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The National Mall:
Becoming Correspondents, Chronologers, Autobiographers, and Biographers

A Social Studies and Literacy-Based Curriculum

For Second and Third Graders

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education/Master of Education

Bank Street College of Education

1995

The National Mall:
Becoming Correspondents, Chronologers, Autobiographers, and Biographers

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ABSTRACT

The National Mall curriculum for seven and eight-year-olds is a child-centered, literacy and social studies-based series of units. Recognizing the need to connect reading and writing with the students' real life experiences, this study utilizes the prior knowledge which students bring to the curriculum and extends that information with activities which build a common experience for all of the children. Developed for inner-city students in Washington, D.C., the study incorporates teaching and learning about letter-writing, timelines, autobiographies, and biographies with history, geography, economics, and political science which is pertinent to the National Mall.

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WHY THE NATIONAL MALL?

Children of all ages who live in or near Washington, D.C., receive daily exposure to the history and operation of the American capital. Most children have a parent, other family member, or family friend who is a civil servant, which they might understand as working for "The Government," a large, somewhat meaningless entity for many kids. Most children have visited the National Mall or Smithsonian on a family or school outing and have spotted one or more of the numerous statues and monuments scattered around the city. From these outings many have a vague sense of the history in which Washington, D.C., is steeped. Acutely aware of the discussions around them, many children have overheard their parents' complaints about taxes, which young children generally accept as a completely evil, but abstract concept. In addition, children living in the District of Columbia or in the metropolitan area frequently have heard the terms "Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast" as terms of geographic significance as they apply to their addresses, neighborhoods, and other sites; they may be unaware that the National Mall is the dividing line from which these quadrants are delineated.

DEVELOPMENTAL REASONS BEHIND THE STUDY:

The National Mall in Washington, D.C., is a logical, concrete starting point for giving meaning to concepts with which seven and eight-year-olds are just beginning to grapple. Developmentally,

around age seven, children begin to think logically and to build their capacities to understand symbols, images and concepts. According to Lucy Sprague Mitchell, seven and eight-year-olds are "beginning to leave the 'here and now;'" she stresses that the "distant and long-ago still has to be closely connected with the 'here and now.'" (1934, p.11) In this curriculum, the past is tied to the present. For instance, the children will view George Washington's accomplishments and impact on the nation as the reasons for his memorialization in the huge monument they see, for his depiction on the dollar bills and quarters they spend, and for the naming of the city in which they live.

Another area of growth in middle childhood which makes this study appropriate is the children's increasing capacity to communicate effectively. According to a study by Krauss and Glucksberg in 1969, children in middle childhood experience a decline in egocentrism which enables them to consider their audiences (Cole and Cole, 1993, p.458). In their experiments, Krauss and Glucksberg seated pairs of children across a table from each other and blocked their views of their partners. Each child had a duplicated series of designs; one child described each design one at a time to the other who was to point to the design. While younger children remained egocentric and relied upon their personal experiences to tell about the pictures, children in middle childhood were able to consider their listeners and give more general descriptions (Cole, 1993). The children's growing ability to consider their audiences will be invaluable in the bulk of the

literacy pieces of this curriculum. For example, in the "Letters Unit" which emphasizes communication, the children will be writing a variety of types of letters and will need to consider how to alter their writing styles and content to suit each purpose and recipient.

The progression of the timeline unit, which begins with a personal timeline before moving into a historical timeline and biographical timelines, also acknowledges the middle childhood move from egocentrism into a deeper understanding of other perspectives. By beginning with their own timelines, the children will learn about timelines in a form which is personally meaningful--their own histories--before they examine and create timelines which focus on other, less personal information.

Likewise, by building on the study of personal timelines by writing autobiographies, the study acknowledges the need of students in middle childhood to begin with material of personal significance. After a thorough examination of self, the students will be better-prepared to scrutinize material focusing on others in the "Biographies Unit." The study of biographies will serve as a tool for heightening the children's natural curiosity about the world around them by encouraging them to explore the lives of several famous National Mall figures in-depth. Utilizing their growing sense of audiences, the children will write their own versions of people's life stories.

NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Elements of this study appear in standard literacy and social studies curriculums. For instance, learning to write letters is part of the scope and sequence for standard elementary school language arts programs, while studying biographical information about George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King is a component of virtually every social studies curriculum which includes American History. The National Mall curriculum is the only curriculum known which is organized around the multi-faceted National Mall.

One integrated curriculum incorporating some of the same elements as this study, is Katherine Young's "Washington, D.C., Project" which she outlines in Constructing Buildings, Bridges, and Minds (1994). Young did not intend this project for students with first-hand knowledge of the Mall or city or access to the actual sights; in fact, Young piloted her curriculum in Boise, Idaho. Designed for upper elementary students, the project centers on creating replicas of important Washington, D.C., buildings and symbols and then extending the study into other content areas based upon the models. In this project method of teaching and learning, the students brainstorm, choose, research and construct buildings using language arts, social studies, math, art, and science skills. Although also a comprehensive and highly social study, the Washington, D.C., Project differs from the National Mall Curriculum in its emphasis on content area issues rather than literacy issues.

The Project's focus on the whole city is broader than the narrower focus of the National Mall Curriculum.

WRITING: INSPIRATION FOR CURRICULUM

In my experience as a second grade teacher in two different inner-city parochial schools in Washington, D.C., I was confronted with what I considered a considerable dilemma in the teaching of writing. Both schools in which I taught were a curious mix of the strict traditionalism for which Catholic schools are known and a freedom, which allowed me, the teacher, to make numerous decisions about everything from scheduling to curriculum absolutely autonomously. This contradictory combination had a dramatic impact on Writing Workshop in my classroom and has led me to examine my ideas about how to approach the teaching of writing in such circumstances.

After reading much of Don Graves' Writing: Teachers and Children at Work (1983), a text describing how to establish a classroom Writing Workshop, I attempted to follow his guidelines in my own class. What an abysmal disaster! I attributed my initial Writing Workshop failure to my lack of experience but remained enthusiastic about implementing the writing process with future students.

As my classroom management improved, I was able to focus more on curriculum. By my third year, I felt that I had been able to develop the writing process to an acceptable stage. Although my teaching of writing needed lots of fine-tuning, I was able to put

in place the basic elements of process writing: rehearsal, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, as well as conferencing for a variety of purposes. Definitely the hardest part of the process for both the children and me was topic generation. Graves' ideas for topic selection, ranging from brainstorming lists of ideas to orally rehearsing possible topics with a friend, proved invaluable (1983). Additionally, I modelled making my own topic list, had children demonstrate for one another where they got their ideas, helped the class generate general topic lists, and had the children bring in collections of photos and small items from home to keep in personal "topic boxes." Still, many of the children seemed stuck, overly concerned with whether their chosen topics were "good" or "right," and hesitant to become invested in their original ideas. At the time, I assumed that Don Graves and all of his New Hampshire teachers were some sort of super-teachers or that their rural and college town students were exceptional and that the majority of kids would struggle with topic selection as my students had.

In retrospect, I believe that environmental factors played a crucial role in my students' difficulties getting started writing and their insistence on waiting for the "perfect" topic to inspire them. My students, though only seven and eight years old, had already internalized the formality of this particular school environment. Most of my students had had two years of traditional schooling before I encountered them. In an attempt to give these students an early start in academics, the kindergartens and first

grades emphasized rote learning of basic language arts and math skills in what progressive educators might consider a misguided or developmentally-inappropriate manner. For instance, the five-year-olds spent most of their school days sitting at desks in worksheet-driven activities which stressed supplying the correct answer rather than a response based on individuality or creativity. Their specific experiences with writing involved using "story starters" or other superficial means of providing kids with a mandated topic or copying tasks with no room for creativity, e.g., copying a teacher-written thank-you letter to a special guest. Mechanics, rather than content, was the emphasis of these assignments. The majority of the children's experiences in school revolved around "black and white," right and wrong answers, with no room for individual interpretation. Understanding the students' school backgrounds explains the anxiety and hesitation I saw in my students surrounding topic selection. Clearly, teaching students to accept mistakes as learning experiences and establishing a safe environment for risk-taking are crucial to eliminating these anxiety issues and to rebuilding the students' confidence in themselves as writers, as well as learners. My hypothesis about writing, which I hope to test in a primary classroom, is that modifications of the writing process are necessary for students for whom the open-ended aspects of this workshop approach are inhibiting rather than freeing.

As Jane Hansen emphasizes, one of the most important tenets for teachers is to "start where the children are" (1987, p.3).

Given the school backgrounds of the children I have described, I believe that the appropriate starting place is to introduce them to Writing Workshop in a less-overwhelming way than the completely wide-open process that Graves and Calkins delineate. For children whose teachers have always provided topics and emphasized the mechanical elements of writing, the freedom to choose a subject, plan a format, draft, revise, and edit a piece can be anxiety-producing even with careful guidance from teachers. With careful facilitation and time, these children can learn to make all these choices for themselves, but may need to move into process writing in more incremental steps than children who have begun process writing from their entrance into school and have never lost their innate sense of themselves as writers. Although the teacher can assist the children in topic choice by modelling ways of settling on an idea, encouraging them to work together to find topics, and providing numerous mini-lessons for the whole group on arriving at possible story ideas, topic choice is the first key step which children must take responsibility for themselves. Instead of relying on assigned topics to encourage reluctant writers who are uncomfortable with the numerous decisions "true" process writing demands, the National Mall curriculum provides possible formats into which children can integrate their own purposes or topics. This approach lessens the demands on students, while providing them with the comfort and reassurance of some structure; but it does not impede their creativity by designating too many strictures or by limiting their authority to make choices. Through the four units

of the curriculum, the students will use letters, timelines, autobiographies, and biographies as frameworks for their writing. The structure of these formats should serve as a reassuring starting point for writers inhibited by previous school experience which demanded little of them as writers. This curriculum can serve as a transition into the completely open-ended writing process based on the Graves and Calkins models.

