Elections

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ABOUT STORYPATH

THE STORYPATH STRATEGY

Storypath offers both a structure for organizing the social studies curriculum and an instructional strategy for teaching. The structure is a familiar one: the story. The strategy is grounded in a belief that children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning, and places students' own efforts to understand at the center of the educational enterprise. Together, the structure and the teaching strategy ensure that students feel strongly motivated and have meaningful and memorable learning experiences.

Originally developed in Scotland during the 1960s, Storypath draws support from decades of experience with teachers and students. The approach has its roots in these beliefs about children and learning:

- The world is complex and presents many layers of information. Children know a good deal about how the world works and have a reservoir of knowledge that is often untapped in the classroom.
- When children build on that knowledge through activities such as questioning and researching, new understandings are acquired. Because children construct their own knowledge and understanding of their world, their learning is more meaningful and memorable.
- Problem solving is a natural and powerful human endeavor. When children are engaged in problem solving, they take ownership of their learning.
- The story form integrates content and skills from many disciplines and provides a context for children to gain a deeper, more complex understanding of major concepts.

AN INQUIRY APPROACH

Questioning, by both teacher and students, is a key component of Storypath. Through the story structure and the discourse it creates, the teacher guides students in their search for meaning and understanding as they acquire new knowledge and skills. Your questions, and the discussions they engender, cause students to:

- ask their own questions and think critically about what they know;
- use their prior knowledge to make sense of new information;
- connect personally to important social studies concepts.

The story structure and inquiry guided by unit goals provide the framework for students to integrate skills and complex content through problems they encounter. As they do so, their understanding of important concepts is extended and key connections are made.

THE STORY STRUCTURE

For thousands of years, stories have helped us create order and make connections between events. Storypath's narrative structure helps students understand concepts that they often find difficult to comprehend in the traditional social studies curriculum.

Each Storypath unit centers on a unique and engaging story that provides a concrete context for understanding the social science content. This story may be based on actual historical events, as developed in *Struggle for Independence*. Or the story might instead be based on typical community or business structures, as developed in *Families in Their Neighborhoods* or in *The Toy Company*. From all of these structures, students develop a meaningful context for developing understanding of the topic.

Typical structure of a Storypath unit

CREATING THE SETTING

Students create the setting by completing a frieze or mural of the place.

CREATING THE CHARACTERS

Students create characters for the story whose roles they will play during subsequent episodes.

BUILDING CONTEXT

Students are involved in activities such as reading, writing, and research to stimulate them to think more deeply about the people and the place they have created.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Characters confront problems typical of those faced by people of that time and place.

CONCLUDING EVENT

Students plan and participate in an activity that brings closure to the story.

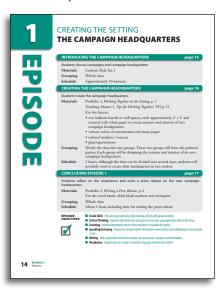
USING THE COMPONENTS

TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

Each Storypath unit includes a Teacher's Handbook, which is designed to be flexible and easy to use.

Episode Planning Guides

Each episode opens with an overview of the instructional plan and materials needed.



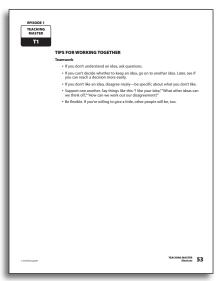
Teaching Notes

Each Handbook contains detailed support for instruction.



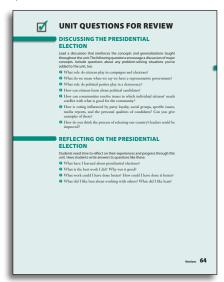
Teaching Masters

Masters provide nonfiction content, writing models, or other information specific to the unit's content. These Masters can be copied for students, displayed in the classroom, or projected via a laptop, depending on your teaching needs.



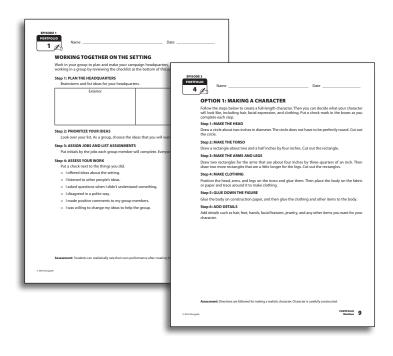
Assessment

Each Handbook contains strategies for assessing learning throughout the unit, as well as unit questions for review and synthesis activities.



