

5-18-2015

The stories we all share : a sixth grade geography curriculum based on Paul Salopek's "Out of Eden Walk"

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Wells, G. (2015). The stories we all share : a sixth grade geography curriculum based on Paul Salopek's "Out of Eden Walk". *New York : Bank Street College of Education*. Retrieved from <http://educate.bankstreet.edu/independent-studies/28>

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The Stories We All Share: A Sixth Grade Geography Curriculum Based on Paul
Salopek's "Out of Eden Walk"

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Science in Education

Bank Street College of Education

2015

“The Stories We All Share: A Sixth Grade Geography Curriculum Based on Paul Salopek’s ‘Out of Eden Walk’”
By Georgina Wells

Abstract

This sixth grade geography curriculum is based on a digital journalism series called the Out of Eden Walk, in which Paul Salopek, a journalist for *National Geographic*, is spending seven years walking the path of early human migration and digitally reporting the stories he encounters. The curriculum follows him on his journey, as students read his and other stories about early man, Africa, and the Middle East. Students also design, and report findings from, their own walks: one through an unfamiliar New York City neighborhood, and one imagined to a country of their choice that they believe has a story important to the next chapter of human development. Designed to reflect the challenges and advantages inherent to twenty-first century experiences and learning, this curriculum orbits around themes of migration; racial equity; the fusion of global and local stories through processes of globalization; learning through current events and digital tools; the symbiotic relationship between place and culture; and recognizing and confronting media stereotypes.

Key words: geography, globalization, media, digital journalism, current events, migration, Africa, Middle East, New York City

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Introduction to the Curriculum

This sixth grade geography curriculum is based around a digital journalism series called the Out of Eden Walk (www.outofedenwalk.com). The premise of the project, deemed “slow journalism,” is that Paul Salopek, an American journalist sponsored by *National Geographic*, is spending seven years walking the path of early human migration. He began his walk in January 2013 in the Great Rift Valley in Ethiopia, scientifically considered the birthplace of our species, and from there will trek across Asia and the Americas, ending, as did our ancestors, at Tierra del Fuego, the tip of South America. As of the completion of this curriculum in April 2015, Salopek has walked through Ethiopia, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the West Bank, Jordan, Cyprus, Turkey, and Georgia. As he walks, Salopek writes articles called “dispatches” and films short video clips called “milestones,” all of which are published in real time on the Out of Eden section of the *National Geographic* website (www.outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com) or the Out of Eden website, respectively. I consider the project an ideal foundation on which to construct a modern geography curriculum.

The progression of my sixth grade curriculum mirrors Salopek’s own walk, as students learn about early human migration (Section I) before following Salopek on his journey through Africa (Section II) and the Middle East (Section III). As his walk has not yet moved past these regions, Sections IV and V of the curriculum diverge somewhat from Salopek’s path, allowing the students to take up the mantle as the chief “walkers.” In Section IV, students are tasked with becoming slow journalists themselves as they

explore an unfamiliar New York City neighborhood and connect its past to what they see in the present. Section V asks students to pick a place in the world they think will be important to the next chapter of human development and write a “dispatch” from that location. Rather than provide a sweeping overview of a country or continent, each section of the curriculum takes as its focus the reading of a handful of individual stories, small pieces of a larger mosaic of human history and human life there. Sections II and III of the curriculum include close-reading of one or more of Salopek’s dispatches, followed by student-driven selections of other stories from each location via news articles, photographs, and other digital journalism websites. Students engage in further research once they select a story they like, then plot the story and their analysis onto a classroom map to place their research into a global context. Salopek’s writing style is more storytelling than it is straight journalism; as he sheds light on the human condition through stories, so, too, does this curriculum teach geography through stories first, data and research second.

As students read Salopek’s stories and locate stories of their own throughout their geographic journey, they are offered multiple avenues through which they can engage with the material. Each section of the curriculum includes the following activities: looking at various maps and data to understand physical geography, reading and discussion, one or more research projects, journaling or creative writing, drawing, and group activities. Through these, students with a variety of academic strengths will find an entry point into Salopek’s journey. Each section also includes a culminating simulated “walk” through the region of study.

Curriculum Rationale

Introduction

Geography education in the United States has been subject to much scrutiny and criticism in recent decades. Throughout much of the twentieth century, geography was widely regarded as a discipline of “low or no priority” (Sharma & Elbow, 2000, p.6) in schools, and curricula largely involved rote memorization of facts: place names; locations of cities, states, and countries; and little else. In her seminal 1934 text *Young Geographers*, Lucy Sprague Mitchell introduced a revolutionary lens through which geography education could be viewed. She proposed a place-based, hands-on approach to learning geography, in which children recreated with art materials the world they experienced around them as a pathway to understanding. However, despite the publication of Mitchell’s progressive, experiential model for learning geography, it was not until the 1980s that a more widespread renewal of interest in the value of the subject emerged. The paradigm that the study of geography was synonymous with the memorization of isolated statistics was still dominant in public opinion, creating the impetus for geographers and geography educators across the country to renovate the discipline and reevaluate its educational purpose (Sharma & Elbow, 2000).

Since the 1980s, several new educational models have been proposed. Perhaps most commonly accepted, and most comprehensive, is a framework of “five themes” around which geography curricula should orbit. This model was developed in 1984 by a Joint Committee on Geographic Education of the National Council for Geography Education and the Association of American Geographers, and its five themes include:

location (the position on the Earth's surface); place (including human and physical characteristics); relationships within places (interaction between humans and the environment); movement (humans interacting on Earth) and regions (both how they form and how they change) (Sharma & Elbow, 2000). In 1994, *Geography for Life; National Geography Standards* proposed that students in the United States should “(1) [see] meaning in the arrangement of things in space; (2) [see] relations between people, places, and environments, (3) [use] geographic skills; and (4) [apply] spatial and ecological perspectives to life situations” (*Geography for life*, 1994, p.34 as cited in Sharma & Elbow, 2000). This organization of geographic content into accessible and thematic structures, including not only physical actualities but also the shifting, symbiotic relationship between humans and their physical environment, has been the basis for most geography curricula since.

While progress has been made in reshaping geography education, it commonly remains woefully lacking. Too often geography is still considered unnecessary altogether (Reinhartz & Reinhartz, 1990) or a dry, memorization-heavy subject that does not require critical thinking (Sharma & Elbow, 2000). The reasoning behind our country's low regard for geography education is debatable, though researchers (Reinhartz & Reinhartz, 1990; Natoli, 1988) have suggested, fittingly, that “American geographic ignorance” is “a product of American geography” (Reinhartz & Reinhartz, 1990, p.14) itself. The insularity of America's location, furthered by the “beneficence and bounty” of physical and cultural geography (Natoli, 1988, p.1) that helped America ascend to a position of superpower, may have influenced America's disregard for comprehensive geographic education. Reinhartz & Reinhartz conclude:

The geographic illiteracy of students reflects the archaic American attitude that ‘the world needs me, so let it come to me.’ To meet the challenges of the future, American students must be educated to help them break out of their insularity to become aware of a world beyond their country line and to understand the world and the complex interdependence of nations (1990, p.14).

As geography, and with it the study of other nations, has been shunted to a position of irrelevancy in American schools, our curricula may not only leave students unaware of the world outside their country, but also, more detrimentally, “may reinforce stereotypes and ignorance of other nations” (Broom, 2010, p.2) through their absence from the curriculum. My sixth grade curriculum calls for a change in this attitude: by exposing race as a social rather than genetic construct, connecting global stories to local ones, providing multiple and varied images and stories from around the world, and encouraging students to use their imagination to forge personal connections to foreign places.

