



Standards Alignment

The National Center for History in the Schools National Standards for History (1996)

Standard 1A – Students understands family life and in the recent past; family life in various places long ago.

Standard 8A – Students understand technological innovations, the major scientists and inventors associated with them and their social and economic effects.

Standard 8C – Students understand changes in communication and their effects.

National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum for Social Studies (1994)

Standard 2 – Time, Continuity and Change

Standard 3 – People, Places and Environment

Standard 8 -- Science, Technology, and Society

REVIEW OF KINDERGARTEN UNIT -- CHILDREN LONG AGO Reviewed by Dr. M. Gail Hickey

National standards for teaching social studies and history support teaching historical knowledge in early elementary grades. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), for example, in their Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (1994) recommends children in kindergarten explore "their own immediate environment" and "environments far distant in time and space". Ten curricular themes outlined by the NCSS standards include three themes especially suited for developing kindergarten instructional units on personal and/or family history: Individual Development and Identity; People, Places, and Environments; and Time, Continuity, and Change. The National Center for History in the Schools, in their National Standards for History for Grades K-4 (1994), recommends young children explore and understand "family life now and in the recent past; family life in various places long ago".



Similarly, recent research on how children learn social studies-related concepts and acquire the skills used by historians supports teaching historical knowledge in early elementary grades. Levstik and Barton's (1994) research, as well as Downey's (1994) study, concluded that even early elementary grades children are capable of more historical understanding than educators originally thought. Further, this body of research showed young students' historical knowledge is limited primarily to information about popular culture and everyday life -- a conclusion providing additional support for teaching about personal and family history at the kindergarten level.

As the author of *Bringing History Home: Local and Family History Projects for Grades K-6* (1999), I strongly support school experiences which facilitate children's exploration of and learning about the lives of children from times past. As a social studies teacher educator, and as one involved in the development of National Council for the Social Studies curriculum standards, I endorse the use of such instructional units as presented by "Children Long Ago". This instructional unit, intended for use at the kindergarten level, is well structured and thoughtfully articulated.



Lesson Plans

This unit introduces students to the concept of change over time by examining the historic counterparts of objects in children's daily lives. Children typically are familiar with toys, food, cars, music, telephones, and toothbrushes. By learning what these elements of life looked like long ago, children may begin to develop an awareness of change over time that prepares them to think historically about life in the past. Because the unit uses very simple forms of photo analysis, timelines, and mind-mapping to teach about life long ago, it also begins preparing children to eventually engage in more sophisticated history research and lays a foundation for the upcoming BHH units in grades 1-6.

A visual timeline/chart divided into just two categories, life long ago and life today, is constructed as the unit progresses. Pictures of toys, food, cars and telephones from long ago and today are posted on the timeline when they are explored in class. By the end of the unit, classes will have a collage/timeline that allows students to visually compare things from long ago with items for the same purpose today.

Throughout the unit, you may wish to read excerpts from **If You Lived 100 Years Ago** (McGovern & Divito, 1999), a book which includes all the concepts in this unit. By returning to the book for information that coordinates with each activity, teachers can model the concept of a reference book; a book we don't necessarily read cover to cover for a narrative story but that we use to locate specific information about a topic.

Activity 1: What is Long Ago?

Content Goals:

- ❖ Children are introduced to the concepts of change and continuity over time.
- ❖ Children learn that many years ago, long before they were born, life was different than it is today.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Discussion
- ❖ Reading

Centerpiece:

- ❖ Book: **When I was Built** (Thermes, 2001).

Content:

- ❖ Life looked different for children a long time ago, but those children needed and had many things similar to children today.



Process:

- ❖ Read **When I was Built**
- ❖ Discussion based on the book, exploring these broad questions:
 - How was life different for children long ago than it is for us today?
 - How was life the same for children long ago as for us today?

Resources:

- ❖ **When I was Built**

Activity 2: Toys

Content Goals:

- ❖ Children learn about toys from long ago and today.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Children compare toys from different time periods.

Centerpiece:

- ❖ Historic toys and students' current toys, Book: **Old Time Toys**, (Kalman & Schimpky, 1995).

Process:

- ❖ Class examines toys (photos and actual) together and discusses the differences between long ago and current toys (electronics, plastic, wood, moving parts, etc.).
- ❖ Class glues photos and/or pictures on the timeline.
- ❖ Class plays a long ago game, such as jump rope, hopscotch, blind man's bluff, duck-duck-goose.

