

Introduction

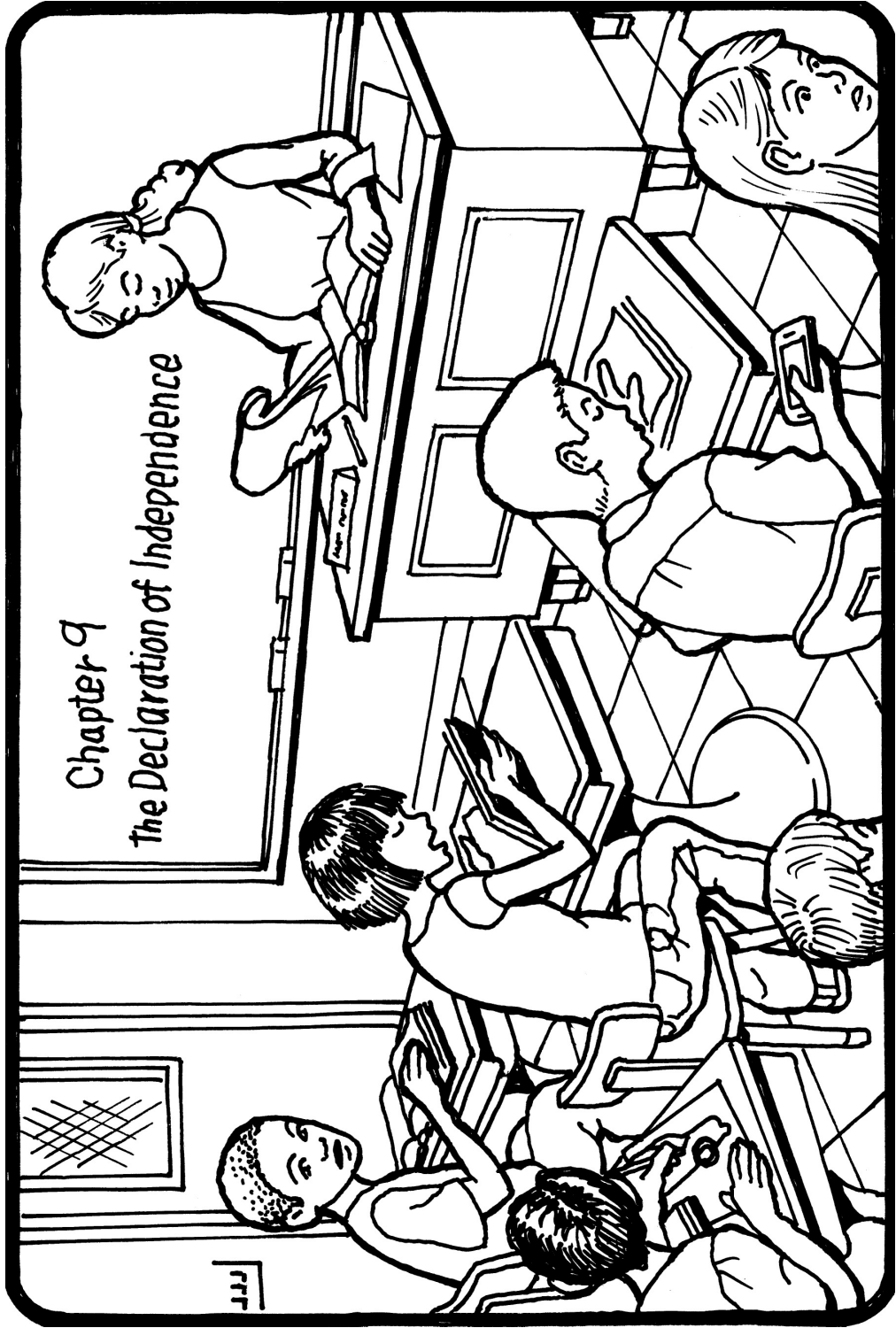
Visualize the two classrooms below and see if they remind you of any previous memories regarding the way in which you were taught social studies.

SCENARIO I ■

Michelle is a very conscientious student. It is very important to her that she make *As* in all of her classes. Today she enters her American history class at Lincoln Park High School. She takes her seat up front, which is where she chooses to sit in all of her classes. Michelle and the rest of the class are told to open their social studies textbooks and silently read Chapter 9, which contains *The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America*, while the teacher, Mrs. Simpson, is checking the roll. As soon as she is done, all students are told to be ready to read the chapter orally. Beginning with the student sitting in the first row, first desk students take turns orally reading *The Declaration of Independence*. Each student reads, some more fluently than others, until told to stop. Then the next one picks up where the last one left off. Since the teacher is calling on students in order, several students are counting down to the parts that they think will be theirs and are practicing. After all, no one purposely wants to sound bad when they read in front of the entire class.