Contemporary Geography Education and Globalization

The theory that American geographic illiteracy has become “archaic” (Reinhartz & Reinhartz, 1990, p.14) in light of future challenges of citizenship segues nicely into more recent scholarship on geography education, which proposes another overhaul of the discipline as modern citizenship becomes increasingly dependent on global understanding. According to Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004), children today are more likely than children of past generations to work, live, and engage with people of different national, racial, or linguistic backgrounds. Indeed, the rise of globalization, or the interaction and integration of countries based on trade and aided by information

technology, ushers in a new skill set that must be mastered by youth today. Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard further state: “While globalization has created a great deal of debate in economic, policy, and grassroots circles, many implications and applications of the phenomenon remain virtual terra incognita. Education is at the center of this uncharted continent” (2004, p.1). The term globalization “appears infrequently in the U.S. educational literature,” though it “has become part of the educational vocabulary in several European nations” and international organizations (Myers, 2006, p.370). As our culture shifts further away from insularity, and towards dependence on and amalgamation of many different cultures, our curricula must shift to match this trend. While promoting global understanding certainly can be a goal in a variety of academic disciplines, the geography curriculum is particularly ripe for the task.

Ironically, as globalization has called for a renewed interest in developing comprehensive geography curricula, it, too, has blurred the borders, and the very meaning, of geography itself. Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard espouse that globalization scholars view it as a process that “de-territorializes important economic, social, and cultural practices from their traditional boundaries in nation-states” (2004, p.14). Further, modern migration is rapidly expanding, with a 2002 United Nations report estimating that 175 million people are living in countries different from where they were born (United Nations Population Division 2002, as cited in Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). Thus, the delineations of countries based on economic, cultural, and social practices are softening, as these practices are spreading across political borders both by developments in communication and increases in migration. We seem, then, torn between thinking that our geography education is increasingly lacking as we shift into a

globalized world, or that we are in, a sense, “post-geography” at all (Bauman 1998, as cited in Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004, p.14), as the boundaries of this world and what those boundaries suggest become more and more slippery.

It is from these disparate perspectives on the need for global education, coupled with the more transitory geographic delineations we face, that I developed my curriculum based on the Out of Eden Walk. The journalism series offers much that a middle-school level, twenty-first century geography curriculum should include: the study of physical and human geography through migration; global perspective; place-based storytelling; the connections between a place’s past and its present, through current events; and the utilization of digital resources. Most powerfully, the series offers the modern—perhaps, “post-geographical”— perspective that, even across political borders, we are all connected as human beings with a common history. Each of Salopek’s dispatches connects a location’s current events with its past, linking stories of today with our most ancient stories as a species, while simultaneously emphasizing the intrinsic connection between place and culture.

Centering a geography curriculum around the study of ancient human migration allows students a unique chance to understand the commonalities of the human race— a single race — and that geography itself is the prime reason for our physical and cultural differences, not our DNA. The first unit begins with studying a quote from a lead scientist in the Genographic Project, Dr. Spencer Wells, arguing in the documentary *Journey of Man* that we are all “brothers and sisters” and “African under the skin” (Beamish & Maltby, 2003 as cited in “All Africans Under the Skin,” n.d.) as indeed, we all descend from a common African ancestor. Understanding this connection between

human beings at the most basic level sets the groundwork for understanding both the connections between people and places, and between people and other people, that is essential to the rest of the curriculum.

Connecting the Global with the Local

That this curriculum begins in Africa, the birthplace of humankind, rather than many of the students' own more immediate birthplaces in a study of the local, is reflective of the challenges and advantages inherent to twenty-first century learning. It has widely been considered best practice to begin geography curricula with a study of the local (Wiegand & Cullingford, 1998), proposed, too, by Mitchell's formative writing on the discipline, which champions the need for direct experience in geography education. However, Wiegand and Cullingford (1998) declare that children now "have indirect experience of distant places, for example very early in life through television" (p.13), and that these experiences are also meaningful in the classroom. This sentiment seems more apt today, as communication technology has ballooned even since 1998. By the year 2000, eighty million new users logged onto the Internet (Foreign Policy Association 2002, as cited in Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004) and a three-minute phone call from New York to London cost less than 20 cents, as compared to \$30 in 1970 (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). In a digital and media-saturated culture, it is no longer only the local that is relevant and accessible to our students.

Indeed, as students become more and more likely to engage with countries other than their own through media, studying that world in the classroom is of greater priority. While the accessibility of media is educationally significant for granting children

exposure to the world, it can also be damaging in its one-dimensional depiction of foreign places. Western media typically paints third-world countries as “inferior” and “uncivilized,” thus aiding the creation of Western biases toward these “ethnic groups” (Ramasubramanian, 2007, p.249). We think and act immediately and subconsciously based upon the stereotypes we hold, and Ramasubramanian notes that “even when people wish to use the mental effort to control their implicit stereotypes, they can do so only if they have the cognitive resources available for such processing” (2007, p.251). Without access to other images beyond those seen on television or the news—in particular, if children are not learning about foreign countries in school—students will be limited to viewing the world through the lens of these images alone. On the contrary, teachers can provide students with the “cognitive resources” they need to overcome biased thinking by exposing them to different images and alternate stories from regions that are victim to stereotypes, as Africa and the Middle East often are. In this curriculum, students analyze images on social media from both regions that may tell different stories than those they find in print journalism and on television. Through reflecting on these alternate images and the ways in which they might bear similarities to their own lives, students will develop tools to expand their thinking past simple stereotypes.

In addition to the relatively new levels of access students now have to foreign and far-off places, the traditional curricular progression from local to global becomes further challenged when the muddied borders between distant and local caused by globalization are considered. Sociologist John Holmwood writes of the imperative “need to understand how our actions have consequences in the lives of other people who may be remote from us in most respects, for example, spatially or culturally” (2007, p.80 as cited in Butt,

2011, p.430). In today's world, our lives don't merely impact our immediate environment, but rather our lives, and our students' lives, are now intertwined with the lives and environments of people across the world. Thus, it can be argued that in modern geography education, a study of the local must innately incorporate a study of the global, and vice versa.

For instance, in this curriculum, while students study stories, newsworthy and otherwise, from across the world, these stories are made locally and personally relevant through guided discussions, personal reflection on the material, and research. In Section II of the curriculum, after students read an article about the spread of cellphone use to the nomadic Afar tribes in Ethiopia, they are challenged to discuss explicitly how this change to the Afar people's customary way of life represents globalization and whether it might have a positive or negative impact. To do so, students will need to reflect on the use and necessity of cellphones in their lives, and consider what the results will be of the imposition, voluntary or not, of elements of their own culture onto a different culture. Further, students can understand their culpability in this technological change spreading across the globe, as the cellphone is an American invention. Though it is a global news story, it inevitably connects local history and involvement, as well. Indeed, Butt (2011) argues that curricula with a "purely global focus will be insufficient for it does not build a bridge between the learners' experience and the wider world" (p.436). Neither a focus solely on the local, nor solely on the global, will provide a complete and meaningful learning experience. In today's reality, global and local issues are fused; accordingly, I believe it is through intertwining the two in curricula, rather than building a learning

experience based on their opposition, that world geography can be most practically understood and applied.

Current Events and Digital Tools

In addition to seamlessly connecting the global and local, Salopek's writing bridges the past to the present, as he weaves historical context into each dispatch he shares. However, though the Out of Eden Walk is labeled "a journey through time" on its website, Salopek's articles do ultimately relay current events, which I would argue is a key facet of their educational value. As a discipline, geography lends itself well to a curriculum based upon current events rather than historical ones. While I would not call any academic discipline static, geography by virtue of its definition evolves at a uniquely quick pace. Natoli (1988) espouses that "discovery occurs every day" in geography, as the earth is constantly evolving and "its people and landscapes constantly interact in new and different ways" (p.1). The constant flux inherent to geography makes a compelling argument for using current events articles as the basis of a curriculum, as I propose by reading dispatches from the Out of Eden Walk in combination with news articles and modern journalism and travelers' stories in lieu of a textbook.