Based on social studies and literacy, this curriculum revolves around historical, geographical, economic, and political content as well as introduces and develops reading and writing in a structured format designed especially for students who lack experience with process writing. This curriculum, planned in the abstract for children in inner-city schools, should help to offset the damaging messages we send to children when we teach them that there is only one answer, one technique, one process or one solution for every problem they encounter.

WHY INNER-CITY STUDENTS?

Children of low socio-economic status are often considered at-risk for school success because of the assumption that these children lack general background knowledge. Since reading is a holistic process grounded in the prior knowledge with which the reader approaches the text, children lacking in background information may struggle with reading, which, in turn, will impact all of their school studies. As Katherine Maria points out, "Indeed one of the major disadvantages these children experience

with regard to reading comprehension is the absence of experiences which are more common for middle class children and are thus taken for granted by authors of children's texts" (1989, p. 296). The National Mall curriculum creates common experiences which will serve as a solid foundation of background knowledge throughout the study. Clearly, it is an oversimplification to assume that all disadvantaged children will lack background knowledge. Like all groups of children, children from low socioeconomic strata will represent a variety of types and levels of experiences. Still the National Mall curriculum strives to establish a foundation of knowledge through shared experiences including frequent whole group discussions, activities and readings.

One principle which Maria suggests as a strategy for strengthening or building a strong base of knowledge is the teacher's employment of interactive strategies along with group discussion (1989, p.299). The social interaction is key, for as Maria describes the children collectively may have more knowledge to draw upon than individual children (1989). If the children pool the information they already know about a particular topic, they can learn from one another and together construct a foundation for a specific piece of the study. Throughout the National Mall study the teacher should take stock of the children's background experiences through pre-reading, reading, and post-reading techniques such as K-W-L charts, story maps, semantic webs, semantic feature analysis, and discussion.

EFFECTS OF FAMILY LITERACY:

Although the inner-city parochial school students I taught had common early school experiences, their home environments were unique in the ways and levels of literacy to which they were exposed. Certainly, the children in my classes represented the broadest range of experience in the frequency and types of reading and writing activities which they had witnessed or in which they had participated at home. Some children had parents or guardians who were powerful positive reading and writing role models who also immersed their children either consciously or unconsciously into meaningful literacy events, while in other families there was only a moderate or even minimal number of literacy activities occurring.

In their research which consists of a series of case studies of inner-city families, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines decry the stereotypical assumptions which educators and policy-makers often hold about low-income inner-city families (1988). In these conceptions people often equate economic poverty with educational impoverishment. Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines emphasize that for the families in their study, "Their lives do not fit any of these preconceived notions or rigid conceptions of Black families or families who are poor and living on welfare" (1988, p.193). As demonstrated in the intensive observations of inner-city families, it is essential that educators consider each family unique in the depth and breadth of literacy to which it exposes its children.

The Purcell-Gates study extends the Taylor-Dorsey-Gaines research by analyzing the types and frequency of literacy in which

a sample of inner-city families engaged; the 1994 study details the "vast variation in the number and types of uses of print in the homes of low-socioeconomic families" (1995, p.572). The observations of the low-literacy families revealed that their uses of literacy were primarily for entertainment and to meet daily living needs. In contrast, the high-literacy families in the study engaged in many types of literacy events, but the predominant reading and writing activities in their homes were storybook reading and using literacy for teaching and learning more about reading and writing (1995). The chief outcome of Purcell-Gates' work is that the "operative factor for emergent literacy opportunities is not socioeconomic status," rather it is "family literacy practices which determine young children's experiences with print in the home" (1995, p.577).

IMPLICATIONS OF FAMILY LITERACY FOR BUILDING HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION:

Both of these family literacy studies have important implications for all teachers, especially teachers of inner-city students. Instead of accepting the popular notion that children who are impoverished financially are also impoverished in the realm of literacy, teachers must gather as much contextual information about each child and family's literacy backgrounds as possible. With this information, teachers can tailor literacy instruction appropriately and can structure home-school interactions accordingly.

Although both of these studies focus on families with emergent readers and many seven and eight-year-olds have moved beyond the emergent reading stage into early or fluent reading, this research has many applications for the literacy and social studies-based National Mall curriculum. Whether emergent, early, or fluent readers, young new readers need reading support from their primary teachers, their parents. To build fluency, readers need to read a variety of materials regularly. Often parents are a young child's only source of formal reading materials (ie., books, magazines) outside of school; if the parent is not able or not interested in taking the child to the library or bookstore, the child may have limited selections for reading at home. Older children or adolescents often have more options for obtaining reading materials on their own, while many young readers must rely upon their parents for assistance. In addition to their responsibility for providing books, parents are powerful role models, both positive and negative examples of whether reading and writing are pleasurable or painful, relaxing or burdensome.

Variety in the literacy levels of the students' homes should be expected, and all parents, no matter their own level of literacy, should be treated with diplomacy and sensitivity. As Barbara Come and Anthony D. Fredericks emphasize in "Family Literacy in Urban Schools: Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Children," "the collaborative partnership between home and school is essential if all children are to reap the benefits of literacy training now, as well as throughout their lives" (1995, p.566). Hence, the

teacher is responsible for communicating the importance of and facilitating the growth of shared responsibility between home and school in the realm of literacy.

The teacher and parents together can devise programs to encourage and enable literacy activities to occur at home. Depending upon the parents' interests and needs, possibilities for connecting home and school include: establishing a class lending library, including a range of books and magazines so that parents have materials to read with their children; setting up an audio-cassette lending library with stories told or read onto tapes by parents; putting together bibliographies of books which extend the National Mall curriculum and can be sent home for library or bookstore reference; having the children create lists of class favorites which families can reread together; inviting parents to school for a presentation by a storyteller to model the importance of telling stories, as well as reading them; and making local library program schedules available to parents regularly. These activities should reflect the range of literacy levels among parents. By incorporating wordless books and tapes into the lending library and by stressing the importance of storytelling, parents whose reading skills are limited should feel empowered to contribute to their children's literacy development. At parent workshops the teacher can model for parents how to increase the amount of literacy during game-playing through joint reading of directions and in television-viewing by selecting children's programs geared toward literacy and by reading television schedules

together (Purcell-Gates, 1995). As teachers make suggestions for weaving more literacy into their students' home lives, they will find The Reading is Fundamental Guide to Encouraging Young Readers an excellent resource of practical ideas which can be modified to suit the individual families with whom they work (1987).

In addition to providing families with general literacy support, the teacher should seek support for and assistance with the National Mall curriculum from families. Communicating with families as many specifics of the curriculum as possible will allow interested families to pursue and extend the curriculum at home. In addition to describing the curriculum and the class activities stemming from the study, involving parents in the planning and implementation of the study is crucial. Parents can be invaluable resources for furthering the National Mall curriculum through special events by: speaking to the class, suggesting and coordinating speakers, planning and leading class activities, chaperoning field trips, and assisting in the classroom. The "On-Going Projects" section addresses specific means for incorporating families into the everyday life of the classroom.

RATIONALE FOR CURRICULUM'S LITERACY BASIS:

Prior to delving into the content issues of the National Mall, this study considers literacy issues. From the first day of its implementation to its culmination at the end of the school year, this series of units strives to demonstrate the connections between reading, writing, and real life. As described previously,

the children come to school with different literacy backgrounds, ranging from lives steeped in literacy to scant experiences with literacy. In order to ensure that each child has a broad experience base with literacy prior to immersion in the social studies issues revolving around the National Mall, this curriculum is grounded in the following literacy principles:

1. Students should be actively engaged in purposeful learning.
2. Activities should encourage social interaction.
3. Activities should give students the opportunity to explore the connections between speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
4. Students should share responsibility for their own learning.
5. Students should feel free to take risks and experiment in an environment in which their efforts will be encouraged and applauded.

SOCIAL STUDIES PRINCIPLES:

In his essay "Bring 'Em Back Alive," Russell Freedman addresses the importance of making the past real in the study of history in a compelling statement:

"I sometimes hear the children today aren't really interested in history. It's one of their least favorite subjects. They look upon history as a kind of castor oil that one has to take--something that's good for you, maybe, but repulsive.

If that attitude exists, then it can only result from the way history is taught. I believe that history can be far more exciting than any imaginary adventure story because truth is so much stranger than fiction. Rather than castor oil, history should be thought of as a tonic. It should wake us up, because it is the story of ourselves" (1993, p.41).

Indeed, the National Mall Curriculum strives to capitalize on the excitement history holds for children when it is taught in a dynamic, personally-relevant fashion. Each of the sections of the study is firmly grounded in moving from studies of personal importance to those of historical significance so that the students have accessed their prior knowledge and heightened their awareness of their own experiences which will make the elements of social studies in the curriculum pertinent and comprehensible.

The following principles of Time, Change, and Interdependence describe specifically the ideas upon which the Social Studies portions of the study are based. Derived from the work of Hilda Taba in A Teacher's Handbook to Elementary Social Studies: An Inductive Approach (1971), these descriptions should serve as a starting point for the teacher considering the foundations of this curriculum, as well as a tool by which to measure the relevance of additional activities the teacher may choose to include.

TIME: The study of history revolves around time. History encompasses telling time in a variety of ways including: positioning points in time in relation to one another,

sequencing events in forwards and backwards order and developing a sense of the passage of time. (Seefeldt, 1993, pp. 112-114).

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP TIME CONCEPT:

Build temporal sequencing concepts of "before and after," "yesterday and tomorrow," and "this week and next week" into daily discussions of the schedule.

Introduce the study of conventional methods of time-keeping in math: clock time and calendars.

Write "Highlights of My Life" timelines; convert timelines into narrative autobiographies.

Read biographies of people relating to the National Mall and chart their lives' highlights in timelines. Write biographies of National Mall Heroes.

CHANGE: History demonstrates that change is inevitable. Some changes bring progress, others do not. Throughout history, groups and individuals have worked to bring about changes which have impacted people's lives.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP CHANGE CONCEPT:

Attend a rally on the Mall planned by people who want the

government to pay attention to their group's viewpoint. (The issue needs to be of interest and relevance to the children.)

Watch and discuss footage of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Graph numbers of people who demonstrated on the Mall for different causes.