Resources:

- ❖ Old Time Toys
- ❖ Photos of long ago toys
- ❖ Children's toys of today

Activity 3: Food

Content Goals:

- ❖ Children learn about food preparation long ago and today.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Children compare food preparation from different time periods.

Centerpiece:

- ❖ Book: **When I was Young in the Mountains** (Rylant & Goode, 1993); historic and current kitchen implements (photographs).

Process:

- ❖ Class examines photos together and discusses the differences between long ago and current kitchen tools.
 - Wood stove - Electric or gas stove and microwave
 - Ice box or cellar - Refrigerator
 - Other?
- ❖ Class posts the pictures on the timeline.
- ❖ Class has a modern snack (packaged treat) and a long ago snack (home-baked treat).

Resources:

- ❖ **When I was Young in the Mountains**
- ❖ Kitchen photos
- ❖ Snacks

Activity 4: Transportation

Content Goals:

- ❖ Children learn how transportation methods have changed.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Children compare transportation types.

Centerpiece:

- ❖ Book: **Train Song (Siebert & Wimmer, 1999)**, photos.

Content:

- ❖ Travel today, long ago and long, long ago.

Process:

- ❖ Class brainstorms ways to travel
 - Bus, train, plane, car, plane, horse, boat, etc.
- ❖ Read aloud Train Song
- ❖ Class looks at photos and discusses long ago and today's means of travel
 - Which is faster, a car or a horse? A train or a plane? A horse or a train?
 - How would you like to travel?
- ❖ Children color pictures of transportation types and paste on the timeline.

Resources:

- ❖ Train Song
- ❖ Photos of transportation types
- ❖ Coloring book pictures of transportation types

Activity 5: Music

Content Goals:

- ❖ Children learn about music machines long ago and today.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Children compare music machines from different time periods

Centerpiece:

- ❖ Book: Winter Days in the Big Woods (Wilder & Graef, 1994), historic (photographs) and current music machines

Process:

- ❖ Read aloud Winter Days in the Big Woods
- ❖ Class examines pictures of early phonographs and listens to modern tape or cd players. Discussion on the differences between long ago and current music machines.

- How do we make music play on a tape player?
 - Plug it in
 - Put in a tape
 - Push a button to play
- How did children make a phonograph play music? (They wound a crank handle.)
- How did people listen to music before there was a phonograph? (They heard live bands/musicians or played instruments and sang themselves.)
- ❖ Class listens to music from various periods, if available.
- ❖ Pictures posted on timeline.

Resources:

- ❖ Winter Days in the Big Woods: picture book version
- ❖ Phonograph pictures
- ❖ Music from different periods if various CD's available

Activity 6: Telephone and light

Content Goals:

- ❖ Children learn about telephones and lights long ago and today.
- ❖ Children review the unit as a whole.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Children compare light and communication from different time periods.
- ❖ Children write a letter through their teacher and illustrate learned concepts.

Centerpieces:

- ❖ Historic and current telephones (photographs) and light sources - candles or oil hurricane lamps.

Process:

- ❖ Class examines pictures and/or actual lights, telephones, etc. if available, and discusses the differences between long ago and current telephones and lights.
 - Long, long ago, before people had telephones, how did people communicate with friends and family who lived far away? (Handwritten letters.) How would that have been different from using a telephone?
 - Do you think you would like having only a candle for light?
 - Can you imagine how would life be different without electric lights? Would it be easier or harder to do things at night?



- ❖ Class writes a letter to their school principal describing life long ago.
- ❖ The children each draw a picture about something they learned in their history unit. The pictures all are pasted on a poster board to form a "mind map", or class story, of life long ago.

Resources:

- ❖ Pictures of telephones and human light sources
- ❖ Candle or hurricane lamp
- ❖ Poster Board for class mind map

Conclusion - Museum Gallery Walk

For this unit finale, get together with other teachers to create a museum gallery walk. With items from past eras you all find at home, create a display of "long ago" items. As they view the artifacts displayed on a table, students practice the respectful viewing skills they learned in their History of Me gallery walks. To further engage them in the items, give students chances to guess the use of some of the more obscure object. An added bonus to this activity: Students learn historic artifacts are found in everyday homes, not just museums!