Further, using digital tools to study current events, such as the Out of Eden Walk itself, is of particular benefit. Studying geography through articles published digitally in real-time rather than through textbooks—an educational luxury that did not exist a few decades ago—seems one way to best keep up with the pace of a rapidly shifting discipline. Though Salopek deems his project "slow journalism," taking place over the course of seven years, his updates are still published as he writes them and are thus

reflective of the very moment in which they become available. Change can be seen more rapidly in our technologically-driven age, and this immediacy of publication aids in a study of people and places as they exist today. Salopek’s articles can essentially be read as a continually evolving textbook, as he can write and react to changes in the world as they are happening. For instance, when Salopek began his walk in 2013, Syria was on the agenda; by the time he came close, he decided to re-route his journey to bypass the turmoil that had since erupted in the area, commenting, instead, on the massive wave of Syrian refugees he encountered across the border in Turkey. The stories he writes will shift and change as will the world over the seven years that readers follow him. Textbooks written in hindsight, without the freedom of immediate publication that the Internet provides, cannot offer this same utterly current relevancy.

A caveat to the exclusive use of current articles is, of course, losing the wisdom of reflection that writing from hindsight allows. I do not intend to devalue the need for such perspective through this curriculum; instead, I approach it from another angle. In Section V of the curriculum, students are asked to write an imagined dispatch from a country of their choice that they believe contains a current event that will be important to the next chapter of human history. In so doing, they must consider salient stories and issues from today’s world and then project how we may view these stories in the future. Thus, the students must imagine how “current events” will one day be viewed through the lens of hindsight—and, perhaps, be written about in future textbooks. Sixth graders following this curriculum, through their active analysis of current world stories, are offered the chance to understand both their role in the making of history, and that history is an evolving process. Textbooks and other such print sources written in hindsight are

necessary learning tools for all subject areas; however, giving students the tools to study history as it unfolds offers an exciting complement to traditional curricular materials, and an opportunity for children to stretch their thinking to apply to different realms of cognition than typically required in middle school.

Geography and Imagination

Mitchell's *Young Geographers* proposed a revelatory connection between geographic exploration and imaginative art or play. She described this as a cycle of "intake," the direct experience with environment through outdoor trips, and "outgo," the active recreation of these experiences through "adaptable materials" (Mitchell, 1960, p.13) such as art supplies. In essence, it is through the combination of experience and image-making that students can truly engage with and understand the physical world. Indeed, this is a curriculum that relies on imagination, and through it, vicarious experience. While traveling to a foreign place is fascinating, as it provides new experiences and exposure to new visuals and new ways of life, encountering a place in the classroom is not always so engaging. I sought to find a way to translate the excitement of travel into a remote study of geography. One way, I believe, is by using compelling visuals and stories.

Without the opportunity for direct, physical engagement with the foreign places that students will study, their "intake" can come, instead, through the power of stories and photographs to spark imagination and forge bonds between the material and the reader or viewer. The events shared in the Out of Eden Walk journalism series are educationally appealing not only because they are current, but also because Salopek's

brand of journalism is essentially storytelling. He imbues each post with poetry, writing articles that are as much literary as they are newsworthy. Further, his mission with “slow journalism” is to highlight the everyday, and thus, his dispatches are often colorful accounts and anecdotes of daily life in unique locations. Through Salopek’s descriptive and evocative language, students can immerse themselves in his travel experiences vicariously.

Wiegand and Cullingford (1998) note that it is most often through an encounter with places through stories, in the form of film or picture book, that children become engaged with geography. For middle school-aged children, the story can act as an entry point into a more research-driven interaction with a place. Wiegand and Cullingford elaborate that the “story is a powerful way to extend children’s imagination and to connect their ‘private geography’ with the distinctive mode of enquiry and explanation in the subject” (p.12-13). It is through wondering and imagining that children will be motivated to explore their inquiries through research. Further, the stories offered by Salopek, in addition to those by other journalists, travelers, or photographers, can activate the students’ imagination and, thus, anchor the data they find in that research to a mental image they have created. Without this mental image, facts operate in isolation; Sharma and Elbow (2000) caution that “Absent from critical thinking, geography risks becoming little more than rote memorization of facts,” which “not only numbs the mind but also robs students of the opportunity to think about the world in which they live and to prepare themselves for active, participatory citizenship” (p.10). Imagination, and imagined experience, is a necessary first step in the study of geography (the “intake”, in this case) that drives investigation, critical thinking, and ultimately deep understanding.

In addition to reading, students in this curriculum are also asked frequently to draw or illustrate their mental image of a place, thus making tangible the visuals they glean from reading, research, and data. It is through images, as they both absorb and create them, that the material can become concrete, relatable, and memorable. Elliot W. Eisner (1990) expounds upon the necessity of creating an image in making intangible academic ideas and concepts concrete. He says that:

representation allows the child to stabilize and make public what otherwise would be evanescent. There is nothing so slippery as an idea or an image...When children are given the opportunity to work with a material that they can use to transform these elusive forms of experience into their public equivalent, the idea or image is stabilized and can be reflected upon and inspected (p.77).

Concepts that children learn in school, particularly ones that are primarily fact-based, can be difficult to remember or fully grasp. The reading and topics of discussion in this curriculum are challenging for a sixth grade student, and will require the children to grapple with the material at high levels of thinking. If students use art—or, I believe, creative and reflective writing—to represent these concepts, they make “slippery” ideas that might otherwise elude them visible and real. Thus, it is through the “outgo” of physically representing that which they have learned through stories and research (the “intake”) that students will be able to consider and develop complex ideas surrounding difficult material with greater ease.

In geography, perhaps the most representative and significant visual is the map. Operating as a visual link between data and analysis, maps are accordingly key tools that students are directed to use in their research. However, I propose that student engagement

with maps need not end with looking alone: a centerpiece of this curriculum is the process of map annotation. After studying the location and story in one or two dispatches for both Africa and the Middle East, students are tasked with locating a different “story” from each continent or region, analyzing it through writing, and plotting their analysis onto a classroom map. This latently delivers the message that maps are neither static, nor a complete view of the world. The students use the map as a base layer, overwriting it with the stories held within the places on it to create a fuller picture. They are placing their analysis into a geographic context while simultaneously adding richer human context to the map. In addition, they are shaping their visual image of the world according to the stories they find and the stories they write in response. They can “[reflect] upon and [inspect]” (Eisner, 1990, p.77) the image of a map, a tangible representation, as a foundation for thinking critically about that world. Students in middle school are expected to annotate text as a process by which they can unlock meaning buried within a page. Similarly, by annotating the map, they can begin to uncover and reveal dimensions of meaning hidden within the flat, colored forms of water and land.

Woven throughout the many interlacing strands of this curriculum is an emphasis on reading stories and writing analysis. Indeed, running counter to the received wisdom that geography is about memorization, the cornerstone of this curriculum is engagement with a place through reading, writing, and drawing. The word “geography,” first coined circa 200 B.C. by the Greek mathematician and cosmographer Eratosthenes, loosely means “writing about or describing the earth” (Natoli, 1988, p.1). By its definition, geography is a discipline not of facts, but of perspective and analysis. Data may be a necessary component to support student research, but it is through imagining, describing,

and mentally grappling with a place and the meaning that can be derived from it that geography truly comes into being.

