guide reading by having students complete innovative Reading Notes.

One of the most powerful ways to improve students’ reading comprehension and retention is by having them complete innovative Reading Notes after each reading assignment. Reading Notes inspire students to think carefully about what they have read as they record main ideas in a graphic form. Encouraging students to record information in these innovative, visual ways will help them recall key social studies concepts months—even years—later.

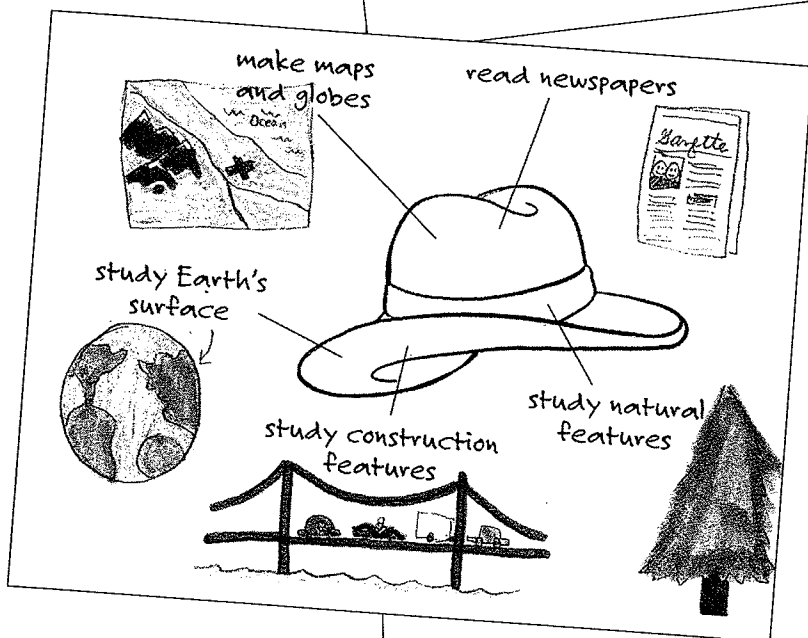
Here are some examples of Reading Notes with inventive graphic organizers that will help your students process and remember what they read:



How Are Goods Made and Brought to Us?

Reading: Lower-elementary students read about how goods are produced in factories, transported to and stored in warehouses, and then transported to and sold in stores.

Reading Notes: Students complete a flowchart that shows how goods are made, shipped, distributed, and sold. They must draw a picture for each step in the flowchart and put the steps in the correct order.

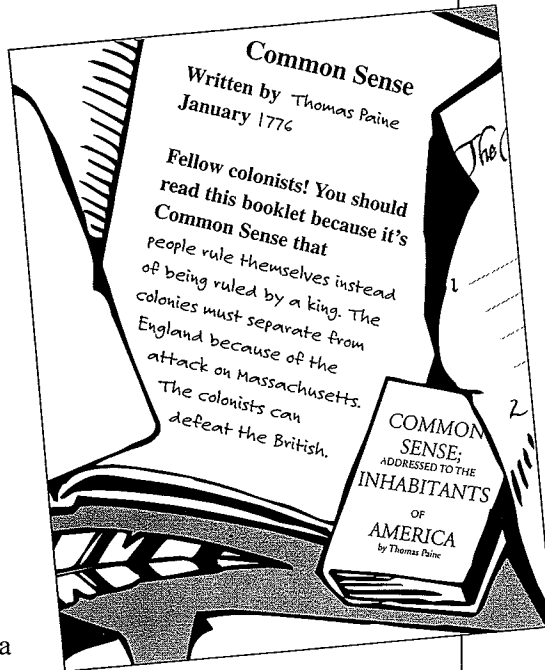


What Are the Social Sciences?

Reading: Upper-elementary students read about four types of social scientists—economists, historians, geographers, and political scientists—and discover that they offer powerful ways to understand individuals and society. *Reading Notes:* Students create a spoke diagram for each social scientist. At the center of each spoke diagram is a hat representing that particular social science. Students attach words, symbols, and pictures to each hat to show they understand what that social scientist does.