Study the contributions which affected people's lives made by the individuals memorialized on the Mall: Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Vietnam soldiers and nurses, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

INTERDEPENDENCE: People and groups depend upon other persons and groups to help them meet their needs. People need government, and government needs people. Government provides rules and services which people need. People provide input and money which the government needs. Sometimes people disagree with the ways a government spends tax money.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP INTERDEPENDENCE CONCEPT:

Meet with and interview National Park Service Rangers about the assistance they provide and the services available to Mall visitors. Discuss who pays the rangers.

Interview Smithsonian employees about the services they provide for the general public, as well as their sources of funding.

The concepts of time, change and interdependence are essential for the development of the social studies elements of this curriculum but also for the foundation of the students' general understanding of the social studies ideas which will pervade their lives. Additionally, as this curriculum delves into the many connections between its principles and the children's lives, it examines the relationships of past and present, and of reading and writing. Underlying the concepts of Time, Change, and Interdependence are the connections between social studies and literacy issues.

The literacy goals for this curriculum also involve time, change, and interdependence. Developmentally-based, the curriculum seeks to introduce concepts at appropriate times for the students according to their developmental stages. The interpretation of the writing process in this study is based upon structuring change, as the children move from traditional writing exercises to process writing. By observing the children over time, the teacher can structure changes in reading and writing processes to suit the students' strengths and meet their needs. Since the development of literacy occurs in a social context, interdependence is one of the chief principles of the reading and writing portions of the curriculum, as well as of the social studies sections. Within the

study the interconnections between social studies and literacy are interwoven, unifying the whole curriculum.

THE NATIONAL MALL CURRICULUM UNITS

CURRICULUM:

The following curriculum consists of four units: Letters, Timelines, Autobiographies, and Biographies. While each unit can be restructured as a distinct entity, there is overlap between the units which allows them to build upon the content of each of the previous units. For instance, after the initial study of letters, reading and writing letters is an integral part of the succeeding portions of the study. Therefore, the order of the units should be retained if the curriculum is to be replicated in its entirety.

A year-long curriculum plan, the following material must be tailored to fit each group of students with whom it is used. Within the following framework, teachers may choose to emphasize, alter, omit, or supplement any of the following ideas based upon their students' interests, strengths, and weaknesses. Practical considerations, such as availability of multiple copies of particular texts, will also impact the planning of the curriculum. Meant to be a flexible curriculum which can be shaped to the students, the National Mall curriculum is a social studies and literacy-based work with endless possibilities for teaching and learning.

The curriculum incorporates a variety of teaching and learning formats, including: independent, partner, small group, and whole group reading; partner, small group, and whole group discussion; and independent, partner, small group and whole group projects or activities. As the teacher presents concepts, skills, and

directions, he/she will use short sessions of direct teaching referred to in the curriculum as mini-lessons. Mini-lessons may be presented to individual children, small groups, or the entire class, based upon the children's strengths, weaknesses, and needs and at the teacher's discretion. One portion of the curriculum details "On-going Features" which are projects and assignments that can be continued and extended throughout all units of the curriculum once they have been introduced. Again, these parts of the study should be modified to meet the needs of individual students as well as of the whole group.

I. INITIAL UNIT: LETTERS:

One form of writing which has universal appeal is the letter. Children are fascinated by mail and are thrilled to receive and read correspondence meant especially for them. In this writing unit which will be integrated with reading, children will capitalize on their enthusiasm for letters as they write a variety of types of letters for various purposes. Ideally, this unit will also demonstrate to children some of the many purposes for communicating ideas in writing which are personally meaningful.

For the initiation of this writing program termed by Lucy Calkins "the Launch" (1986, p.109), the teacher should gather the class together on the rug in the class meeting area and show them actual letters he/she has written or received. As Calkins describes, the teacher should plan this crucial kick-off of process writing with deep consideration and much reflection. Beginning the

program with a strong, powerful opening will help the children become invested in writing immediately.

INTRODUCTION TO LETTERS UNIT:

Goals for the opening discussion in the Letters unit are:

1. To determine several purposes for written communication.
2. To stimulate the students' interest in writing letters.
3. To raise the students' awareness of the variety of types and formats of letters.

The teacher should select a variety of pieces, such as: a memo to teachers from the principal which gives information about an issue of pertinence for the class (ie., reminding teachers of the importance of being on time for playground duty); a letter from the teacher's parent with lots of family news; a thank-you letter from a young cousin for a birthday present; a short reminder note from an immediate family member about an errand; a party invitation; a letter the teacher wrote as a child; a postcard from a friend's trip. (See Appendix A for samples of letters.) The teacher should read several of the letters aloud without giving any background information and ask the children to guess who wrote the notes to whom and why. As the children respond, the teacher should record their responses on a chart. Next the teacher should ask why they think he/she has kept each of the selections.

After ample discussion of these samples, the teacher will show the students the classroom mailboxes and point out the types and locations of lined and unlined paper and varieties and locations of writing implements available for their use. Then the students should be given time to experiment with writing notes and letters and placing them in the appropriate mailboxes.

DEVELOPMENT OF LETTERS UNIT:

Class "All-Reads" are the selections which all children in the class will read simultaneously. Multiple copies of each of the designated titles should be obtained through public libraries, discount bookstores, and mail order book companies which cater to schools. In conjunction with the reading, the teacher should coordinate mini-lessons, pre-reading and post-reading activities to enhance the children's comprehension of the book and to encourage the children to engage in a variety of literacy events.

Goals for the first class all-read book include:

1. To introduce students to meaningful, purposeful written dialogue.
2. To expose students to letter format, including the parts of a letter and the arrangement of those parts on the page.
3. To model for students the type of dialogue in which they will engage in their reading journals.

For the first class all-read book in the letter-writing portion of the study, the children will read Dear Mr. Blueberry by Simon James (1991). This picture book is a collection of letters written by Emily to her teacher Mr. Blueberry over summer vacation. Emily writes requesting information about whales since she believes one is living in the pond behind her house. The book's text consists entirely of Emily's letters and her skeptical teacher's responses about whales, their characteristics, and needs.

This selection will be the initial book in the study since it demonstrates clearly purposeful letter-writing, as well as provides a model of written dialogue and of mechanical aspects of letters. In addition, the letters are concise, the syntax is simple and straightforward, and the accompanying illustrations are supportive of the text, making this book an appropriate selection for emergent as well as fluent readers.

SAMPLE MINI-LESSONS FOR THE FIRST CLASS ALL-READ:

This lesson will focus the students on helpful strategies for approaching a book, including making predictions based on the title, cover text, and cover illustrations.

MINI-LESSON #1:

Pre-Reading: Prior to beginning the book, the children will participate in a whole-group, teacher-led discussion revolving around predictions based on the title, cover and back cover

illustrations. The teacher will record the students' responses on chart paper for later reference.

Questions will include:

1. What do you do when you are about to start a new book?
2. Before you open the book where can you get some ideas about what might be inside the book?

   (After discussion, the teacher should point out that good readers notice any illustrations on the front and back covers, read the title, and read any other information on the covers prior to reading. Introduce term and concept of "prediction.")
3. What are the pictures on the front and back covers?
4. From the pictures, what do you think this book will be about?
5. Look at the title on the front cover. What is it?
6. Who do you think Mr. Blueberry might be?
7. Why do you think his name is part of the title? What do you think the title might have to do with the story?

Open book. Point out endpapers, dedication, and title page to students. Encourage the students to speculate about who David and Lucy (names listed in the dedication) might be. Point out that authors have the option to dedicate their writings to anyone they please.

Ask students to read the first exchange of letters between Emily and Mr. Blueberry. Set purpose for reading by rereading the chart

of their predictions about the story and Mr. Blueberry. State the following purpose for the students prior to reading:
Read the first two letters and find out if the predictions appear in the story or if the story differs.

Post-Reading:

After the students have read the first part of Dear Mr. Blueberry, the whole group will reconvene. Discussion questions will include:

1. Who is Mr. Blueberry? Were our predictions on target or did we expect him to be someone different?
2. What does Emily write about in her letter?
3. Why do you think she chose to write to Mr. Blueberry?
4. What does Mr. Blueberry say to Emily in his letter to her?
5. Does Mr. Blueberry give Emily the information she wanted?
6. If you were Emily, would you write back to Mr. Blueberry after receiving this letter? Why or why not?

FOLLOW-UP WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Hold up a sample journal and explain to the students that they, like Emily, will be writing back and forth with their teacher. Initiate discussion and brainstorming about these letters with questions such as:

1. Since this school year is just beginning and we don't know each other well, what kinds of things should we write about to get to

know each other? (Record students' ideas on a poster which can be hung in the room as a resource for journal-writing ideas. See Appendix B for a sample poster.)

2. How does Emily begin her letter? end it? How does Mr. Blueberry begin his letter? end it? (Begin a second reference poster titles "Letter Words", which will be posted and added to throughout the unit. See Appendix C.)

Ask students to begin writing a letter to the teacher on the first journal page. Establish that to conserve paper, journal entries should utilize both sides of the page. Also show the students where they should stack finished journals and show them where returned journals will be placed.

MINI-LESSON #2:

In this lesson the children will practice revising their predictions as they read.

Pre-Reading:

Discuss the contents of Mr. Blueberry's first letter to Emily.

1. What do you think Emily will think or do now that she knows whales live in salt water? How will she go about finding out what is in the pond? Will she give up her idea that it is a whale? (Review "prediction" and record new predictions.)

The teacher should direct students: read the next three letters and determine whether Mr. Blueberry answers Emily's questions in

his letters.

FOLLOW-UP WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Students should read the teacher's responses in their journals and should respond directly to his/her questions, in addition to making any comments or asking more questions.

MINI-LESSON #3:

Questions and Answers in Letters:

This lesson will focus the students' attention on the relationships between pieces of information in an exchange of letters.

Pre-Reading:

The teacher will present the students with two charts which are reproductions of Emily's second letter and Mr. Blueberry's reply. After the students reread the letters chorally, they will discuss the following questions and underline key points on the chart copy of the letters with markers.