Conclusion

If the role of geography now is to both educate students about the symbiotic relationship between humans and their environment as proposed by progressive educators like Mitchell and models like the “five themes,” and to encourage global understanding, the subject becomes infinitely vast. Such a study encompasses every place, and with it, every person on Earth; further, as nothing exists in a vacuum, these places and people contain a history of change that spans millions of years. Creating a comprehensive geography curriculum within these parameters seemed an overwhelming and daunting task. Integrating geography into the history curriculum is one viable option for setting a curricular framework of what of the world should be studied and when, but what parameters should be set for a stand-alone geography curriculum, as I sought to create, that emphasizes not just the local, but also the global? How can a curriculum of such magnitude be both comprehensive in scope and accurate in portrayal?

The solution I propose through this curriculum is to embrace the infinitude of geography by studying individual stories, and recognizing them explicitly as tiny pinpricks on the globe. Rather than absorbing wide-ranging generalizations, the students acknowledge through conversation and research that they are making sense of the world through pieces of a whole, and that it is their responsibility to seek out and create a full picture for themselves. Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk, “The Danger of a Single Story,” which the students watch in Section II, emphasizes, in

particular, why the students must avoid any “single story” of a place and actively locate new and different accounts of life there; it will be only through their sustained pursuit of different stories about people and places that they will gain a deep understanding of the world as it changes and evolves. Creating a curriculum that acknowledges and operates in tandem with the challenges and questions of inclusion seemed the best way to offer a meaningful and fair representation of the world.

In *Young Geographers*, Mitchell wrote, “Thinking forever consists of seeing relationships” (1960, p.26). This is, in essence, the goal of any academic subject, including geography, and especially through the lens of globalization. So, too, then, did my curriculum become one about connections, starting with the most essential understanding of human connection across boundaries of geography, politics, and race. Further, it is about drawing connections between the individual story, the nucleus of this study, and a larger historical, local, and global context. The Out of Eden Walk offers a glue with which to bind the disparate stories that students locate. The Walk, and this curriculum with it, can ultimately be boiled down to a study of relationships between people and places, global and local, historical and present, present and future.

The Walk provides a framework for looking at the world and our relationship to it and to each other in both macrocosm and microcosm, shifting, as it does, from the universal to the personal. Its unique perspective offers a way of understanding human connections on a global level, and introduces students to a series of highly individual accounts from across the globe that they might otherwise not encounter. Its story of human history in relation to geography can provide children with a view of the world that

is simultaneously wonderfully reductive, and held under a microscope – encompassing the vastness of the global, and the small, familiar accessibility of a good story.

Curriculum Section I: Early Human Migration

Learning goals:

- For students to understand that race is socially constructed rather than based in genetics, and that physical environment is a prime reason for our differences
- For students to understand the distinction between physical and human geography, as well as the symbiotic relationship between the two
- For students to gain an introduction to the concept of migration and its effects, both as it applied to early humans and to humans today

Part I: Introduction

Introduction to the Walk:

Project a map of Paul Salopek's walking path, available on the Out of Eden website (www.outofedenwalk.com). Explain to students the premise of the project: that Paul Salopek, a journalist, is spending seven years walking the path of early human migration. Explain that it is widely accepted that the first humans lived in Africa, and, beginning about 60,000 years ago, began migrating from Africa across the globe, populating the rest of our planet. The Out of Eden website and *National Geographic* website have introductory videos of Salopek explaining his walk that may be useful to watch.

Read and Discuss:

Write or project on the board the following quote from Dr. Spencer Wells, a lead scientist for the Genographic Project:

“You and I, in fact everyone all over the world, we’re literally African under the skin; brothers and sisters separated by a mere two thousand generations. Old-fashioned concepts of race are not only socially divisive, but scientifically wrong” (Beamish & Maltby, 2003 as cited in “All Africans Under the Skin”).

Ask students to react to this quote. Explain that scientific research has come to show that all humans are 99.9% identical in terms of genetics. Ask them to connect this information to Salopek’s journey. Ask students: What might “old-fashioned concepts of race” be in light of this information? What do you think Dr. Spencer Wells means by that? What is race, if not something genetic?

Next, ask students: if humans are 99.9% identical genetically, why do we look, think, act, and speak differently?

Physical Geography – Group Activity:

Divide students into small groups of four to five students. Print out several pictures of different environments (a desert, a tundra, a rainforest, an urban city, etc.), without any people in the pictures, and give one photograph to each group. There will likely need to be five or six photographs, one per group, depending on the size of your class. Ask students to discuss each picture and what they would need to survive in each environment and, based on what they see in the picture, what they would use. After about five or so minutes, ask students to “rotate” by moving to the picture next to them,

switching seats. Repeat this a few times, or until every group has discussed every picture. Reconvene as a whole group and ask the students to compare their answers for each picture. Discuss the idea that environment affects the way humans live.

Write the terms “physical geography” and “human geography” on the board and ask students what they think these terms mean. Define the words together, and then have students copy the definitions into their notebooks.

Explain to students that they will be following Salopek on his journey together, paying attention to the themes that we are all connected as human beings, even across the globe, and that environment, climate, and the physical geography of a place have an impact on how people live there.

Part II: Beginning the Walk

Read and Discuss:

1. Read the first dispatch, “Let’s Walk,”

(<http://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com/2013/01/22/lets-walk/>) published January 22nd, 2013 from Herto Bouri, Ethiopia. This dispatch introduces Salopek’s journey as well as provides an overview of human migration and the scientific evidence behind it. After reading the dispatch, ask students to define the word “migrate.” Once the class arrives at a definition, ask the students to write this definition in their notebooks. Ask them to review the article and find some reasons that Salopek cites for why the earliest humans migrated out of Africa—he gives overpopulation and climate changes as reasons

(Salopek, 2013c). Ask students to think about what these terms mean and why they would make people want to migrate.

2. Before reading “Gona: First Kitchen,”

(<http://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com/2013/02/08/gona-first-kitchen/>) published near Gona, Ethiopia (the site of the earliest stone tools) on February 8th, 2013, bring in any kind of stone artifact that has been sharpened into a blade. Pass the stone artifact around but don’t explain it to the students. Ask them, as a whole class or to discuss on their own in small groups, what they notice and what they think the object is. Ask them what they think it was used for. Ask them why a simple sharpened stone might be important in the context of human history. After students have engaged with the object, read “Gona: First Kitchen,” which explains the significance of stone tools, the first of which date back 2.6 million years, used for cutting up animals to be consumed. The dispatch includes an interview with a Harvard researcher, Richard Wrangham, who argues that eating cooked food (which he suggests began to happen around 1.9 million years ago, though this is debated) was a major milestone in human development and allowed our species to develop as it did: cooked meat provides more energy meaning humans could live longer, travel farther distances, and better fuel their brains (Salopek, 2013b). Ask students to react to this article. What story does the stone tool tell about human migration and development?

Research Projects:

1. After reading “Let’s Walk,” explain that we are studying the earliest human migrations, but ask students if people still migrate today. Ask if they can think of any examples of migration today, and if they can think of some reasons for contemporary migration. Next, either make a list together or give students a list of possible historical periods of migration to study. These can include both voluntary and involuntary migrations. Some topic options to consider could be: the Atlantic Slave trade, the Cherokee Trail of Tears, the Irish potato famine, the Jewish diaspora or Holocaust, Viking migrations, the 1947 partition of British India, and current migrations to Anglo-America from Mexico and Central America. Students can also select their own topic.

Each student should then research their topic and answer the following questions:

- a. In the context of your topic, what caused people to migrate?
- b. Connect your answer to Salopek’s journey. Could this have been a reason that early humans may have migrated to new places around the world? Why or why not?