The Declaration of Independence

Reading: Students read the background to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, including biographical details on Thomas Jefferson, the convening of the Second Continental Congress, and the publication of Thomas Paine's booklet "Common Sense." They also read how and why the Declaration was signed and interpret key excerpts. **Reading Notes:** Students analyze what they read by annotating a graphic organizer of the famous desk upon which Jefferson wrote the Declaration. They record notes by completing missing parts of several artifacts from Jefferson's desk. For example, they fill out an invitation to the Second Continental Congress and write an introductory page for "Common Sense."



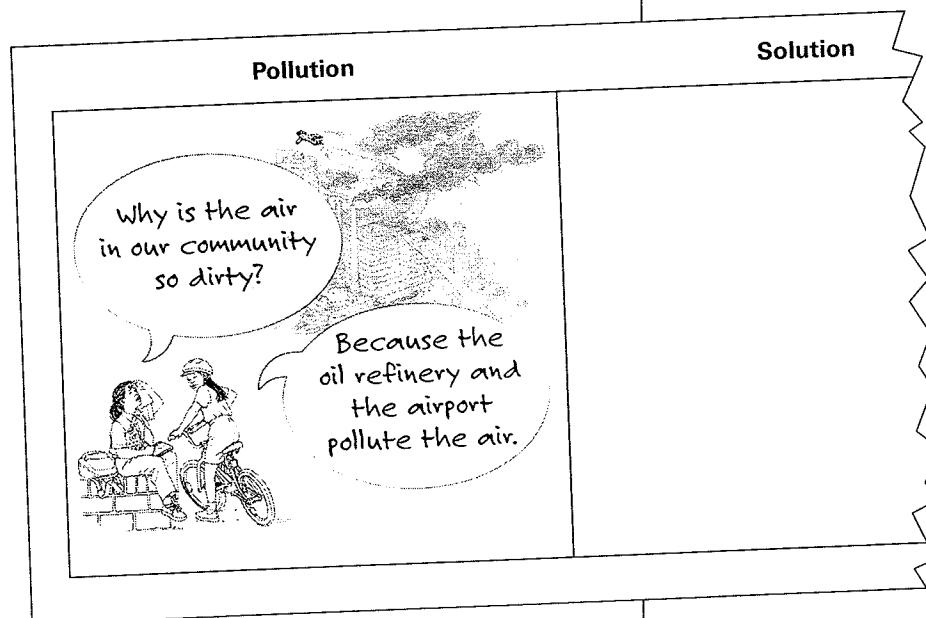
What Is a Map?

Reading: Lower-elementary students read that a map is a drawing of a place; has symbols and a key; and shows the directions north, east, south, and west. **Reading Notes:** Students use what they read about maps to create a map of a fictitious teacher's classroom. They must use symbols, keys, and directions accurately to show they have understood the reading.

Whose Planet Is It, Anyway?

Reading: Upper-elementary students read case studies of how people have solved environmental problems in and around their communities. For example, they read about how a group of third graders in El Segundo, California, planted trees in their community to help cut down on air pollution.

Reading Notes: Students complete two-frame "Pollution Solution" cartoons for each case study. The first frame shows two characters explaining what is polluted and how it became polluted. The next frame shows the two characters explaining how their community worked together to solve the problem.