When it is Michelle's turn, she reads perfectly, with expression; that is, as much expression as you can muster from a piece of expository text. Since most of the class is bored to tears, personal conversations sporadically break out from all over the room. Several students are text messaging while holding their cell phones out of the purview of the teacher, while others are scribbling on their paper. Class is so boring that they must find other ways to engage their brains!

The teacher then reads aloud to the class 30 slides from a PowerPoint presentation regarding the remainder of the first section in Chapter 9. When the PowerPoint is completed, students are asked to read the next section of the chapter silently for the rest of the period and answer the accompanying questions. It becomes obvious that most students do not take advantage of this option and choose instead to engage in alternate activities.



SCENARIO II ■

Sarah is a student at Providence High School. Her American history class is her favorite since she is lucky enough to have a teacher, Mr. Martinez, who makes history *come alive* each day! Today's lesson is on *The Declaration of Independence*. As students file into class, they are greeted by their teacher, who is standing at the door while patriotic music is playing. By the way, no student is ever late for this class. They are too afraid that they will miss something important!

As they enter class, students know to look on the board for a meaningful activity that will either review content from the previous day or ready students for the lesson that is to follow. Today students have a choice to either individually draw or partner with another student to act out vocabulary words from yesterday's lesson. This activity consumes the first 15 minutes of the period but provides a much needed review of the content.

Mr. Martinez then reminds the class of their homework assignment, which was to read *The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America* from their textbook prior to coming to class. He opens the discussion by asking students how they typically spend their July 4 holiday each year and why we, as Americans, celebrate that date. He reminds them that the Declaration of Independence was adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776, making that date a special one for our country. He then randomly calls on students to stand and read selected sections of the document while he leads students in a thought-provoking discussion of its content.

Mr. Martinez asks students whether they have heard instances of teenagers asking the courts to be emancipated from their parents and all the ramifications that would entail. He asks them to consider the advantages and disadvantages of such a request. Following a spirited discussion, students are then requested to write their own personal *Declaration of Independence* from their parents, patterned after the one just discussed. Students spend time referring to the original document while crafting their personal declarations. Their documents should outline the grievances they have against their parents or guardians, just as the colonists did against the King of Great Britain in the original document. During the last part of the period, students volunteer to share their original *declarations* with the entire class. Then Mr. Martinez asks this question: *Would you like to present your parents with a copy of your declaration?* Most students agree that they would not! They concur that it would be too upsetting to their parents and that the emotional and financial support received from their parents would far outweigh the advantages of personal freedom at this stage in their lives.



The Declaration of Independence Vocabulary

- I. Unanimous
- II. Inalienable
- III. Despotism
- IV. Tyranny
- V. Migration

DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN ■

What you probably do not realize is that Michelle is actually a description of me. My social studies classes were so boring but I considered myself a high achiever. I made straight As in social studies classes in elementary and high school. (There was no such thing as middle school when I came along.) But I am not really bragging since, as an adult, I have very little memory of the content I was supposed to have learned.

Social Studies, to me, consisted of a large number of isolated names, facts, explorers, and so forth, which I memorized. Here was the problem. I memorized them only long enough to pass the numerous tests I was given. That is how I made the As. Unfortunately, once the tests were over, so was the information. As an adult, I have come to realize that one can make straight As in their classes and not have truly learned much of anything. All you have to have is a fairly good memory for a short period of time.

Social studies is one of the easiest content areas for teachers to be tempted to use lecture and worksheets to have students cover content and cram for exams. But, like a famous educator, Madeline Hunter, once said, *If all you are doing is covering content, then take a shovel and cover it with dirt, since it is dead to memory!*

If you are having students attempt to recall information that you believe they need to know, you are fighting a losing battle. I have learned that between the years 4 B.C. and A.D. 1900, information doubled. Information doubled again between 1900 and 1964. In other words, what initially took more than 1,900 years to accomplish only took 64 years the second time around. Now, depending on which source you read, with the invention of the Internet, information is doubling every 12 to 24 months. Therefore, there is no way that a student can hold in short- or long-term memory all of the things they need to know and understand. Nor should they! Isn't it more important that students comprehend certain major concepts in social studies and then know how to locate any additional information essential for answering a question, dealing with an issue, or solving a problem?