2. The invention of stone tools was revolutionary and fundamental to human development, as we learned from reading “Gona: First Kitchen.” Ask students to brainstorm as a class what other human inventions have changed the course of history and how we live today. These could include anything: the wheel, the automobile, planes, the cotton gin, the light bulb, the printing press, computers, antibiotics, etc. Students should each choose an invention and research its creation, history, and use today. Each student should:

- a. Write a paragraph explaining the invention and analyzing its importance in human history. How did this change the course of human history the way stone tools did for the earliest humans? Could this invention have impacted human migration at all? Did the invention spread to countries or places other than where it was invented, and if so, how?
- b. Each student should illustrate, bring in, or create some sort of visual model of their object. Students should share their visual model and written analysis with the class.

Journaling:

Students should begin a journal that can be used throughout this curriculum. This can be done in a section of a notebook, a separate notebook, or, in the spirit of the digital resources used in this curriculum, on a blog or class blog, at the discretion of the teacher. Tell students that they should set aside or create a space just for journal responses.

For this first journal entry, ask students to respond in writing to Salopek's journey. They should write a letter to Salopek discussing what they find interesting about the project and what they are wondering. What lessons can be learned from this project? What are the benefits and challenges of such an undertaking?

If the walk is still going on at the time this curriculum is implemented, a class Twitter account could also be set up as a way to engage with Salopek and the walk: using the hashtag “#EdenWalk,” the class can Tweet several representative questions that they have composed. Salopek and his team monitor and respond to some Tweets that use the hashtag, and this may be an exciting way for the students to connect to his journey. In

addition to helping students connect personally with Salopek's walk, asking students to compose Tweets is an excellent method for teaching brevity in writing.

Curriculum Section II: Africa

Learning goals:

- For students to research and analyze important issues and developments in Africa today
- For students to understand the connection between Africa's physical and human geography
- For students to begin to understand and discuss globalization in the context of one case study in Ethiopia
- For students to understand the political and historical connections between different countries based on their individual research topics
- For students to learn to recognize stereotypes about Africa and begin to build up a store of new images and stories from the continent

Part I: Salopek's Stories in Africa

Physical Geography:

1. Start out by studying Salopek's first location in Africa and what many scientists consider the "birthplace" of humans: the Afar triangle in Ethiopia. Find this location on a classroom map that can be marked and annotated throughout the rest of the unit, and plot it. This can either be done on a large-scale classroom wall map, or using a digital mapping tool such as Tripline (www.tripline.net). Ask students to consider what they know about Africa, and to postulate why the

human race may have originated there. The class can generate a list of what they know and what reasons they come up with.

2. Next, watch Salopek's Milestone video of the region: Milestone 2, "Afar Badlands" (<http://www.outofedenwalk.com/media/2013/01/milestone-2-afar-badlands>). There is no narration in this short video clip, so students must make deductions based upon visuals and background noise alone. Ask students what they see and find interesting in the video. What can they tell about the Afar region based on what they see there? What are they wondering?
3. Look at the Afar region, or Afar triangle, on a terrain map. *National Geographic's* Mapmaker Interactive (http://mapmaker.education.nationalgeographic.com/?ar_a=1&b=1&ls=000000000000) has an easy-to-use map with different overlays, one of which is a topographic layer. Ask students what they notice about the region using this kind of map. They will bring up things like the absence of water, ridges, and triangle of flat land surrounded by higher elevation ridges. The class could also look at the street view layer of Mapmaker, and notice that there are major roads only on the edges of the region.
4. Ask students: what do we know about this region just from looking at the map and video? List their observations on the board or on chart paper. It may also help to read Salopek's January 24th, 2013 dispatch "Baby Steps" (<http://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com/2013/01/24/baby-steps/>) together, which describes the harsh desert climate he experienced in this region.

5. Ask students to brainstorm how they think people in the Afar region live and survive in this type of environment. Ask them to sketch their ideas in response to this question. How might the physical geography impact the human geography?

Read and Discuss:

Have students read Salopek's January 28th, 2013 dispatch, "Electronic Oasis," (<http://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com/2013/01/28/electronic-oasis/>) written from Dalifagi village, Ethiopia. This dispatch addresses how increased cellphone use is changing the Afar region; as the population is largely nomadic, cellphones can drastically change their way of life, as they will newly be able to communicate without a great deal of traveling.

Quote to discuss:

"Next year, fixed power lines arrive. 'Twenty years from now? There will be a different Afar people,' said Haji Boddaya Qibad, a local political leader of the nomads. 'Life won't be camels and sheep anymore'" (Salopek, 2013a).

Questions for discussion:

1. Why will there be a different Afar people with the expansion of cellphone use?
2. Why are the Afar people *nomadic*? Connect this to what we've learned about the physical geography of the region. How does the physical geography play a role in their way of life?
3. How does this article reflect *globalization*: the connections and interaction of people in countries across the world?

4. Do you think the changes that cellphones will bring to the Afar people will be positive or negative? Or both? Why?
5. Think back to the stone tools we learned about from Salopek's dispatch in Gona. Imagine you are in the future studying your human ancestors who were alive today, and compare the stone tool to the cellphone. Make an argument for the importance of the cellphone as an artifact bearing great importance to today's population. What place will it hold in the story of human development? If students have strong and different opinions, they could also prepare a debate arguing the validity of this statement. What do they think the most important tool is for human beings today?

Part II: Other Stories

Introduction:

Watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 2009 TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story:"

(http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en). In it, Adichie, a Nigerian novelist and short story writer, discusses stereotypes about Africa that are widespread and created by exposure to only a "single story" (Adichie, 2009), or a single and one-dimensional depiction of the continent through arts and media. Ask students to respond, either in small groups, as a whole class, or in writing: What is the "danger of a single story"?

Research Project:

Explain to students that Salopek visited the Afar region and told one story from that area because it is an important place in human history. Tell students that their task is to find other stories from other locations in Africa. Particularly in light of the TED talk, it may be a good idea to briefly examine the size of Africa at this point: compare its size to other continents in the world and emphasize its diversity.

In teams or individually, have students research “stories” from anywhere they like in Africa using newspaper articles, or web resources such as Maptia (www.maptia.com). Maptia is an excellent website that contains stories and photographs uploaded by users—typically journalists and photojournalists—about places around the world to which they have traveled. Students can search stories by theme or continent. You may want to divide the class, asking half to search for newspaper articles using a website such as CNN Student News (www.cnn.com/studentnews) and half to use Maptia.

It may be worth pointing out to students that the stories on Maptia, and in the newspaper articles that they find, will likely be written by people who are not actually from the places about which they write. Ask students who wrote the articles, and what these people’s relationships might be to the country they are writing about. Ask the students to consider how a story written by a person native to that country might be different.

Once students find a story that interests them, ask them to select one photograph to represent the story and write a short paragraph explaining the story and its importance. Have students annotate the classroom world map with their stories and analysis. This can be done manually if you are using a large-scale wall map, with students pinning their

photos and stories onto the appropriate locations, or each student can contribute their annotation online.

Next, ask students to consider the main theme or issue present in the story they have selected. For example, is it about a war in that country, an environmental issue, an issue of government, or about a certain cultural practice? Ask students to investigate this issue, theme, or practice further. If it concerns war, the student should research the background of that war. If it is about a cultural practice, the student should research the cultural practice. Students should write a summary paragraph and add this to their annotation. If the issue connects to other countries in the world (as it likely will), students should draw a line from their annotation to that country, connecting the stories across the map.

After students have selected and written about their news stories and related issue or topic, they should use an atlas or Internet research to take notes on the physical geography of the their story's location. Once they have collected data about the terrain, climate, neighboring areas, relevant bodies of water, and other salient physical features, they should draw, or create a three-dimensional topographic depiction, of the area. These illustrations can be displayed in the classroom, plotted onto a classroom map, or scanned and placed on a communal Internet map.