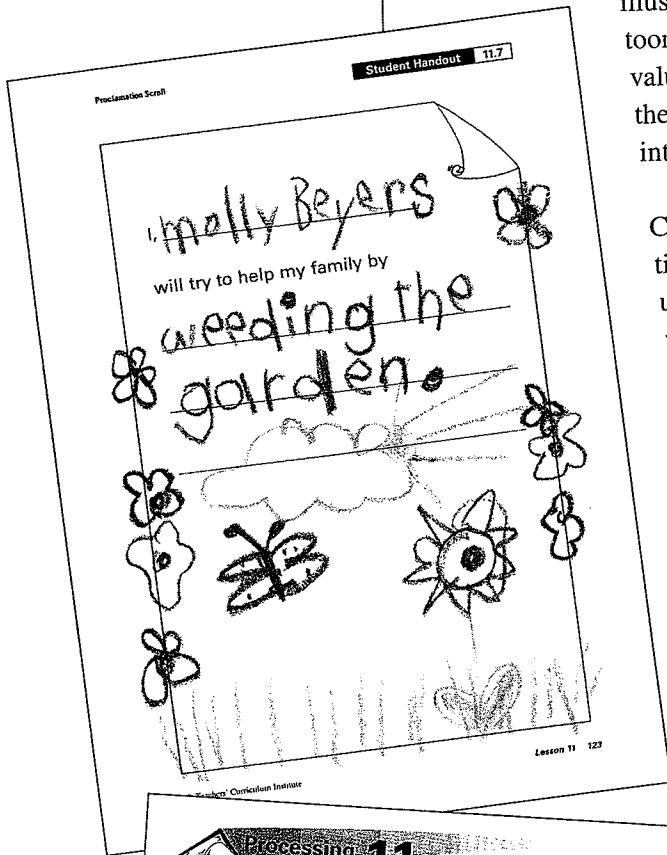


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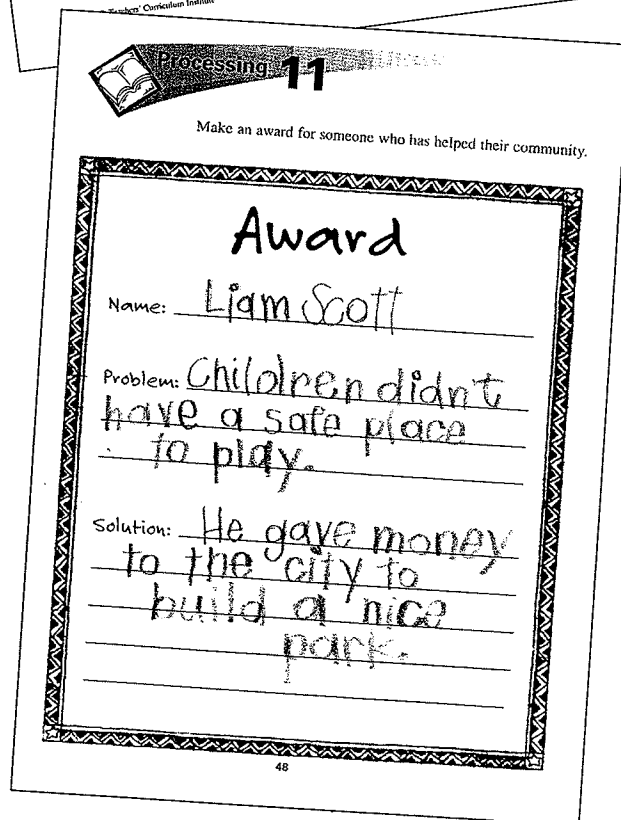
Challenge students to apply their learning through Processing assignments.

Processing assignments are unit wrap-up activities that challenge students to actively use the information they have learned. Students work out an understanding of new material by using illustrations, diagrams, flowcharts, poetry, colors, matrices, cartoons, and the like. They explore their opinions and clarify their values. They wonder about “what if” hypothetical situations. And they express their feelings and reactions to activities that tap into intrapersonal intelligence.

Completed Processing assignments usually have an appropriate title, use many colors, incorporate the key information from the unit, show graphical imagination and creativity, and may use a variety of resources (the text, notes, outside readings, references, interviews, magazines, and so on). The intent of each Processing assignment is to have students *actively apply* what they learned in the unit so that you—and they—can assess their understanding. Here are five representative Processing assignments:

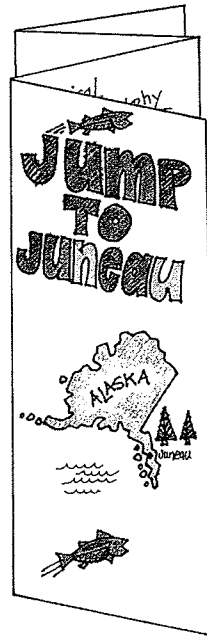


Proclamation Scrolls In a lower-elementary unit, students learn about ways family members care for each other. They process what they learn by creating “proclamation scrolls” that list ways they will help their families. Students learn that a proclamation is a statement a person makes that tells what the person intends to do. The class brainstorms ways they can help their families. Students create their scrolls by writing and illustrating a sentence that begins “I will help my family by....”