1. What was one thing Emily told Mr. Blueberry? (Underline a few key words.)

2. Reread Mr. Blueberry's letter to yourself and see if you see a place where he comments on her information. (Then a student will mark underneath Mr. Blueberry's words which address Emily's observation.)

3. Does Emily ask Mr. Blueberry any questions? (A student will underline them on the chart.)

4. Then students will reread Mr. Blueberry's letter in search of his answer to the question.

FOLLOW-UP WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Students will read the teacher's responses to their letters in their journals and underline any questions he/she asks them. Referring to their underlinings the children will respond to the questions in their next letters.

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENT:

With a partner, students will create posters. Students will divide their posters into halves by marking down the middle. Together students will choose a pair of letters from the story and will display in words and pictures a question asked in one letter and answered in the response or a comment made in one letter which the recipient comments upon further in the reply.

The teacher may choose to show a sample, and then ask children to pick different information for their letters.

MINI-LESSON #4:

Letters often include important information which can teach us about a particular topic, about the person who wrote the letter, or about the person who receives the letter. Some of the letters

include facts about whales and some include one person's observations of a whale. Observing is a valuable way to learn information. For this lesson, however, the focus is the facts, not the observations. In Dear Mr. Blueberry, which writer's letters focus on facts?

Read the next four letters and think about the kind of information Emily is learning about whales from her observations and from Mr. Blueberry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The teacher will have two charts. In the center of one is a circle which includes the words, "Emily's Observations about Whales," the other has a circle which reads, "Mr. Blueberry's Whale Facts." (See Appendix D.) In the discussion, the students should brainstorm and categorize the information gleaned from the reading into these two categories. If the idea that many observations over time lead to facts does not occur naturally in discussion, the teacher should assist the students in making this connection which can be extended in science experiments and projects.

FOLLOW-UP WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

In partners, the students will create whale posters based on the observations or the facts which have been proved through lots of observations. Posters should focus either on: what Emily finds out

from watching her whale or what Mr. Blueberry says about whales. Discussion and showing of posters should follow their creation.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR THE LETTERS UNIT:

--Write fan letters to authors of some of the children's favorite books.

--Write letters to penpals of the same age in a different part of the United States or in a different country. (Arrange penpals through a colleague who works elsewhere or ask parents to assist in networking through their relatives in other places.)

--Assume a favorite book character's role and write a letter to another character in the same book or a character in another book. (Have the children read The Jolly Postman (1986) by Janet and Allan Ahlberg to see models of postcards, birthday cards, mail order forms, and letters written and received by a variety of nursery rhyme characters.)

--Make a variety of types of fancy stationary as an art activity to motivate young letter-writers.

II. SECOND UNIT: TIMELINES:

INTRODUCTION TO TIMELINES UNIT:

Goals for the initial sessions revolving around timelines are:

1. To introduce children to a linear understanding of the sequence of time.
2. To acquaint the children with the term "timeline" and an example of a timeline which contains both text and supporting illustrations.
3. To demonstrate for the children one way of recording and arranging events in a timeline.

By beginning with their own personal histories in the form of timelines, the children should find the study of history entrancing. In the first session, the teacher will meet with all of the children and show them a prepared set of index cards (or larger paper models, if the group is large) on each of which he/she has written and drawn about one major event in his/her life. Selecting events which will interest the children is essential. Milestones such as breaking a bone, getting a dog, or moving to a new town, are events to which many children can relate and, thus, will increase the children's engagement in this activity.

After having volunteers read the cards aloud, the teacher may choose to describe each event briefly to give the children additional insight into why he/she chose the particular happenings. The children may wish to engage in dialogue with the teacher about

the happenings and compare them with their own experiences. After ample discussion the children should make their own sets of index cards with sentences and illustrations representing highlights from their lives.

In the next session, the teacher should model sequencing his/her events into chronological order and use glue or tape to attach the cards in order to a long strip of paper or tagboard. Then the children should work individually or with partners to sequence their own timelines and attach them to strips as well. When the group reconvenes and individuals have the opportunity to explain their timelines to a partner, small group, or the whole group, discussion should revolve around the length or duration of time revealed in the children and teacher's creations. The idea that these timelines represent large spans of time should be made clear.

A possible follow-up discussion would revolve around "time words." In this mini-lesson, the children should discuss their prior knowledge of time vocabulary. Word cards with time vocabulary can be used to stimulate discussion. (Words include: second, minute, half-hour, hour, day, week, month, year, decade, century.) The word cards can be arranged in increasing or decreasing lengths of time, as the children discuss the different spans of time represented by the words. Depending upon the children, the teacher may need to provide many examples and explanations of these words and should weave them into the

curriculum until the children have a firm understanding of the concepts.

DEVELOPMENT OF TIMELINES UNIT:

Goals for the middle portion of the timelines unit are:

1. To access the children's prior knowledge of historical events.
2. To assist the children in ascertaining possible strategies for arranging events in chronological order.
3. To create a general timeline to which events, historical periods, and famous people's names can be added throughout the year and curriculum.

In a brainstorming session, the children should list all of the data they can think of about history and historical events for the teacher to record on a chart. For instance, the children may know about: dinosaurs, World War II, George Washington, slavery, Columbus, and Vietnam. From this chart of knowledge, the children should work in partners, small groups, or individually to create one labelled picture representing each of their ideas. With their pictures, the children should rejoin the group and discuss which events came first, second, and so on. To each other they should reveal their reasoning for their ordering of the events. Children may rely upon stories they have heard, intuition, pictures they have seen, or vague understanding of past, near past and long past. The amount of support which the teacher needs to provide for this discussion or series of discussions will depend entirely upon the

group of children and their understanding of temporal sequencing as it relates to history. Extensions of this discussion could include examining pictorial information supplied by the teacher of vastly different time periods for the children to sequence in small groups and write explanations of their chronologies. Sample illustrations for sequencing could include: cave people, pioneers, and modern-day families.

When the children are beginning to grasp how to sequence events, they should create a chronological class timeline of their illustrated, brainstormed events. This timeline should be posted prominently in the classroom where it can serve as a general reference and can be added to throughout the curriculum.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR THE TIMELINES UNIT:

--Create a class big book which details important events recorded at regular intervals. The big book can contain: descriptions of field trips, programs, experiments, pieces of curriculum, lists of birthdays, sample schedules, illustrations, photographs, stories, poems, reports and other data the children wish to include arranged in chronological order. Monthly photographs of the whole group will record the physical growth of the children. If taken outside, these photos can also display differences in seasons, based on the children's clothing and the changes in deciduous trees.

--Graph numbers of children in the class for whom particular milestones have occurred or who have included common events in

their timelines. Ideas for graphing include: number of teeth lost, number of birthdays in each month, year of birth, and number of people living in each household.

--Math studies during the timelines unit can include: cardinal and ordinal numbers, multiple-digit subtraction of years, and sequencing of multiple digit numbers.

--Reading studies can delve into books which record what happens in a lifetime, year, week, or day. See Timelines Bibliography for annotated titles.

III. THIRD UNIT: AUTOBIOGRAPHIES:

To introduce the autobiographical study, the children will explore important family objects and write stories about family memories which revolve around the chosen objects. Then the children will revisit their personal timelines from the previous unit, using the timelines as a form of outline for writing autobiographies. Simultaneously, in reading the children will focus on memory books and autobiographies to examine examples of how other authors have treated information of personal importance.

INTRODUCTION TO AUTOBIOGRAPHIES UNIT:

Read aloud Bringing the Farmhouse Home (1992) by Gloria Whelan. In this illustrated storybook, Whelan describes how Grandma's five children and numerous grandchildren visit her house the summer after her death to divide up her belongings. As they sort through her possessions, her relatives tell stories of the memories associated with different objects, from her quilt to her mixing bowl. After the reading, facilitate discussion in which the students recall a list of the objects important to this family's history and the memories or family stories behind each object. Chart their responses.

Discuss the idea that most families have objects (or memories of objects) which they hold dear and which have importance in their family history. Ask each student to identify with his/her family one such object. Students should bring the actual object to school or draw a picture of the item to show in discussion. With the

children, compose a letter to families summarizing Bringing the Farmhouse Home (1992) and explaining the assignment; have several children take turns copying the letter onto a sheet which can be photocopied for the whole class to take home.

On the appointed day when students bring their objects or illustrations to school, have the students meet in pairs for "Family Object Show-and-Tell." With their partners, the children should discuss study each others' objects or pictures and complete charts (Appendix E). The charts will become the fact sheets which will be references for the children's family stories. Ultimately, the students' stories and accompanying illustrations will be combined into a class book.

DEVELOPMENT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHIES UNIT:

Read When I Was Young in the Mountains aloud (Rylant, 1982). In this book, a child describes her vivid memories of childhood in Appalachia, beginning most of the descriptions with, "When I was young in the mountains..." Ask children: "What do you remember from this story? Did you see pictures in your mind of any parts of the book? Which parts?" After a thorough discussion of the images the book created in their minds, discuss how the author's words contributed to the vivid images this book evokes. "What words do you remember?" Record their words, phrases, or sentences on a chart. Then ask the children to write a memory of their own choosing. Encourage them to use Rylant's repeated language pattern, "When I was young," if they choose. The teacher may

choose to have the children publish these stories, either individually or as a class anthology for reproductions which can be sent home to all families in the class. There are sample checklists for revision and editing in Appendix F which can be used as tools after thorough introduction to the children.

To move from single-episode personal stories into autobiographies, the teacher should read examples of autobiographies to the children. One fine example of an autobiography is A Girl from Yamhill by Beverly Cleary (1988). This selection will only be an appropriate selection if all of the children are familiar with several Cleary titles, however. Integrating several of Cleary's books about Ramona Quimby into the Timelines Unit to examine a year in a child's life is one way to meet this prerequisite. Although the teacher may prefer to read the autobiography to the children in its entirety, he/she may choose to read only select portions and make the text available to children and families for borrowing as the book is quite lengthy. In the Annotated Bibliography there is a list of other autobiographies and family stories which can be used for reading groups as well as for pleasure reading throughout this unit.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES UNIT:

--Organize a "Family Autobiography" writing project which parents and children can complete together as they write about events important to their families.