Take a Walk:

As the culmination of students' research and writing on Africa, tell the class that they will be taking a "walk" through the stories the class has found. Hang up students' illustrations next to their analysis and summaries of news stories, and place these around

the classroom. If it is feasible to use a larger space in the school, such as the gymnasium or even throughout the hallways, these stories can be posted so that the “walk” is more reflective of a journey: for example, stories from Northern Africa can be posted on one wall of the classroom or gym, or on the top floor of the school, while stories from the south of Africa can be on the opposite wall or the bottom floor. Tell students to walk slowly and quietly, and to read each story that was found.

As students walk, ask them to write a one-sentence response to several of their classmates’ stories and annotations. The teacher can leave Post-It note pads or blank pieces of paper under each student illustration, annotation, and story, and the rest of the class can write their responses on the Post-Its or the paper underneath. It might also be interesting to ask students to compare the types of stories found in newspapers and the types of stories found on Maptia. Are there differences? Similarities? After the walk is complete, students should read the comments that other students left for them. Allow students the chance to meet with each other and respond to the comments, or write a short response paragraph that addresses the questions and comments they received.

Journaling:

Have students go onto the EverydayAfrica Instagram account (<https://instagram.com/everydayafrica>). Tell students to select one photograph that they find powerful or interesting. Then, they must imagine they were present when the photograph was taken. What was happening? What do they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel around them? Maybe they would like to imagine they are the person in the photograph. What were they doing and thinking when this photograph was taken? What

might their life be like? Each Instagram photo has a caption, which the students can use as a springboard for their creative writing, or for further research.

In a second paragraph after their creative writing, ask students to comment on the photograph they selected in relation to Adichie's TED Talk.

Curriculum Section III: The Middle East

Learning goals:

- For students to research and analyze important issues and developments in the Middle East today
- For students to recognize the importance of the location of the Middle East and how its location has impacted its history
- For students to understand the connection between the Middle East's physical and human geography
- For students to learn to recognize stereotypes about the Middle East and begin to build up a store of new images and stories from the region

Part I: Salopek's Stories in the Middle East

Physical Geography:

1. Begin by looking at Salopek's walking map in the classroom or online. Ask students to point out Salopek's next location after he leaves Africa, and what is interesting about this next stop. They will likely point out that Salopek had to cross the Red Sea to arrive in the Middle East; explain that Salopek took a boat but that our earliest ancestors were able to walk to this next destination. It may be useful to show a map showing differences in sea levels thousands of years ago, and explain that the earliest humans were able to cross this area on foot. There is such a map on the Out of Eden website.
2. Plot Saudi Arabia on the map. Look at its location, on the Arabian Peninsula. Ask

students to point out what they notice about the location. Arrive at the notion that it is like a bridge between the continents of Africa and Asia, physically linking disparate locations (as well as cultures, as they will see).

Read and Discuss:

1. As a class, read Salopek's dispatch "Pilgrim Road,"

(<http://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com/2013/10/05/pilgrim-road/>) published

October 5th, 2013, and written in Saudi Arabia.

Quotes to discuss:

"This fading road system across the Arabian Peninsula, traveled across time by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people, is a civilizational artifact that deserves far greater awareness than it currently enjoys. It is a global heritage site bleaching away in the Hejaz. It was one of the world's original information superhighways—an arterial network of language, ethnicity, trade, ideas—linking Arabia and North Africa, the Mediterranean and the East" (Salopek, 2013d).

"We see an occasional Toyota Hilux pickup truck steered by Bedouins searching for their animals. They always make a beeline to us. They squint, open mouthed, out their truck windows. They say they have never seen walkers this way before. On this road that is kadim—old. A road their fathers knew stories about. But that today they do not follow" (Salopek, 2013d).

Questions for discussion:

1. How does Salopek see Saudi Arabia's geographic location reflected in its history?
2. Why is it important that Salopek sees a group of Bedouins in a car on the road?
3. What is the Hajj? Why is this area no longer used as a Hajj trail? How has that changed the area, do you think?
4. Tell students that Broadway used to be the major trading route for the Lenape tribe in Manhattan, stretching from downtown all the way into Massachusetts ("Manahatta to Manhattan", 2010). Ask them if there is any connection between today's Broadway and the Lenape's "Broadway." How is it different today? After they have discussed this, ask them to compare their thoughts to what they read about the road system Salopek writes about in Saudi Arabia.

After reading Salopek's dispatch, as a class, look at some maps of caravan routes in Arabia, both in terms of the Hajj pilgrimages to Mecca and the spice and incense trade routes. Some background information about the Hajj as well as the spice and incense trade will need to be given, or can be assigned as a separate research homework assignment. Ask students to connect what they saw of Saudi Arabia's location to these maps. How has the location of the Arabian Peninsula affected its history? Why is it important?

2. Read "Aftertaste,"

(<http://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com/2014/07/26/aftertaste/>) published in

Nablus, West Bank on July 26th, 2014. In this dispatch, Salopek describes cooking with a

slow food cooperative run by Palestinian women in the city of Nablus. As they cook, they discuss the history of the foods they eat.

Quote to discuss:

The coop founder Kadoumy says: ““Our history is mixed into our food. It is the food of a crossroads. It contains migrations”” (Salopek, 2014a).

Questions for discussion:

1. Compare this quote to the quote we discussed in “Pilgrim Road.” Think now about the location of the Middle East in general. Ask students to point out countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, on a map. How is the location—the physical geography—reflected in the culture—the human geography, based on the dispatches we have read? Think of a thematic link between these two articles.
2. Think of some foods you eat or like to eat. Can you think of a story behind the foods? Do they reflect your culture or location in any way?
3. Think back to our discussion about cellphones in the Afar triangle. How does the food we eat represent globalization in this country, or any country?

Part II: Other Stories

Research Project:

As in the Africa unit, after reading and engaging with Salopek’s stories from the

Middle East, tell students that they will be finding stories from this region on their own and annotating the classroom map with them. If you had students searching CNN Student News and Maptia in half groups for stories about Africa, ask the students to switch groups and search using the resource they did not use last time. Again, students will locate a story they find interesting and write a response and choose an image. They should annotate the classroom map with their writing and image, and plot the story onto the map. Afterwards, students should repeat the process of researching the most salient issue, theme, or topic present in their story, and writing a paragraph summarizing and analyzing the issue or practice. Again, on the class map, they should physically connect their story and annotation to any other countries to which the topic relates. Finally, students should once again collect data about the physical geography of their location, and draw an illustration of the region. They should once again read and comment on their classmates' stories.

After students have finished their research, annotation, and responses to classmates, ask them to discuss in small groups the stories they found in Africa versus the ones they found in the Middle East. Have the students make a list of similarities and differences. They can refer back to previous annotations on the map. Are any stories similar? Are any completely different?

Take a Walk:

As the culmination of students' research and writing on the Middle East, tell the class that they will now be taking a "walk" through this region and its stories. Again, hang up students' illustrations next to their analyses and summaries of news stories, and

place these around the classroom or in a larger or more spread out space, if possible. Tell students to walk slowly and quietly, and to read each story that was found by their classmates. Students should repeat the process of commenting on each other's work, using Post-It notes or on blank sheets of paper. After the walk is complete, students should read the comments that other students left for them. Allow students the chance to meet with each other and respond to the comments, or write a short response paragraph that addresses the questions and comments they received.