STUDENT PORTFOLIO

Students use the Portfolio to read, write, conduct research, and complete other activities crucial to the specific Storypath unit. The Portfolio helps students manage their work throughout the unit. When completed, the Portfolio becomes an authentic assessment tool.





CONTENT SLIDE SETS

Each unit includes Content Slide Sets that offer flexibility in how they are used to support student learning. The number of Slide Sets varies from unit to unit. The slides in each set provide focused nonfiction content and can be used for independent, paired, or small-group reading.

Students use the slides to build context and deepen their understanding of the unit's content. You can use the slides as most appropriate to your situation. For those with laptops, display the appropriate slides for student reading and discussion, or reproduce the slides as needed for each episode for individuals, pairs, or small groups.

In the overview of each episode, slide sets needed are listed and specific suggestions are provided for how to use the slides as you proceed through the episode. Best practice is for the slide to be available to the students either on a laptop in front of them or in hard copy. Then the teacher can use a large screen to display and support discussion related to the slide.

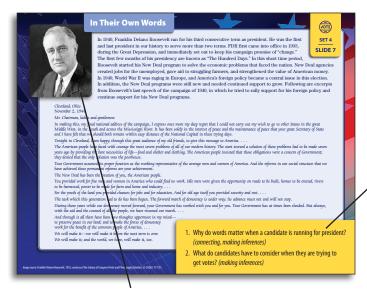
A "reading tips" PDF chart provides quick reminders of key reading strategies. Reproduce "reading tips" for each student or group.

LITERACY AND STORYPATH

With the Storypath strategy, students deepen their understanding of major social studies concepts. Storypath provides literacy support to help students access and make sense of the social studies content. Students apply literacy skills such as reading comprehension, prewriting and writing skills, speaking and listening skills, and vocabulary development.

Reading

Content Slide Sets present opportunities for students to engage in focused content reading. Students can use the slides to engage in shared reading or can listen as a teacher or another student reads.



Comprehension

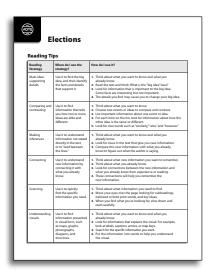
Questions in each Content Slide Set help students focus on important content. Questions are labeled with suggested reading strategies.

Visual Literacy

Each unit offers numerous opportunities to evaluate and respond to visuals such as photographs, maps, diagrams, and illustrations.

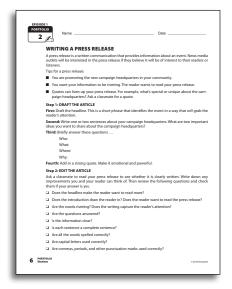
Reading Tips

For easy reference, Reading Tips for using the reading strategies are included on the CD.



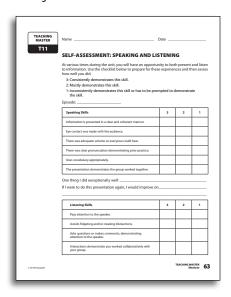
Writing

Throughout each unit, students complete writing activities to prompt thinking as well as to demonstrate what they have learned.



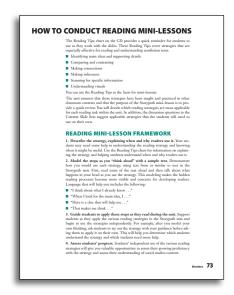
Speaking and Listening

Students refine these skills by presenting ideas to the class and resolving issues through discussion and collaboration.



Reading Mini-Lessons

Use the Reading Mini-Lesson Framework in the Teacher's Handbook to conduct reading mini-lessons.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND STORYPATH

English Language Learners, or ELLs, is a term that applies to students whose primary language is not English. These students are in the process of acquiring English as a way to communicate ideas and gain content knowledge. They don't yet have the tools at their fingertips that native English speakers have that allow them to easily navigate classroom activities and contribute to classroom experiences. ELL students don't lack ability; they just don't know the language.