--Examine "Oral Autobiography." Arrange for parent or grandparent volunteers to visit the classroom and tell stories from their childhoods, youths, adulthoods or about their heritages.

IV. FOURTH UNIT: BIOGRAPHIES:

BIOGRAPHY:

Myra Zarnowski points out that "biographers see themselves as problem-solvers, discoverers, and artists" (1990, p.5). Through an extensive whole-class study of some of the biographies of Abraham Lincoln and through individual and partner forays into biographies of historical figures of their choice, the children will have opportunities for critical thinking and problem-solving, discovery and connection of those findings to other events, and creative presentation of their data.

Zarnowski defines the appeal of biographies as the power of the stories they tell. Generally, children are eager to read or hear interesting narratives; biographies are narratives which describe the lives of real people. Therefore, this curriculum capitalizes on students' love of stories by immersing them in a study of real stories: biographies.

INTRODUCTION TO BIOGRAPHIES:

Goals of the initial foray into biographies are:

1. To introduce the children to ideas and vocabulary important to Lincoln's life.
2. To establish a framework of the major events in the president's life as well as a rough sense of the relevant chronology.
3. To experience the joy and curiosity which the life of a real person can rouse.

David Adler's A Picture Book of Abraham Lincoln (1989) is a biography which is simple and straightforward and has illustrations which are supportive of the text. Reading this short biography aloud in one sitting will serve as an introduction to key events and people in Lincoln's life. During the reading, the teacher should explain any concepts or terms as needed as he/she reads to the group since much of the information may be new to the children. As a post-reading activity, the group should create a timeline of Lincoln's life which can be elaborated upon as they read more detailed biographies about Lincoln. After the reading and discussion, this biography of Lincoln and other biographies of Lincoln should be readily available in the library corner of the classroom. The Annotated Bibliography contains information about selections which may be appropriate for reading groups. As small reading groups and as a whole group, the children can convene periodically to report and discuss the information they are learning about Lincoln as well as to discuss the variety of biography formats and styles.

DEVELOPMENT OF BIOGRAPHIES:

Concurrently with the children's individual reading of biographies of Lincoln, the teacher may choose to read Me and Willie and Pa (Monjo, 1973) aloud to the class. Although F.N. Monjo's book is written as if told by Tad Lincoln, one of Lincoln's sons, it is a type of biography. Historical data is fitted into a creative format, with which the children should become familiar, as

they work toward writing their own biographies. Me and Willie and Pa is also an ideal vehicle for introducing the children to the exploration of primary source documents. After the children have a basic understanding of key events in Lincoln's life from reading and hearing secondary sources, primary sources will be more comprehensible and pertinent. Attached in Appendix G is a list of primary source material, letters written to Lincoln and some letters written by Lincoln, which can be interwoven in the reading of Me and Willie and Pa. Me and Willie and Pa will provide the context for the letters, making them accessible to the children.

Next the children should work in pairs to read, make timelines, and write biographies of key Mall figures such as: George Washington, Martin Luther King, L'Enfant, Smithson (Smithsonian founder), Harriet Beecher Stowe, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (a new Mall monument is being erected in memorial to him currently), and other famous people they have studied or heard mentioned during the National Mall curriculum. Ample time should be spent with the group in discussion of the different formats of biography they have read and found appealing and effective. For their biography projects the children should be allowed to choose the writing style and form they find most appropriate for their subjects. As a culminating project, the children should present their biographies to their classmates and families.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR THE BIOGRAPHIES UNIT:

--Conduct interviews of family members or individuals met in the National Mall study and write biographies of living people.

--Portray historical figures researched and visit other classrooms in costume or with several props to be interviewed by other students about the figure's life and accomplishments.

--Publish extra copies of students' biographies to present to the school library.

ON-GOING FEATURES OF CURRICULUM:

Certain pieces of the curriculum pervade all four units of the National Mall study. Once introduced, these "On-going Features" should be extended or modified for use in each of the units as appropriate for the specific group of students. For instance, the "Class Newsletter" feature may take the format of a series of letters in the first unit. During the "Timelines Unit", the newsletter may include a summary of the week's classroom highlights in a timeline. In the final two units, the students and teacher may opt to add an autobiographies column for class members' and families' contributions, as well as a biographies column with profiles of school staff and National Mall figures. The "On-going Features" are an additional set of tools which the teacher should use with flexibility to enhance the National Mall curriculum.

CLASS MAILBOXES:

In the classroom, there will be a mailbox for each student and for the teacher. Depending upon space and classroom set-up, cubbyholes may be designated as mailboxes, or a vinyl bag designed for shoe storage or a pocket chart may be used. After the introduction to the idea, the children will make their own name labels to mark the boxes.

The notes and letters placed in these boxes may serve a variety of purposes of communication, which can be categorized and discussed in mini-lessons. For instance, class members can use the

mailboxes to send personal reminders, requests, invitations, thank-you notes, compliments, holiday greetings, or any other forms of personal correspondence. (If parents choose to leave personal messages for one another, they may use their children's slots. Children should be the messengers and take home notes addressed to their families.)

CLASS MESSAGE BOARD:

One of the bulletin boards in the classroom will be used for making general announcements. Through this board, readers and writers will witness that written language, not only oral language, is a means of social interaction. To introduce the board, the teacher may write an announcement and post it on the board.

When students discover a message, they are encouraged to write notes to each other and to the teacher. Messages must be signed and dated. The Message Board should become a classroom vehicle for informing the class of personal or family news, posting invitations or thank-you notes, responding to assignments, hanging lost-and-found notices, sharing current events, posing questions, telling jokes, or posting sign-up sheets. Families should also be encouraged to use the Message Board to leave notes for the children or teacher, to post announcements about community events which might interest other families, or to leave notes for other parents.

After the children begin using the board frequently, the board may become crowded and the class may choose to delineate certain areas of the board for specific categories of announcements.

Ultimately, the class may sequence and glue samples of messages into a scrapbook of class history.

CLASS NEWSLETTER:

Primarily a means of communication between home and school, the Class Newsletter should be produced at a regular interval, weekly, biweekly, or monthly, and photocopied for home distribution. The newsletter should be a collaborative effort, representing contributions from children, teacher, and families. The newsletter should contain a range of types of articles, announcements, stories, poems, art work, quotations, calendars of events, ideas for curriculum extensions, book reviews, recipes, and any other contributions which members of the classroom community desire to publish. As the National Mall study progresses the children may opt for the newsletter to evolve into different formats such as an anthology of their work on a particular theme, a compilation of book reviews, or a monthly timeline of class activities.

Throughout the year, the teacher can present language arts mini-lessons which can be incorporated into the class newsletter. Suggestions for mini-lesson topics include introductions to: writing headlines, distinguishing between the different sections of a newspaper, newspaper vocabulary (masthead, bylines, layout), writing captions, and Letters to the Editor.

JOURNALS:

Each student will keep a journal for the purpose of recording his/her responses to reading. At the beginning of the year the journal will take the form of a Dialogue Journal, with the teacher responding periodically in writing to the children's entries. The children will write in the journals at least twice per week during designated Journal Periods. Occasionally, the children will have opportunities to read entries to the whole-group or to a partner.

To introduce journal writing, the teacher will model on the overhead projector or on chart paper her responses to a book with which all the children are familiar. Depending upon the students, the teacher may need to repeat the modelling process for the whole group or for small groups of children who need assistance choosing topics or formulating their responses into entries.

The children should generate a list of different kinds of writing which can go into journals; this list should be converted to a poster which can be hung as a reference for students who need ideas. Some types of writing which can be presented in mini-lessons as needed are: summaries, book evaluations and ratings, retellings of the plot, discussions of problem and solution, rewritten versions of portions of books, setting or character descriptions, and reflections on the story. Occasionally, the teacher may choose to give a particular journal writing assignment, such as writing to a book character or writing a series of letters exploring one topic.

INVITATIONS AND THANK-YOU LETTERS:

To introduce these forms of personal letters, the teacher will read aloud A Letter for Amy by Ezra Jack Keats (1968), which describes Peter's desire to invite a girl to his birthday party; ultimately he writes her a letter of invitation which he attempts to mail, but the wind snatches it away from him.

After this introduction to invitations, the children will write their own letters of invitation. It is essential for their understanding of purpose and for their motivation that these letters be actual letters of invitation which will be sent or given to the addressees. Whatever point the children have reached in the curriculum will determine the purpose; perhaps they can write to their families inviting them to an upcoming Parents' Night, invite individuals from another grade to their classroom for a special book reading, or write to the principal, librarian, janitor, and other school officials inviting them to join the class for a special student-made snack. The number of letters needed to accomplish the purpose will dictate whether the children work individually or in pairs.

Invitations and thank-you letters should be embedded throughout the curriculum as an activity which demonstrates to the children the importance of this means of personal communication. Whenever the children plan to invite a special guest into the classroom or ask families, school personnel or another class to attend a special production, meeting, or event, they should be responsible for extending personal invitations to the invitees.

Likewise, thank-you letters should become a routine follow-up for any special assistance the children receive throughout the course of the school year.

BUSINESS LETTERS:

Another type of letter which the teacher should weave into the curriculum is the business letter. Again, these letters should be introduced and used for genuine purposes. To introduce business letters the teacher should prepare overhead transparencies or large charts with copies of actual business letters she has written requesting information, materials, or other assistance with the National Mall Curriculum. After determining the purpose of the letter and circling or highlighting key features of the letters' formats, the children should embark on writing their own business letters.

Possible purposes for business letters should stem directly from the curriculum. The children can write to the Chamber of Commerce requesting maps and general information about all four quadrants of Washington, D.C., the Smithsonian for schedules and field trip information, the National Park Service for maps of the Mall and brochures about the monuments, or to other nonprofit organizations or businesses which are relevant to their explorations of the Mall.