Journaling:

Have students go onto the EverydayMiddleEast Instagram account (<https://instagram.com/everydaymiddleeast>). Tell students to select one photograph from the account, and then a photograph from a newspaper article about the same country in the Middle East that their Instagram photo is from. Ask students to compare the images. Which one seems more surprising? Which one seems more familiar? What stories do the pictures share, and are the stories similar? Are these the types of stories they are used to hearing or reading about from this region and country? Why might it be important to compare the two photographs, or to have a chance to look at both? Is it important?

Reflection:

Ask each student to individually write a short reflection paragraph about the stories they found in both Africa and the Middle East, and their process of finding them. Ask students to consider and respond to the following questions: What surprised you about the stories that you found, if anything? Did you learn something new about the

regions? Did you enjoy the exercises? Did you find it more useful to read a story or look at a photograph? Did any of the stories reflect what you already knew or learned about the physical geography of the countries you studied? If so, how? What do you think you got out of this exercise, over all?

Curriculum Section IV: Your Own Walk: Connecting a Neighborhood to Its Past

Learning goals:

- For students to research an unfamiliar location in New York City and connect its history to its present
- For students to understand the connection between New York City's physical and human geography
- For students to experience "slow journalism" and the purpose of seeing stories unfold for themselves

Physical Geography:

Look at a map of New York City and discuss its location. Have students point out all relevant features, including surrounding bodies of water. Look, also, at a topographic map and have students discuss the terrain of the city in different places. Ask them how they think the physical geography has played a role in what they know of the human geography of the city. Have students generate two lists of things they notice or know: one about physical geography, and one about human geography. The lists may end up forming a Venn diagram, depending on students' responses; ask them to make an argument for why each list item they bring up should fall under either physical or human geography, or both. Ask the students if there is anything they are wondering about the history or human geography of the city based on the discussion and lists. For an in-class project or homework assignment, have students research the history of the city. This can be done in teams or groups to make the task more manageable; for instance, one group

can research the history of the city pre-colonization, one group can research Dutch colonization, one English, one Revolutionary War era and post-Revolutionary War New York City, and one more modern history of the city. Students can share their research and results with the class so that every child receives an overview of information about the city's history.

Take a Walk:

Now that the students have engaged with the world around them through Salopek's stories and stories they have found on their own, tell them that it is time for them to take their own walk to engage with the history and culture of their location. Salopek does not walk through New York City, as scientists have found that the path of migration followed the Pacific coastline, so the students will be investigating New York City themselves. During class, go with students on a walk around the school's neighborhood. Tell them they are not to talk, but must notice and pay attention to the details around them. Walk slowly, and cover only a couple of city blocks.

Next, or alternatively, take students on a class trip to Inwood Hill Park. This park has caves, valleys, and ridges left over from shifting glaciers and which still exist in their untouched natural forms. It also has a forest and the last natural salt marsh in Manhattan ("Inwood Hill Park," n.d.). Further, evidence that the Lenape tribe inhabited the area and its caves has been found. Take students on a guided walk through the park, asking them to look for ways that the earliest humans in this part of the world interacted with the land. What features of the land might they have used? How did the physical geography impact their lives? Ask students to consider the natural features they see around them. Students

should bring their journal to write ideas and sketch as they walk.

Read and Discuss:

After the students have taken their walk, ask them to read Salopek's dispatch "Trail Gallery: Anatolia Through Other Eyes," (<http://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com/2015/03/13/trail-gallery-anatolia-through-other-eyes/>) published March 13th, 2015 from Tbilisi, Georgia, which is about the walking guides that Salopek has had throughout his journey. Ask the students to pay particular attention to the narratives by Matthieu Chazal and Murat Yazar, two of Salopek's guides, about their experiences walking with him.

Journaling:

Ask students to write a short personal narrative about their own experience walking through the school neighborhood: What was it like to walk around with the goal of noticing details rather than to go somewhere? Did you engage with your own neighborhood or Inwood Hill Park in a different way than you usually engage with the city? Did you notice anything new? Connect your experience and what you read to Salopek's journey. It may be helpful to discuss this quote from Murat Yazar: "When I started to walk in Anatolia, I realized that I didn't know my country well. I live here, but walking gave me an opportunity to rediscover my world and my life" (Salopek, 2015). Ask students: Why is Salopek walking rather than using another form of transportation?

Research Project:

Tell students to pick a neighborhood in the city that they do not know very well. It can be as close or as far from their home as they would like, as long as they will be able to get to the neighborhood (likely with a parent or guardian) to take a walk for homework. Before beginning their walk, students should begin to research the history of New York City and of their chosen neighborhood. The New York Public Library has a comprehensive collection of resources that would be helpful. Additionally, the website “Place Matters” (www.placematters.net), is a digital database of historically and culturally significant places in New York City that have been submitted by hundreds of New Yorkers. Each location includes a write-up of a specific place and its importance to the city. This can be used as inspiration or as a resource for selecting a location—students can search places by neighborhood. Have students take notes on the neighborhood so that they will be aware of its history when they go on their walk.

On the walk, students must take notes and photographs as they go, noting every detail they see so that they can write an account as descriptive as Salopek’s. Ask the students to include in their accounts references to the following questions: What stories can you find in this neighborhood? How is the history of the neighborhood a part of what you see today? How is it not? Who lives in this neighborhood—where do people in the neighborhood come from originally, if not New York City or America? Does the neighborhood reflect a pattern of migration and if so, how? What do you notice about the physical location of the place? Does the physical geography play a role in what you see of the human geography? Tell students that if they wish, they can interview someone they see there or who knows the area.

In addition to their written accounts, the students will be drawing a map of the area they walk through and annotating it. Have students select a particular location or landmark and include it on their map, along with a short description about what it means to them or to the neighborhood, both in terms of its history and its meaning today. They should include photographs if possible.

Plot onto a new class map, of New York City, each neighborhood that the students researched. Using the student-created walking maps and the information they share, ask students to think about the history of the city. How has its location played a role in how the city has developed? Questions from the teacher can spur student research; for example, pose the question: why are there skyscrapers in certain parts of the city and not others?

Next ask students to consider: Why do you think the neighborhood you chose developed the way that it did? What role does it play in the history or culture of the city? Why did people choose to settle in this neighborhood? Are there any issues or developments happening in this neighborhood that you think are important to the story of the city? Do these issues connect to other places in the world? If so, have students connect their map plot with a line to the other place(s) in the world to which it connects. Ask students, too, to consider how New York City and its neighborhoods may be involved in some of the other issues they have considered in prior units of this curriculum.

**Curriculum Section V: Your Own “Walk”: Connecting Our World to Its Future
(Writing the Next Dispatch)**

Learning goals:

- For students to locate, research, and analyze an important current events issue or development in today’s world
- For students to apply their understanding of the issue or development by predicting its impact on the future
- For students to imagine themselves in a foreign region and write creatively about that place

Read and Discuss:

Ask students to read Salopek’s dispatch “No Reply,”

<http://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com/2014/09/22/no-reply/>) published September 22, 2014 near Mürşitpınar, Turkey. Some discussion and context will be necessary for this article, as it describes the experiences of Syrian refugees in Turkey, and contains some difficult subject matter. After reading the article together, ask students to discuss this quote:

Include the Iraqis shoved aside by spillover fighting, and the total number of destitute, uprooted people in the region now scrapes five million. If you think this exodus won’t touch you, you are a fool. Your grandchildren will be grappling with the fallout from this calamity (Salopek, 2014b).

Ask students what this quote means. Salopek has been visiting places that are important to human history and telling the story of what they are like in the present, and how the past connects to the present. How is he engaging with the future in this dispatch? How might today's stories, things we read about in the news or see on television, impact our future? Ask students to discuss that question with a partner, then open up the discussion to the whole class. Next, ask students to consider this article in relation to migration. Is the migration of Syrians into Turkey similar to other periods of migration we have studied? Why or why not? How did early human migrations impact human development? How might this migration?