As ELL students gain experience in an English-speaking classroom, their abilities and comfort levels increase. But remember that regardless of the progress made by ELL students, new material will revert them back to beginner status simply because they do not have the same background knowledge that a student who was born in the United States does.

There are some very basic things the teacher can do to make the classroom a place of learning for ELL students. For example, text-rich activities, without visuals, should be avoided. Visually rich activities should be commonly used, and the senses should be engaged whenever possible. Music and kinesthetic activities, such as role-playing, are excellent tools for ELL students.

Activate prior knowledge. English Language Learners are similar to native English speakers in the most fundamental ways: They possess a great deal of prior knowledge and are excited about sharing that knowledge. To provide scaffolding, preteach new vocabulary and introduce concepts with visuals that relate to the subject matter. When studying another time period, it is important to connect concepts to both the present and the past.

Allow extra time for small-group work. ELL students will benefit from working with partners and small groups. These situations allow students more opportunities to contribute to conversations and complete tasks. In small groups, assign ELL students a specific task to complete, and allow them extra time to complete this task, if needed. When you do have whole-class discussions, you might have ELL students follow this discussion by working with a partner to recap the important ideas or the assignment.

Model tasks and thought processes. Modeling makes tasks and thinking processes more concrete. For example, if students are expected to write a short poem, model the process of writing a poem. Then have them refer to the model poem as they write their own.

Develop vocabulary. Vocabulary development is key to comprehension, so preteach vocabulary whenever possible. Use illustrated word banks and vocabulary exercises that encourage interaction with words. For example, students can write the word and draw an illustration of each word in the word bank and then verbally explain how the word relates to the big ideas in the unit.

Allow use of the native language. For students who possess few English words, allow them to complete writing activities in their native languages. As they learn more English, they will begin to incorporate English into their written and oral languages. This validates the students' native languages and their prior knowledge, and also helps bridge the gap on their way to learning—and using—their new language.

Encourage involvement in class discussions. English Language Learners will likely be reluctant to contribute to whole-group discussions, so encourage them to contribute in a way that is comfortable for them—words, phrases, simple sentences. Make sure the classroom is a safe and supportive environment.

Modify assignments and assessments. Students can use many different modes to communicate their understanding of unit concepts. Illustrating, cutting and pasting vocabulary activities, using graphic organizers such as time lines, and completing sentence stems are all excellent and valid methods for responding to content. ELL students should also work on and present material with a partner or in small groups whenever possible. In these situations, you will gain a more valid assessment of what ELL students have learned.

Additionally, at the beginning of the school year and anytime new material is introduced, limit the number and complexity of the activities you assign. Allow students to use methods other than writing to respond to information.



Look for this icon throughout this Teacher's Handbook. This icon indicates that an activity is particularly appropriate for English Language Learners.

ASSESSMENT

Each Storypath unit offers a range of options for assessing student learning.

Portfolio Assessment

The Student Portfolio provides ongoing assessment of student understanding of unit objectives.

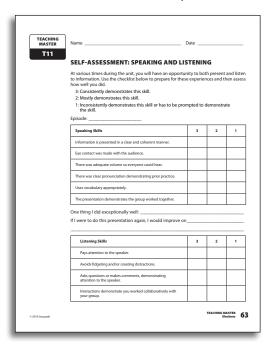
During Each Episode

Assessment suggestions are included throughout the Teacher's Handbook and align with the Student Portfolio. Complex thinking and problem-solving abilities are assessed as students role-play and respond to critical events throughout the unit.



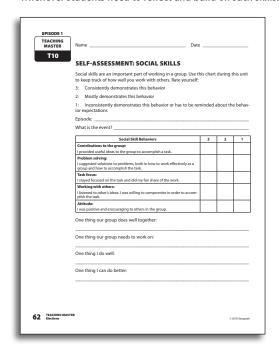
Self-Assessment

Students have opportunities to assess their own work, such as writing and oral presentations. There are also opportunities for student reflection at the end of each episode.



Social Skills

A social skills master is provided to support student selfassessment and can be used at the teacher's discretion whenever students need to reflect and build on such skills.



End of the Unit

At the conclusion of the unit, synthesizing questions reinforce unit objectives. Optional synthesis activities are included to guide students to apply what they've learned. Each synthesis activity includes criteria for assessment—you decide how best to use these options.