A follow-up mini-lesson can focus on the addressing of envelopes, while math lessons can revolve around the different coin combinations which can be used to purchase a stamp.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF CURRICULUM:

The organization of the curriculum depends upon the units (Letters, Timelines, Autobiographies, and Biographies) occurring in order since there is a progression of ideas and skills built into the study. Each unit builds upon the last, and calls for information from the past section. Each of the on-going features of the curriculum serves as a means of sharing information; by permeating the study, each feature is intended to broaden and deepen the children's understanding of the connections between reading and writing, as well as of the purposes and forms of communication.

Since the curriculum has not yet been used in the classroom, it is a rough outline with some sample lessons and ideas for implementation. For every piece of the curriculum, the teacher should consider the exact children with whom he/she will be using the study and modify, omit, insert, or extend portions of the study as necessary to tailor the units to his/her students. Teachers are encouraged to reshape the curriculum in any way they choose in order to utilize the strengths and meet the needs of their students.

QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER'S ON-GOING ANALYSIS OF CURRICULUM:

To evaluate the progress of the class, the success of the curriculum, and the input by the teacher, there are three sets of questions which can assist the teacher in focusing his/her reflections. Depending upon the group of students, the teacher's goals and expectations, and the pieces of the curriculum which the class explores, the teacher may choose to modify, supplement, or omit some of the following suggestions.

<u>To determine whether the curriculum unit is meeting the literacy goals of the study:</u>

Do the children consider themselves readers/writers?

Are the children self-motivated to read and write? (Do they initiate reading and writing on their own without an assignment?)

Can the children assist each other and work cooperatively to when working on reading and writing projects? (Are the children able to give and receive constructive criticism, ask each other for assistance, and conference with each other appropriately?

Do the children view themselves as teachers and learners, with the ability to attain expertise in the areas of their own choosing?

Are the children familiar with and able to apply a variety of reading and writing strategies independently?

Do the children read a variety of genres and write in a variety of formats?

Do the children experience joy in reading and writing?

Are the children comfortable taking risks in reading and writing?

To determine whether the curriculum is meeting the content area goals of the study:

Are the children able to choose the appropriate letter format in which to communicate their ideas for different purposes and different recipients?

Are the children able to articulate and apply multiple purposes for reading and writing?

Do the children understand that history is subjective?

Are the children able to distinguish between autobiography, biography, history and historical fiction?

Are the children able to understand the concepts of before, during, and after based on a timeline?

Are the children developing a sense of past, long past, and long, long past through their study of history?

To gauge the environment in which the study is taking place:

Do parents and administrators have a clear sense of the study's goals as well as of the day-to-day operations?

Are parents involved in portions of the curriculum, such as giving and attending presentations, trips and their planning, and family assignments which extend the study?

Is the class community warm, supportive, and conducive to risk-taking?

Are materials directly related to and those which extend the study readily available to children and their families?

Does the classroom arrangement of furniture, work areas, meeting area, storage of materials and library support the children s learning and enable them to take responsibility for supplies and operations of the class?

Is the frequency of transitions and interruptions reduced to the absolute minimum?

To encourage self-reflection:

Do I present material in a variety of ways which is supportive of the range of learning styles in my class?

Am I constantly modelling the reading and writing behaviors I expect the students to develop?

Are my expectations of the children high? Have I articulated my expectations clearly to them?

Am I learning continually about each of the children, about the topics relevant to the curriculum, and about teaching and learning in general?

SUMMARY:

Moving away from traditional models of social studies and literacy which are taught in an entirely teacher-directed manner, the National Mall curriculum embraces a progressive curricular trend which engages students in the process of their learning. This study emphasizes purposeful reading and writing revolving around the issues of Time, Change, and Interdependence which are developmentally-appropriate for second and third-graders. Ammon and Weigard summarize the difference between the traditional and progressive teaching philosophies: "Instead of a pell-mell dash to cover a curriculum by treating topics superficially, process teaching requires time for in-depth study" (1993, p.94). The exact depth of study in each of the units of the National Mall study must be determined by the teacher, based on careful observation of his/her students' interests, strengths, and needs. Intended as an outline of a curriculum with solid grounding in theory, the National Mall study is a flexible study which will take on new shape with each group of students.

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Seefeldt, C. (1993). Social studies for the preschool-primary child. New York: Macmillan.

Taba, H., Durkin, M., & McNaughton, A. (1971). A teacher's handbook to elementary social studies: An inductive approach. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Taylor, D. & Dorsey-Gaines, C. (1988). Growing up literate: Learning from inner-city families. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Young, K. (1994). Constructing buildings, bridges, and minds:

Building an integrated curriculum through social studies. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Zarnowski, M. (1990). Learning about biographies: A reading-and-writing approach for children. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: LETTERS

Ahlberg, J. & Ahlberg, A. (1986). The jolly postman or other people's letters. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. In this rhyming book, the postman delivers letters to many well-known fairy-tale characters. The actual correspondences can be removed from their envelopes and read.

Blake, O. (1979). Mystery of the lost letter. New York: Troll. In this beginning reading level mystery, a girl fails to follow her mother's directions and loses a letter. She enlists the help of a friend who helps her find it.

Brisson, P. (1989). Your best friend, Kate. New York: Bradbury Press. In this detailed picture book, Kate and her family spend the summer travelling around the United States. She sends a series of postcards and letters to a friend which describe the trip's highlights.

Brisson, P. (1992). Kate on the coast. New York: Bradbury Press. In the sequel to Your best friend, Kate, Kate moves to Seattle and initiates a pen-pal relationship with her old friend.

Campbell, R. (1982). Dear Zoo. New York: Four Winds Press. An emergent level "lift-the-flap" book, this story is about trying out different zoo animals as pets. It has a strong language pattern and supportive pictures which should make it accessible to children who are just beginning to grasp some concepts about reading.

Cleary, B. (1983). Dear Mr. Henshaw. New York: Morrow. This chapter book is appropriate for early fluent or fluent readers or for reading aloud. Leigh is a lonely boy who begins a diary after writing an assignment at school requiring him to write to an author.

James, S. (1991). Dear Mr. Blueberry. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books. Intended as a Class "All-Read", this picture book is a series of letters written by a child to her teacher and his responses.

Keats, E.J. (1968). A letter for Amy. New York: Harper and Row. A picture book illustrated with collages, this book includes an birthday party invitation sent by Peter to Amy, which she receives in an unusual manner.

Leedy, L. (1991). Messages in the mailbox: How to write a letter. New York: Holiday House. Filled with animal cartoons, this "how-to" book describes letter formats and purposes and includes related reference information such as state abbreviations.

Lobel, A. (1970). Frog and Toad are friends. New York: HarperTrophy. In this "I Can Read" text suitable for beginning readers, one chapter of the book revolves around letters written by the two pals, Frog and Toad.

Parker, N.W. (1977). Love from Uncle Clyde. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company. Uncle Clyde sends an unusual birthday gift accompanied by a letter in this beginning reading level picture book.

Parker, N.W. (1983). Love from Aunt Betty. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company. Aunt Betty sends a recipe through the mail in this short text appropriate for beginning readers.

Siracusa, C. (1990). No mail for Mitchell. New York: Random House. A Level One "Step into Reading" book, this funny, predictable story describes Mitchell the mailman's disappointment in never receiving any mail.

Va, L. (1987). A letter to the king. New York: HarperCollins. In ancient China, a little girl's father is unjustly arrested. She writes a moving letter to the king, who ultimately pardons the man.

Williams, V. (1988). Stringbean's trip to the shining sea. New York: Greenwillow Books. With rich illustrations which make each page appear to be an actual postcard, the story traces Stringbean and his brother's trip across America. Teachers should consider this text if they desire a second Class "All-Read" during the "Letters Unit."

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: TIMELINES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Ballard, R. (1992). Granny and me. New York: Greenwillow. A lovely collection of family photographs amuse a little girl and her grandmother. This book could serve as an introduction to the concept of "family tree."

Bonners, S. (1991). The wooden doll. New York: Lothrop. An example of a "family object" story, this picture book describes the importance to Stephania's family of a set of nested wooden dolls brought out of Poland.

Caseley, J. (1987). Apple pie and onions. New York: Greenwillow. On a shopping trip, Rebecca becomes embarrassed by her grandmother's Old World customs and language. Her grandmother tells her a story about when she was embarrassed by one of her own parents.

Cleary, B. (1982). Ramona the pest. New York: Morrow. The first in a series about Ramona Quimby, this chapter book describes the hilarious events in a mischievous girl's home and school life.

Cleary, B. (1988). A girl from Yamhill: A memoir. New York: Yearling. This favorite children's author describes her own life, as well as how she became a writer. This text is an excellent selection for reading aloud if students admire Cleary's work.

Cohen, R. (1994). My dad's baseball. New York: Lothrop. Another story describing an important object, this story focuses on a boy who finds an old baseball which triggers his father to tell a story about an important game.

Davis, M.S. (1991). Something magic. New York: Simon and Schuster. A mother shows her daughter an old family scrapbook. Some of the illustrations appear to be photos. This text could be used to introduce a project in which children write stories based on old family pictures.

Friedman, I.R. (1984). How my parents learned to eat. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Told by a little girl, the story explains how an American sailor meets and courts a Japanese woman. Secretly, each tries to learn the other's customs of eating.

Hest, A. (1993). Nana's birthday party. Boston: Morrow. After Nana tells her granddaughters a story about an old family picture of a birthday party, the girls surprise her with a special birthday gift.

Kahn, R. (1991). Grandma's hat. New York: Viking. Grandma tells a story from her childhood in South Africa when she was forced

to wear an ugly hat. She details how she lost it and the hat's fate.

Levinson, R. (1985). Watch the stars come out. New York: Dutton. A grandmother tells the story of her mother's immigration to America as she shows her granddaughter a photo album.

MacLachlan, P. (1980). Through Grandpa's eyes. New York: HarperTrophy. Told by his grandson, this story describes a boy's visits to his blind grandfather, who teaches him to "see" in a new way.

Mathis, S.B. (1975). The hundred penny box. New York: Scholastic. Michael's Great-Aunt Dew keeps an old box filled with one penny for each year of her life. As they count the pennies together, she recounts stories associated with each year.

Mora, P. (1994). Pablo's tree. New York: Macmillan. Grandfather planted a tree in his new grandson's honor the day Pablo was adopted. On that day each year, his grandfather decorates the tree and tells the story of the adoption.