Here is a true story that illustrates the point I am making. I was asked to teach a social studies lesson in a middle school not too long ago. Whenever I come in to conduct a model lesson with students, I always ask the teacher ahead of time what he or she would like me to teach. In other words, what is the objective of the lesson and what should students know or be able to do by the time the lesson is completed? I was told that students needed to learn and remember the original 13 colonies in the United States, who founded each colony, and the year in which it was founded. Although I can understand why students need to know the names of the original colonies, I do not know why it is important that they memorize the year in which each separate colony was founded. That information can be easily located on a need-to-know basis. Class time would have been better spent examining the reasons for which the colonies were founded and how the climate and topography of each colony contributed to its economy. Therefore, that is exactly what I taught!

■ THE THEMES OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Before we look at how to teach social studies, let's consider what major concepts should be taught. According to the *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (2010), published by the National Council for the Social Studies, the following 10 major themes should be an integral part of any social studies curriculum. The paragraphs that follow delineate the 10 themes and provide a brief description of each theme. Notice how the content of the themes overlaps since no one theme is an entity unto itself.

Culture

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

When students study the theme of culture, they learn about the values, beliefs, behaviors, institutions, and traditions of a group of people by examining their language, music, arts, literature, and artifacts. They realize that there are similarities and differences in cultures but that they are dynamic and, therefore, change over time. In the early grades, students begin to explore the likenesses and differences of cultures and to recognize the cultural basis for some ways of life in their communities as well as throughout the world. By the middle grades, students are looking more in-depth at various aspects of culture such as beliefs and language and how time and place influence cultural development. High school students are drawing from other disciplines in an effort to comprehend more difficult cultural concepts such as assimilation, adaptation, acculturation, and dissonance.

Time, Continuity, and Change

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

During this theme, students realize that by analyzing the history of a group of people's values, ideals, and traditions, they can discern patterns of continuity and change over time. In the early grades, children experience how the stories of the past can be told differently and why they differ. They begin to comprehend the relationship between the decisions humans make and the consequences of those decisions. By the middle grades, students delve more deeply into an appreciation for various perspectives on history, realizing that those perspectives are influenced by cultural traditions, values of society, the sources one selects, and their individual experiences. By high school, students are making more informed decisions by locating and analyzing multiple sources and discerning the differences in the accounts of others.

People, Places, and Environments

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

When students study this theme, they learn where people live and why they decide to live there. They explore physical systems such as weather and seasons, natural resources, and the impact of climate on human populations. Students identify the important economic, social, and cultural characteristics of different people in various locations. In the early grades, students are more focused on their personal neighborhoods, cities, and states but are able to use maps, globes, and other tools to study distant people and places. By the middle grades, students are looking at issues impacting people and places in this country and throughout the world, with particular attention to concepts such as migration and changes in the global environment. High school students become capable of evaluating and recommending public policy based on their knowledge of complex processes of change in the relationships between people and their environments.

Individual Development and Identity

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

Drawing from the fields of psychology, anthropology, and sociology, this theme enables students to answer such questions as *How do we interact with other people culturally, socially, and politically in ways that enable us to develop into the individuals that we become?* Students will examine their personal skill level in working toward individual goals while attempting to understand the feelings and beliefs of others as well. In the early grades, students concentrate on their personal identities within the context of their own families, peers, and communities. By the middle grades, students are looking at themselves in light of their relationship to other people and examining individual differences in various cultures and societies. By high school, students are applying concepts from fields such as psychology and sociology to look at patterns of human behavior across cultures.

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

When studying this theme, students learn how such institutions as families, schools, religious institutions, courts, and government agencies are formed, influenced, maintained, and changed as well as how they influence people and the culture. In the early grades, students study a

variety of institutions that affect them personally and how those institutions change as individuals and groups change. They also study how groups can come into conflict with one another. By the middle grades, students are learning how to use institutions to work for the common good. High school students are examining traditions that serve as the foundation for political and social institutions as well as how those institutions reflect the beliefs, needs, and interests of people.

Power, Authority, and Governance

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

By studying the basic values and ideals of a democracy, as well as other governmental systems during this theme, students learn how nations establish their security and order and how they resolve conflict. They study the purpose of government, its proper scope and limits, and how individual rights are affected within the context of a system where the majority rules. Students in the early grades are considering what constitutes fairness and order in different contexts. During the middle grades, students examine a variety of century-old systems that have given people power and authority to govern. High school students are looking more closely at more abstract principles of governance. However, all students should be provided with real-life opportunities to participate in different levels of power, authority, and governance at the classroom, local, state, and national levels.

