

Here's to You, Dr. Seuss!

Happy Birthday to an iconic man...

A man who likes green eggs and ham.

Cheers to you today and tomorrow!

Your words and your pictures we'd like to borrow.

We love to teach historic deeds,

And are always looking for good leads

In the direction of engagement and thinking critically

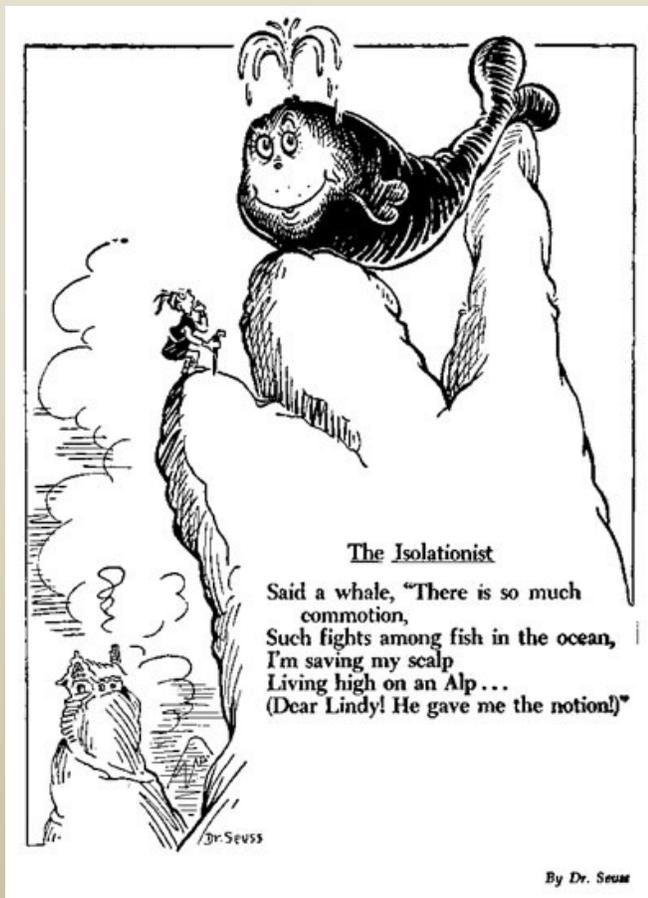
And on the path towards writing academically.

Thanks for your cartoons – so witty, so wise.

The kids will love sources that they can recognize.

How nice that your characters look so silly -

It helps students learn involuntarily.



Happy Birthday, Dr. Seuss!

By: Angela Orr

March 2, 2011 is the 107th birthday of one of the most beloved children's authors of all time. Dr. Seuss' literature and political cartoons can be a fantastic resource in the social studies classroom at all levels. Whether a high school government teacher initiates a class discussion of the role of government in protecting the rights of a minority group by asking students to remember the story of Horton and his little Who friends, or a 3rd grade teacher reads *The Lorax* to begin an interdisciplinary science and social studies unit on sustainable communities, Dr. Seuss provides a relevant and comfortable example for students to begin a rigorous and in-depth encounter with new knowledge.

Dr. Seuss' World War II political cartoons (<http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic/>) also offer teachers a great resource for teaching how to analyze primary sources. Although these cartoons were originally directed at an adult audience and contain high-level symbolism and language, they are accessible for students. The unique and indelible look of Seuss' characters engage students from the beginning, allowing teachers to focus their energy on the why and the how of analyzing primary sources.

So just in case you didn't know,



Social Studies CRT Test Prep...Not so fast!

By: Victor Sherbondy

If you polled every Social Studies teacher in WCSD you would probably get a split response as to whether or not social studies should adopt a CRT for our content area. There are very compelling arguments for and against having a standardized test to measure what our social studies students know. Actually it seems very unlikely that a CRT for social studies is coming anytime soon, but we can contribute to Math and English Language Arts (ELA) preparation. I recently attended a district training on this very topic and this is what I found out:

What can social studies teachers do to support ELA? There are several things that we can do in social studies that would support ELA and prepare our students to perform well on their CRT's. First and foremost we need to use document based activities and excerpts from novels and other primary source materials on a routine basis. For this, social studies teachers need to have students write compare and contrast essays, conduct interviews, perform speeches, and write research based papers where they can cite (using MLA or APA citations) their sources and defend a thesis throughout their writing. The compare and contrast method of looking at two topics or items is essential to CRT Preparation and this is something that many ELA teachers will pinpoint as the most important thing we can do to support them. Characterization is very important and this can easily be achieved in social studies by putting up images or pictures of certain people and asking your students to tell you what they see. This is especially helpful as a sponge or lesson opener and really gets your students engaged the moment they walk in to class. When looking at primary sources we need to ask our students how the time periods are reflected, how historical events or periods may have influenced the author, or what the connection between historical events or time periods may be. Cause and effect is another important ELA topic that we can discuss in social studies as we are always looking at how the past has shaped the future. Or offering our students the ability to think about the "what if" question. If we were to go back into history and change one small aspect of it how widespread would the changes be today? We can also talk about personification, symbolism, metaphors, and rhetorical questions on a daily basis.