Oberman, S. (1994). The always prayer. Chicago: Boyds Mills. About a prayer shawl brought from Russia, the story demonstrates the importance to one family of passing important items down through its generations.

Rylant, C. (1982). When I was young in the mountains. New York: Dutton. A Caldecott Honor Book, this story describes an Appalachian childhood in a repeated language pattern.

Whelan, G. (1992). Bringing the farmhouse home. New York: Simon and Schuster. After Grandma's death, all of her children and grandchildren gather at her house to divide up her belongings and to tell their memories associated with her possessions.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: BIOGRAPHIES

Brenner, M. (1994). Abe Lincoln's hat. New York: Random House. A "Step into Reading" historical fiction account of Lincoln's adult life, focused on why Lincoln wore a stove-pipe hat. Ideal for individual student reading or for a small reading group--grade 2 reading level.

Bruns, R. (1986). World Leaders, past and present: Abraham Lincoln. New York: Chelsea House Publishers. This dense biography is a rich teacher resource in text and in old photographs and prints.

d'Aulaire, I. & d'Aulaire, E. (1989). Abraham Lincoln. Garden City, New York: Doubleday. This Caldecott medal winner is a picture book biography written on a second/third grade level.

Freedman, R. (1987). Lincoln: A photobiography. New York: Clarion. Although the text may be overwhelming for young readers, the collection of photos is moving.

Freedman, R. (1990). Franklin Delano Roosevelt. New York: Clarion. A photobiography, this text will fascinate young readers with its collection of black-and-white photos.

Fritz, J. (1969). George Washington's breakfast. New York: Coward-McCann. This endearing story is about a little boy who is named for George Washington and who is determined to find out as much as possible about the first president. His grandmother agrees to cook George Washington's breakfast for him if he can find out what she should make.

Fritz, J. (1993). Just a few words, Mr. Lincoln: The story of the Gettysburg Address. New York: Grosset and Dunlap. An "All Aboard Reading" selection, this book presents the Civil War and Lincoln's famous speech, as well as other details of Lincoln's life, clearly and simply.

Gross, R.B. (1973). True stories about Abraham Lincoln. New York: Scholastic. These short stories are divided into one page episodes illustrated with dramatic woodcut prints. Their brevity could make them a good choice for a cooperative exercise focusing on summarizing, writing concise passages without extraneous information, or modelling dividing a biography into manageable "chunks."

Hakim, R. (1991). Martin Luther King, Jr., and the March toward freedom. Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press. This biography focuses on the March on D.C., but contains a meaty biography of King as well. Book contains a timeline of King's life and many photographs.

Heilbroner, J. (1989). Meet George Washington. New York: Random House. This "Step-Up" series paperback in short chapter form is a thorough chronological account of Washington's life. Strong independent readers (grades 3-4) could tackle this book or could be a read-aloud selection for the whole group.

Holzer, H. (1995). Dear Mr. Lincoln. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. This collection contains letters written to and by Lincoln. Organized by purpose, this collection is an essential teacher resource for primary source material.

Kunhardt, E. (1993). Honest Abe. New York: Greenwillow Books. Illustrated with brilliantly-colored murals, this text is a straightforward biography in chronological format.

Meltzer, M. (1993). Lincoln in his own words. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co. A compilation of letters, remarks, speeches, and presidential papers accompanied by woodcuts, this collection of primary source documents will be an invaluable teacher resource.

Monjo, F.N. (1973). Me and Willie and Pa: The story of Abraham Lincoln and his son Tad. New York: Simon and Schuster. Told as if written by Tad Lincoln, this biography contains important factual information as well as delightful anecdotes.

Murphy, J. (1990). The boys' war: Confederate and Union soldiers talk about the Civil War. New York: Clarion. Based on first-hand accounts of young soldiers, this vivid account, written on a third/fourth grade level, will clarify issues of the Civil War.

Sandburg, C. (1954). Abraham Lincoln: The prairie years and the war years. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company. The definitive biography of Lincoln, this text is an essential teacher resource. The single volume edition also contains many photographs.

Sandburg, C. (1954). Abe Lincoln grows up. New York: Harcourt Brace. Reprinted from Sandburg's Abraham Lincoln: The prairie years, this selection describes Lincoln's childhood and youth. This chapter book is appropriate for reading aloud or for students reading on about a fourth grade level.

Smith, K.B. (1987). Abraham Lincoln. New York: Simon & Schuster. Dense text packed with facts--third or fourth grade reading level. All photographs and illustrations are from Washington, D.C. sights and are potentially helpful for making trip sheets. Majority of illustrations are from the Smithsonian and National Portrait Gallery.

Wagoner, J.B. (1947). Martha Washington: America's First Lady. New York: Macmillan. From a series of biographies detailing the childhood of famous people, this selection is an easy-to-read illustrated chapter book.

Weinberg, L. (1991). The Story of Abraham Lincoln, President for the people. New York: Dell. This chapter-book version of Lincoln's life is particularly strong in its description of Lincoln's struggles with slavery and divisions within the Union. It contains a timeline of Lincoln's life.

Yoder, C.P. (Ed.). (May 1994). Abraham Lincoln issue of Cobblestone: The History Magazine for Young People. This magazine issue shows the wide variety of articles, stories, and other nonfiction accounts which can be the result of research.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: NATIONAL MALL

Arnold, C. (1983). Why do we have rules? New York: Franklin Watts. Arnold's book, illustrated with photographs, is an excellent, simple account of what government is and why we need it.

Ashabranner, B. (1992). A memorial for Mr. Lincoln. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. Excellent teacher resource for entire process of building Lincoln Memorial. Many, many photographs of the carving and erection processes as well as of important events occurring at the Memorial--Marian Anderson's concert, King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Bunting, E. (1990). The wall. New York: Clarion. A father and son visit the Vietnam Memorial to find the name of the grandfather the boy never knew. This selection is a "Reading Rainbow" picture book.

Climo, S. (1991). City! Washington, D.C.. New York: Macmillan. This chapter book will be challenging for most second graders. Its table of contents and index make it a good choice for learning research skills. The book also contains color photographs of Washington sites which have simple captions.

Donnelly, J. (1991). A wall of names. New York: Random House. This "Step into Reading" book is appropriate reading for second or third grade readers. This selection tells the story of the Vietnam Memorial.

Friedel, F. & Aikman, L. (1965). G. Washington: Man and monument. Washington, D.C.: Washington National Monument Association. This guide is a complete teacher reference and resource for reading prior to the Washington Monument trip. Many of the drawings and photographs would be helpful for enlarging and reproducing for the children's study.

Gelber, C. (May 1994). Monuments and Memorials. Faces: The magazine about people, pp.19-26. This photo essay depicts monuments from different cultures and gives an overview of reasons the living memorialize the dead. This piece could be a strong introduction to a collective study of the Mall's monuments.

Hoig, S. (1990). A capital for the nation. New York: Cobblehill Books. This teacher reference book contains many historic prints and has a particularly descriptive and helpful account of the Capitol Building.

Knowlton, J. (1985). Maps and globes. New York: HarperTrophy. This non-fiction book introduces basic features of geography as well as map and globe reading. Simple, clear line drawings

and maps support the text.

Krementz, J. (1987). A visit to Washington, D.C.. New York: Scholastic. In this photographic essay, Matt Wilson, a six-year-old, gives commentary on the sites of the city.

Levine, E. (1990). If you lived at the time of Martin Luther King. New York: Scholastic. Question-Answer format is very readable. This text is an example of one of the creative formats students may use to write biographies. The book also contains musical score for "We Shall Overcome."

Lindbergh, A. (1982). The people of Pineapple Place. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. This book is a delightful account of a boy and his single mom who move to Georgetown. There are many references to streets, sites, and stores which are actually in Washington. A perfect selection for reading aloud to the class! This author lives in Georgetown--wouldn't it be wonderful if she could be persuaded to visit the class after they had listened to her story?!

Maher, J.E. (1972). Ideas about taxes. New York: Franklin Watts. An elementary account of why governments collect taxes and the kinds of things taxes pay for in the community will interest children through its lists and funny illustrations.

Reef, C. (1990). Washington, D.C.: A downtown America book. Minneapolis: Dillon. A picture book with simple text and captions, the photographs will be a useful resource for the children as they draw, paint, and build their own models of important buildings.

Stein, R.C. (1986). The story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Chicago: Childrens Press. This book gives important background information which will build the children's understanding of events leading up to the March on D.C.

Stein, R.C. (1979). The story of the Smithsonian Institution. Chicago: Childrens Press. This non-fictional account traces the history of the Smithsonian and contains a clear map of the museums on the Mall.

Waters, K. (1991). The story of the White House. New York: Scholastic. Although not about the Mall itself, the photographs and easy-to-read text will intrigue children who are looking for books in the class library corner.

Weisberger, B.A. (1968). The District of Columbia: The seat of government. New York: Time-Life Books. Although this book is written for adults, children will enjoy the many photographs, maps, line drawings, cartoons, and other elements of the book.

Wright, D.K. (1989). The Story of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Chicago: Childrens Press. This text treats the Vietnam War fairly even-handedly and sensitively. The site selection and information about the monument's design and erection could be helpful in trip sheets for the Wall field trip.

APPENDICES

A. Sample letters for introduction to "Letters Unit."

B. Example of a topic list for "Letters Unit" Mini-Lesson #1.

C. Sample of a "Letter Words" chart.

D. Sample of a chart for "Letters Unit" Mini-Lesson #3.

E. Family Object Show and Tell chart for introduction of "Autobiographies Unit."

F. Sample Checklist for Revision and Editing introduced in the "Autobiographies Unit."

G. List of primary source documents to integrate into development of "Biographies Unit."

Appendix A: Sample Letters to show the class during "Letters Unit" introduction.

Dear Uncle John and Aunt Marion -
Thanks so much for the Bible, the teething ring, the onsie and all the good stuff - I'm using all of them.
You both are so special that I'm lucky to have you in my life.
XOXOXO
Love,
Eddie
P.S. Teach me how to write, too!