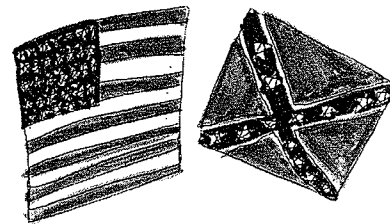
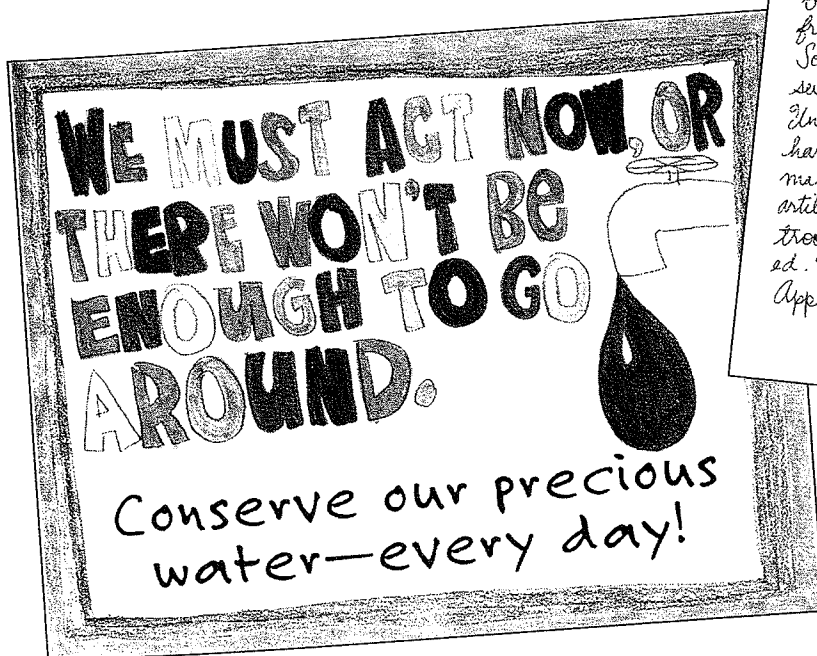
Community Service Awards In a lower-elementary unit, students learn about four people who made a difference in their communities: Jane Addams, who helped Chicago’s children; Garrett Morgan, who made his community safer by inventing the traffic light; Susan LaFlesche Picotte, a Native American who helped sick people on her reservation; and Luis Valdez, who wrote plays to improve farmworkers’ lives. At the end of the unit, students create an award to honor another person who has made a contribution to a community. They share their finished awards with the class.

Travel Brochures In an upper-elementary unit, students learn about the geography of communities around the country. In the Processing assignment, they make travel brochures about the geography of their own community. Their brochures include the name of their community and state; an outline of the state with a dot representing the community; and labeled illustrations of one physical geographic feature, one natural resource, and a typical day's climate.



Historical Eulogies In an upper-elementary unit, students learn what life was like in the Union and Confederate Armies during the Civil War. The Processing assignment is to write a eulogy honoring those who fought and died at Gettysburg. Students are told that a eulogy is speech or writing that praises a person or thing. The Civil War eulogy that students create must describe the conditions under which Union and Confederate soldiers fought and died; contain the terms *freedom*, *Pickett's Charge*, *trenches*, *artillery shells*, *wounded*, *hardtack*, *shortages*, and *Appomattox*; be appropriately illustrated; and be free of spelling and grammatical errors.

Public Awareness Posters In an upper-elementary unit, students explore the history of how people have shared and tamed the water of the Colorado River. In the Processing assignment, they create a poster to educate people about the future challenges for water users in the Colorado River Basin. The poster includes an eye-catching illustration, a sentence that clearly states the challenge to people living in the Southwest, and a sentence that suggests what people can do to help meet that challenge.



In the Civil War, in which Union and Confederate soldiers both felt they were fighting for freedom, conditions were almost unbearable. Soldiers on both sides often suffered from severe shortages of food and other supplies. Union soldiers ate thick, dry biscuits called hardtack; Confederates boiled chicory root to make a coffee like drink. During Pickett's Charge, artillery shells tore through the Confederate troops, leaving thousands dead and wounded. The Confederates finally surrendered at Appomattox Court House in Virginia in April 1865.