Production, Distribution, and Consumption

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

Since resources are unequally distributed, students explore the fact that systems of exchange must exist. While studying this theme, they learn that economic decisions are becoming increasingly global and the world more interdependent. Students will pair their critical thinking skills with data to decide how to deal with the real-life issue of scarcity of resources. In the early grades, students begin to consider their wants versus needs as they compare their own personal experiences with those of other people. They also examine the consequences of personal economic decisions on the larger community, the nation, and the world. Middle grade students take what they have learned to address answers to basic questions of economics. By high school, this theme is emphasizing domestic and global economic policies as they relate to such issues as trade, unemployment, health care, and the use of resources.

Science, Technology, and Society

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of relationships among science, technology, and society.

Modern life is dependent on technology, but do new technologies actually improve the society for which they were created? Is technology use out of control, and can society preserve its values and beliefs in a technology-linked world? How can the greatest number of people in society benefit from technology? These are just a few of the questions addressed as students study this theme. Students in the early grades examine the history of technology and how inventions like the wheel, automobiles, transistor radios, airplanes, and air conditioning influenced the human values and behaviors of their time. By the middle grades, students are considering whether technology is beginning to control us or we it. High school students examine real-life controversial issues such as genetic engineering, electronic surveillance, and medical technology.

Global Connections

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

To understand global interdependence, students must realize the important connections among societies throughout the world. While studying this theme, students analyze the conflict that can exist between national and global interests and priorities and examine possible solutions in critical fields such as human rights, the quality of the environment, health care, and economic development. Students in the early grades learn to derive action plans that address basic global issues and concerns. By the middle years, students can analyze how states and nations interact and how they respond to global change. By high school, students are reflecting on personal, national, and global decisions regarding critical issues such as human rights, universal peace, trade, and ecology.

Civic Ideals and Practices

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

The central purpose of social studies is to provide students with an understanding of the civic ideals and practices necessary for becoming a fully participating member of a democratic society. This theme attempts to do just that. Students learn about their basic freedoms and rights and the practices and institutions that support them. Students in the early grades accomplish this by setting classroom rules and expectations, creating mock

elections, and using the strategies of storytelling and role play to experience civic ideals in other places and times. Middle school students should be capable of visualizing themselves in civic roles within their own communities, but by high school, they should be identifying needs in society, determining public policy, and working for the dignity of the individual as well as for the good of society as a whole.

■ BRAIN-COMPATIBLE SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION

Now that we know what should be taught, let's examine how we should teach it. Teachers should be experts on the brain. After all, they are teaching brains every day. In fact, every time a student learns something new, his brain grows a new brain cell, called a *dendrite*. Therefore, teachers should actually be classified as *dendrite* growers! What I find, however, is that many teachers know very little about the vessel that they are expecting to hold vast amounts of information, particularly in the content area of social studies.

Learning-style theorists (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Gardner, 1983; Marzano, 2007; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2000) and educational consultants (Caine, Caine, McClintic, & Klimek, 2009; Jensen, 2002, 2008; Sousa, 2006, 2011) who research the brain have all concluded that there are certain instructional strategies that, by their very nature, result in long-term retention. These strategies are not new. Most have been used by memorable teachers for generations. What is new is that the brain research is providing some insight as to why these strategies work better than others, such as lecture or worksheets. I call these strategies brain-compatible since they take advantage of the way the brain learns best, and I have synthesized them into 20 ways to deliver instruction.

The 20 strategies are as follows:

1. Brainstorming and discussion
2. Drawing and artwork
3. Field trips
4. Games
5. Graphic organizers, semantic maps, and word webs
6. Humor
7. Manipulatives, experiments, labs, and models
8. Metaphors, analogies, and similes
9. Mnemonic devices
10. Movement
11. Music, rhythm, rhyme, and rap
12. Project-based and problem-based instruction
13. Reciprocal teaching and cooperative learning

14. Role plays, drama, pantomimes, and charades
15. Storytelling
16. Technology
17. Visualization and guided imagery
18. Visuals
19. Work-study and apprenticeships
20. Writing and journals

Refer to Figure 0.1 for a correlation of the 20 brain-compatible strategies to Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences and to the four major modalities—(1) visual, (2) auditory, (3) kinesthetic, and (4) tactile.

These strategies not only increase academic achievement for all students, since they address every single intelligence and modality and decrease behavior problems as well as actively engage every brain and reduce boredom, but they also make teaching and learning so much fun!