M²
Merry Christmas, Good Friends!!!
Hope I get to see you soon & hope all is going great! Hi & Merry Christmas to John & your parents from me.
Talk to you soon -
Love
Stan

Appendix B: Example of topic list to inspire journal writing in "Letters Unit" Mini-Lesson #1.

Ideas for Writing:

pets

favorite foods

school

hobbies

weekend activities

friends

family

field trips

books you've read

things you'd like to do

Appendix C: Sample of a "Letter Words" chart.

Letter Words:

Dear

Thank you

Sincerely,

To

From

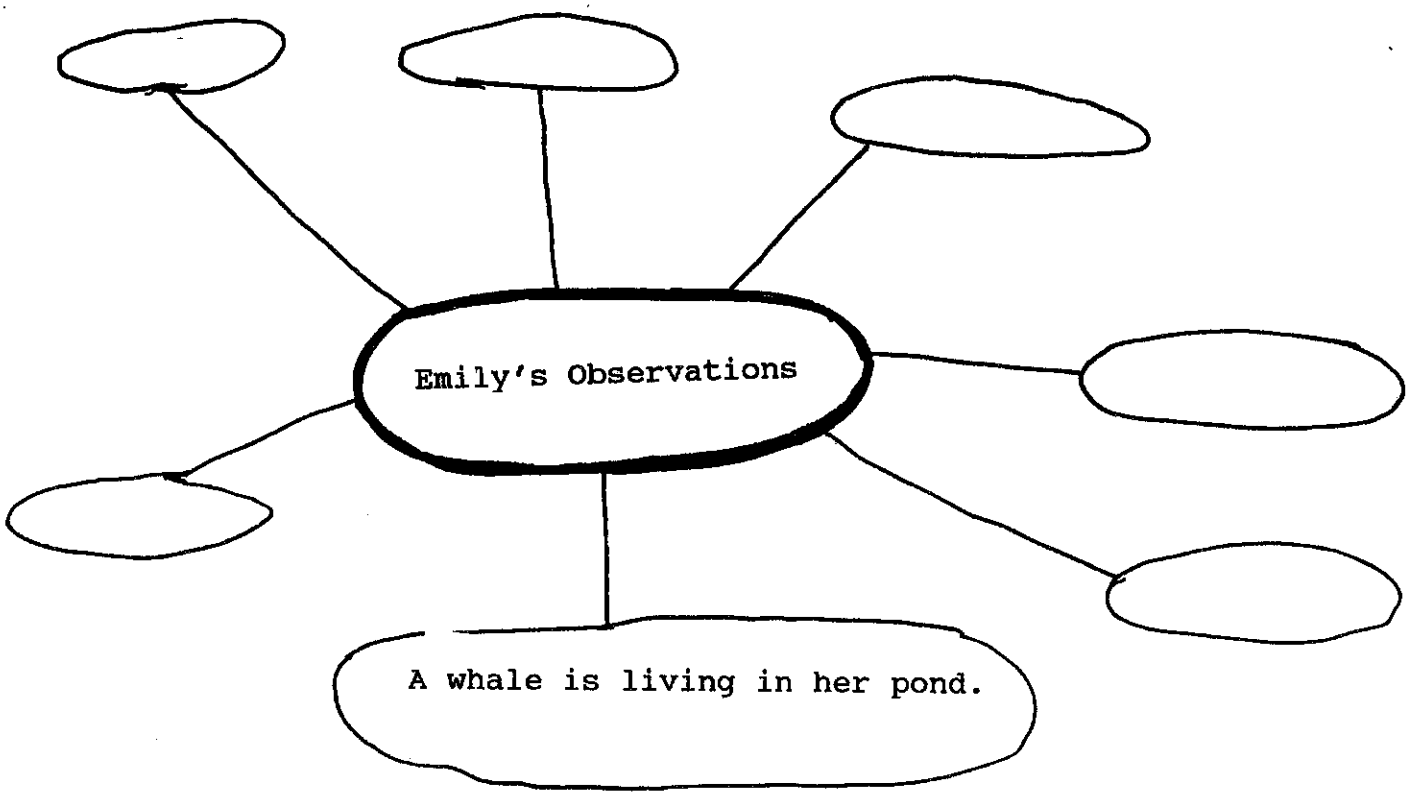
Love,

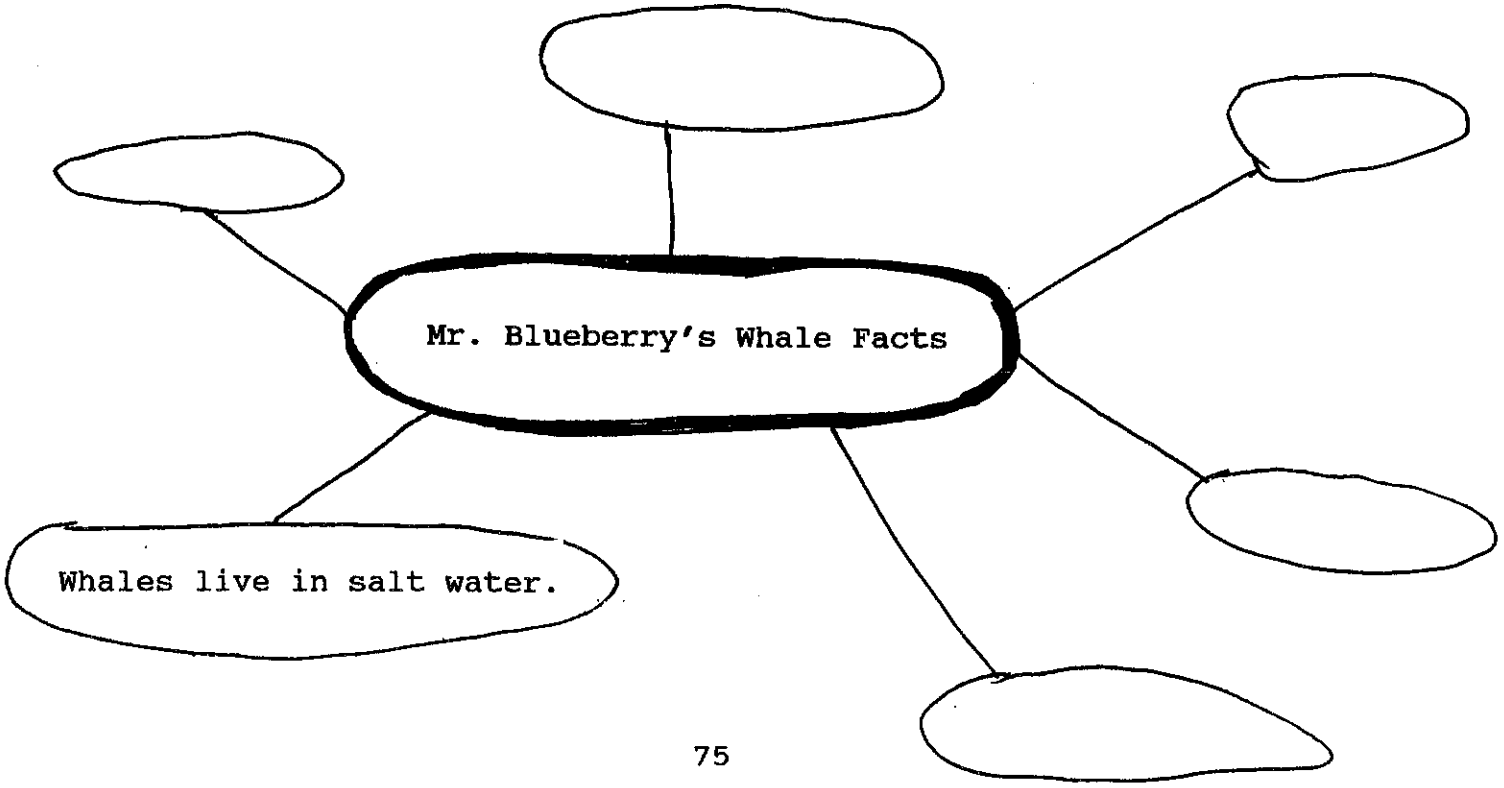
Fondly,

appreciate

How are you?

Appendix D: Sample of a chart for "Letters Unit" Mini-Lesson #3.





Appendix E: Family Object Show and Tell sheet for introduction of "Autobiographies Unit."

Family Object Show and Tell Sheet:

My family object is:_____

_____.

It is important to my family because:_____

_____

_____.

Three words I like that describe it are:_____

_____

_____.

I showed it to:_____.

Appendix F: Sample Checklists for Revision and Editing introduced in the "Autobiographies Unit."

Revising Checklist

Title:

Author:

Date:

1. Title?
2. Author?
3. Does it say everything?
4. Does it make sense?

Editing Checklist:

Title:

Author:

Date:

1. Title?

2. Author?

3. Periods •

New editing elements should be added to the list as the child masters these elements. The next checklist might be:

Editing Checklist:

Title:

Author:

Date:

1. Title?
2. Author?
3. Periods •
4. Do all sentences start with capital letters?

Appendix G: List of primary source documents to integrate into development of "Biographies Unit."

The following are suggestions for the timing of the integration of primary source documents from Dear Mr. Lincoln (1993) into the reading aloud of Me and Willie and Pa (1973).

A young girl's letter to Lincoln requesting him to shave prior to the election and Lincoln's response (1993, pp.46-47) should follow the description of the 1862 election in the biography (1973, pp.10-11).

After reading about the presidential pardon of Tad's doll (1973, pp.22-23), letters requesting actual pardons should be incorporated into study (1993, pp.84-85).

An actual exchange between General McClellan and Lincoln about using horses in the Civil War should be read after McClellan is introduced in the biography (1973, p.33).

The death of Willie (1973, pp.32-33) should be accompanied by a reading of a letter of condolence sent by Lincoln's Springfield, Illinois, barber (1993, pp.320-321).

Letters and telegrams sent to Lincoln about the Emancipation Proclamation (1993, p. 124, pp. 126-127) should be discussed after reading about Lincoln's signing of the document (1973, p.49).