What can social studies teachers do to support mathematics? There are many ways that we can support math in social studies. To start a simple one is having your social studies students work out their percentages on tests and then either graphing the results of the class or breaking the results down into intervals. The concept of using graphs or intervals is also helpful when working with concepts such as death rates during a war or looking at the 50 states electoral votes. You could also employ the use of a histogram which is a graphical representation, showing a visual impression of the distribution of data. Histograms are excellent tools to expose to social studies students as they are commonly used on the math portion of the CRT and visually show students creative aspects of social studies. Most social studies teachers use maps or have students make maps during a variety of time periods throughout the year. Precision in measurement and map skills are important mathematical CRT preparation elements. Having students' measure distances and making inferences as to how far people traveled in the past are great mathematical CRT preparation activities. We also have economics as part of our social studies curriculum and this is an excellent opportunity to develop some lessons that would directly support math CRT preparation. There are many topics that can be built into an economics unit that would support math. Everything from mock stock market projects where students graph the prices of their stocks to applying ratios and proportions to the number of casualties in a particular battle or war. Money is also an essential topic in both math and social studies and social studies teachers can incorporate money into many lessons throughout the year. The ability to calculate percentages and work out word problems are very important to finding success on the math portion of the CRT.

Death by Association; *Teaching to a Test*

By: Whitney Foehl

Even if you don't teach AP classes, you may find this commentary interesting. Just to check in and see if teaching by association is something you tend to do. What do I mean "teaching by association"? Well, let me try to explain. To teach students all of the content that may show up on any AP exam becomes an impossible task. There is just too much information that the College Board expects students to know, and no where near enough time to teach it. I feel like I am swimming in information, the metaphoric water drowning me and overwhelming me with every breath I try to take, the fight to stay on top of it is a constant struggle. So, I've been thinking lately about how AP students really learn. They learn by associating certain people, places, events, and timeframes together. They do not have to grasp deeper meanings in order to answer most multiple choice questions, or even to write a formulaic essay. If they can associate a person or event with a certain timeframe, they can answer questions without really understanding that person or timeframe. Here you try it: Jane Addams, _____ in Chicago, during the Progressive Era. If you instantly filled in the blank with "Hull House", you are correct, any questions? If they can associate a certain quote with its author and time period, they don't even need to know what the quote means, or even know the whole quote. Here, you try it: "...city on a hill", "remember the ladies...", "cast down your bucket...", "the man who dies rich..." "...carry a big stick", "the business of America is...", "take all necessary measure to repel any armed attack...". How did you do? We generally feel proud if we can associate people, terms, events, places, and time periods in history with other related people, terms, events, places, and time periods. I call it the *Jeopardy effect*. Do students need to know the constitutional interpretations of the Supreme Court? Not really, as long as they can associate *Marbury v. Madison* with judicial review, *McCulloch v. Maryland* with the U.S. Bank, *Dred Scott* with slavery, *Plessy vs. Ferguson* with "separate but equal is okay", and the list goes on and on. You try an easy one: *Brown v. the Board* is associated with _____. Too easy? Think again; what was the *Brown* case all about? How did it reach the Supreme Court? Who was behind it? Did black students really want to go to school with white students, so they could face abuse and ridicule every day, or was something else going on? Students don't have time to really explore and analyze these cases, not in "AP world" they don't. History becomes a mere mention it and move on. What do you associate with Adam Smith, William Jennings Bryan, Upton Sinclair, Herbert Hoover, Joseph McCarthy, Betty Friedan? Oh, perhaps that last one was hard for you? Didn't have time for the woman's rights movement? You're not alone. Anyway, don't fear, you really don't have to critically think about these figures and their philosophies, only what they are associated with. For example; Betty Friedan=*The Feminine Mystique*, NOW, and the 1960s. Do you need to know what the feminine mystique really is, the "problem with no name" as Betty called it; probably not? By the way, no one knows what the feminine mystique is. Not then, not today. And as far as this "problem that has no name" goes, it's called sexism. But that is not on the exam, so let's move on.

Don't get me wrong, I understand that students need to analyze and synthesize when they plan and write essays for the AP Exam but there are even tricks of the trade that turn this process into a farce. If you can just teach them how to write a five paragraph essay with a thesis and some evidence, you are pretty much there. I make it sound simple, it is not. It is also a near impossible task. All the factual knowledge, *and* teach them to write timed essays? Cramming information down student's throats and teaching them how to write a formula essay becomes perfectly acceptable behavior. Stop the madness! Someone please get me off of this treadmill of information! I think we are doing our brightest students a serious injustice by teaching to the AP exams. We fool ourselves into hoping that they critically think about the information but don't allow time and activity to foster that critical thinking. The only hope is that in the future they will win on Jeopardy and send along a thank you check...cash accepted as well.

Social Networking as a Resource?

By: Jamie Thomsen

With all the hype regarding social networking, it is hard to believe that it can actually enhance our professional careers. Using social networking sites as a resource, and not so much for catching up on long lost friends, has led many more teachers to reach out to this 21st century tool. Some of these sites provide teachers with resources that can be taken and used directly in the classroom, while others provide teachers an opportunity to stay in touch with other teaching professionals and share ideas and teaching materials.

Classroom 2.0 is a site where teachers can interact with fellow teaching professionals while participating in scholarly dialogue and collaboration. By using Facebook, teachers can become “fans” of various social studies organizations. This allows teachers to acquire information on upcoming professional development opportunities as well direct resources for the classroom. Some of these organizations on Facebook include the Gilder Lehrman Institute, the Mount Vernon Teacher’s Institute, and Colonial Williamsburg. The Gilder Lehrman Institute updates its fans with incredible primary sources and brief background information on the document. The Mount Vernon Teacher’s Institute notifies its fans of scholarly updates, Mount Vernon news, and professional development opportunities.

Teachers can also create their own Facebook page for their class. Ms. Smith, for example, has a Facebook page where she can communicate with her students and post updates and reminders. It is just another tool to reach your classes, and since they are addicted to social networking anyway, why not tap into their world?

Despite most of these sites being blocked by the district network, social networking is proving to be useful in many ways. Enjoy!