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK ■

This social studies book will complete the set of multiple content-area books in the series about *growing dendrites*. The additional books are as follows:

- *Worksheets Don’t Grow Dendrites: 20 Instructional Strategies That Engage the Brain*
- *Reading and Language Arts Worksheets Don’t Grow Dendrites: 20 Literacy Strategies That Engage the Brain*
- *Mathematics Worksheets Don’t Grow Dendrites: 20 Numeracy Strategies That Engage the Brain PreK–8*
- *Science Worksheets Don’t Grow Dendrites: 20 Instructional Strategies That Engage the Brain*

This book, like the others in the series, attempts to accomplish the following four major objectives:

1. Review the research regarding the 20 brain-compatible strategies and why they provide best practices for teaching and learning;
2. Supply more than 200 classroom examples of the application of the 20 strategies for teaching the 10 themes of social studies;
3. Provide time and space at the end of each chapter for the reader to reflect on the application of these strategies as they apply to the social studies curriculum; and
4. Demonstrate how to plan and deliver unforgettable social studies lessons by asking the five questions on the lesson plan format in the Resource section of this book.

This is one of the easiest books to read that you will ever add to your professional library. There are 20 chapters, one for each strategy. The chapters do not even have to be read sequentially. If you wish to read about the impact of *Movement* for teaching social studies, then start reading at Chapter 10. The sample activities in each chapter are correlated to a specific grade range and one or more social studies themes. But the sample activities are just that—samples. They are intended to provide you with examples of how you can integrate the strategies into your social studies lessons and are not meant to be an exhaustive list. Once you start thinking, you will be able to generate a plethora of additional activities for each strategy.

If you really think about the list of 20, these strategies are used most often in the primary grades. What we know now is that these strategies work for all students, regardless of age, ability level, grade level, or content area. In fact, when these strategies begin to be used less by teachers is precisely when students' grades, academic achievement, confidence, and love of school also decrease. The advantage to having activities ranging from early grades through high school in the same book is that the reader can easily select activities that will meet the needs of students performing below, on, and above grade level. This will enable you to more easily differentiate instruction. You will also find that an activity designed for a specific grade range can be taken as is or easily adapted for another grade range.

The reflection page at the end of each chapter enables the reader to think about ways in which they are already incorporating the strategy as well as new activities they would choose to create.

The lesson planning section asks five questions that help the reader synthesize the process of planning an unforgettable lesson.

In conclusion, consider the following riddle:

*What is the difference between a person who
crams for a social studies exam and makes an A and a person
who crams for the exam and makes an F?*

Give up! The answer is simple. The person who crams for the exam and makes an *A* remembers the information until 10 minutes *after* the test. The person who crams for the exam and makes an *F* remembers the information until 10 minutes *before* the test.

If you will teach the 10 social studies themes using the 20 brain-compatible strategies outlined in the chapters that follow, not only will your students remember the information long after the test is over, but their grades will be better than ever, their achievement scores higher than you thought possible, the content itself more relevant, and teaching social studies will become a blast! As a side benefit, you will become their favorite teacher if you are not already!

Comparison of Brain-Compatible Instructional Strategies to Learning Theory		
<i>Brain-Compatible Strategies</i>	<i>Multiple Intelligences</i>	<i>Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile (VAKT)</i>
Brainstorming and discussion	Verbal-linguistic	Auditory
Drawing and artwork	Spatial	Kinesthetic/tactile
Field trips	Naturalist	Kinesthetic/tactile
Games	Interpersonal	Kinesthetic/tactile
Graphic organizers, semantic maps, and word webs	Logical-mathematical/spatial	Visual/tactile
Humor	Verbal-linguistic	Auditory
Manipulatives, experiments, labs, and models	Logical-mathematical	Tactile
Metaphors, analogies, and similes	Spatial	Visual/auditory
Mnemonic devices	Musical-rhythmic	Visual/auditory
Movement	Bodily-kinesthetic	Kinesthetic
Music, rhythm, rhyme, and rap	Musical-rhythmic	Auditory
Project-based and problem-based learning	Logical-mathematical	Visual/tactile
Reciprocal teaching and cooperative learning	Verbal-linguistic	Auditory
Role plays, drama, pantomimes, and charades	Bodily-kinesthetic	Kinesthetic
Storytelling	Verbal-linguistic	Auditory
Technology	Spatial	Visual/tactile
Visualization and guided imagery	Spatial	Visual
Visuals	Spatial	Visual
Work-study and apprenticeships	Interpersonal	Kinesthetic
Writing and journals	Intrapersonal	Visual/tactile

Figure 0.1