Journaling:

Tell students to think back on the stories and issues, topics, and themes that they researched and that their classmates researched in previous units. Ask them to pick one or two that have stuck with them and write a short reflection about what they learned and why that story is important to them. Can they see this issue or topic relating to anything in their own lives? Does it impact the United States or New York City at all? How might it impact the future of human development?

Research Project:

Once students have begun thinking about an issue they have explored previously and its impact on the future, ask students to next consider: Choose a place Salopek is not walking to, or that he has not gone to yet, that you think he should. Explain that Salopek has traveled to and walked through places that have been essential to the history of

human development. Think of what is next for our development as a species. What place and story will be essential to the next chapter of human history? What is the story there and why will we need to know it in the future?

Students may have a place in mind based on their past research or knowledge, but selecting a topic for this assignment will likely require further research and reading. Have students explore CNN Student News or Maptia for other stories they have not yet read, and from regions the class has not discussed. The teacher should help guide student research based on their interest and should approve all topics before the students get started on the project.

Take a Walk:

Once students have selected a location and story, tell them that they are to imagine they are walking through that place like Salopek. How are they engaging with the landscape? What does it look like?

Students should weave into the narrative a summary of the important issue in their location. What is happening in this country that they believe will be important to the next chapter of human development? How are they, as walkers, engaging with the story there? How will they see this story play out, and what do they think the impact of it will be on our future? They are to write a “dispatch”-style article, using descriptive language to describe the location and story they selected. This will require research both about the physical geography and the human geography of their place. In lieu of photographs, students must also include at least one illustration of the place they have selected.

Once students have completed their illustrations and dispatches, their work can be hung up in the classroom or school for a final global walk-through. Have students make a sign indicating which country their story takes place in, and plot it on the classroom map, to provide world context as students walk. As this is the last unit in the curriculum, this work could also be shared as part of a larger school event including other teachers, parents, or members of the community. Students can present their place, issue, and dispatch before or after the walk-through.

Curriculum Applications

The following are suggested ways to best implement, or expand, this curriculum for use in your classroom.

Reading Dispatches

The language in Salopek's dispatches is not easy for a sixth grade reader. He packs his writing with complex vocabulary, allusions, imagery, and metaphor. I recommend, therefore, reading his dispatches together as a group, rather than asking students to read them on their own, so that the teacher can guide discussion and student understanding. Additionally, providing a vocabulary list or other reading aid to go along with the text can help students absorb meaning as they read with fewer roadblocks. I also recommend reading only a few representative dispatches, rather than making them the prime source material in the curriculum. Further, having students read and analyze short, meaningful quotations, as I recommend throughout each unit of the curriculum, can allow them to make sense of the text and find main ideas by delving deeply into one manageable chunk of a longer article. Each sentence is packed with meaning, and thus particularly significant sentences will require sustained attention and discussion to extract that meaning. Salopek's dispatches can spark fascinating discussion, questions, and debate, but should ideally be read slowly and with help from the teacher.

Integrating the Curriculum

While I created these units to serve as a stand-alone geography curriculum, the Out of Eden Walk does provide distinctive opportunities for integrating other disciplines

into its study. The Walk could be the core of an integrated curriculum, with supplementary lessons in math, science, social studies, and English developed based on its content. Math lessons could focus on topics of distance, speed, and travel, as well as graphing through Salopek's scrupulous use of precise latitude and longitude coordinates. Science lessons can focus on topics of dating fossils, bones, and artifacts, as well as evolution, adaptation, and human development. Topics that fuse a geographic study with a scientific one, such as climates, weather patterns, the Earth's movement, oceanography, ecology, and the environment, would also be particularly apt and easy to relate to the Walk. Social studies units could be similar to existing units in this curriculum, but might focus more heavily on customs and practices of each location that Salopek walks through. Alternatively, social studies topics could focus on ancient civilizations or our earliest human ancestors.

Reading one of Salopek's dispatches alone constitutes an excellent English lesson, as his writing is complex and contains layers of thought to parse and meaning to extract. These dispatches could be read in combination with books relating to an integrated social studies curriculum, perhaps about early civilizations or multicultural children's literature. The possibilities are vast; these suggestions would work well but are by no means the only options for expanding this unit into the core of an integrated sixth grade curriculum.

Expanding the Curriculum

A curriculum based upon the Out of Eden Walk offers the unique and exciting opportunity to grow, year by year and even month by month, as Salopek continues to

walk through new locations and publish new material. His walk is set to end in 2020, a full five years after the publication of this curriculum. Thus, as Salopek encounters different regions and continents, these places can easily be added to the curriculum in the model of previous sections on Africa and the Middle East. Students can read and engage with the issues and developments that Salopek will write about in central Asia, South America, and North America, and then locate different stories and images they find topical and compelling from these regions. A study of North America could be particularly interesting; students can repeat the process of connecting stories from their continent to other places in the world to understand the effects of globalization and how it relates to their lives, as well as actively seek out issues that are current and important from their own country and neighboring countries.

The Walk for Other Age Groups

Particularly in light of the complexity of Salopek's writing, as well as the maturity of many of his topics, this curriculum could work well with an age group older than sixth grade, as well. Seventh and eighth graders could follow a similar progression of activities, with more sophisticated research topics and questions posed for writing and discussion. High school students could certainly read and engage with the Out of Eden Walk as a basis for a geography curriculum, though research projects and activities should be modified for this older age group. Students could work individually or in teams to conduct more in-depth research projects on an issue or country, spending more time on a single region and utilizing newspaper articles as well as books and scholarly articles or websites, rather than just sites like CNN Student News and Maptia, to develop

their investigations. Full-length papers on a place or issue would likely be required, rather than short paragraphs and illustrations. Topics of discussion for high school students could be similar in theme but more advanced in terms of content and possibilities to expand the conversations.

Justification for Developmental Relevance

While this curriculum can be easily tailored to suit other age groups, it was designed to align with the developmental tasks specific to sixth graders. Sixth graders, at ages eleven and twelve, are on the cusp of adolescence and, accordingly, are in a state of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional flux. Changes at this age occur at rapid rates, both physically and cognitively. Emotionally, sixth graders are struggling to define and identify themselves, both on a personal level and within their larger communities (Stevenson, 1996). Peer socialization also becomes increasingly important to the sixth grader, as cliques and friendship groups begin to form; this often comes alongside bullying and cruelty, which peaks in the sixth grade (Lightfoot, Cole, & Cole, 2009). I have carefully considered each of these dimensions of sixth grade development and they are reflected in the content of my curriculum.

As a result of their rapid physical growth, sixth grade girls and boys often require a great deal of sleep and develop a “vast appetite for food” (Wood, 1994, p.124). However, despite their primal need for rest and refueling, they are quite the opposite of sluggish, and are instead restless and constantly on the move. Stevenson (1996) advises that “lots of physical activity, ranging from relatively mild to moderate to highly vigorous is essential and central to their daily lives” (p.7). A stationary sixth grade curriculum, therefore, is ill advised. In this curriculum, students are given the opportunity to move around: most blatantly, through their walking exercises in Section IV, but also through group activities that require motion throughout the classroom, such as station work, physical plotting on maps, and simulated walks through global stories. A variety of

activities throughout each unit will allow students to mentally and physically shift gears, breaking up the monotony of a single mode of silent or static interaction that might cause a sixth grader to quickly lose focus.

As social relationships with peers are paramount to the eleven- and twelve-year old, this curriculum relies heavily on opportunities for social engagement. While friendships have been important to children for many years prior, it is at this age that friendship groups and social circles begin to develop. Stevenson explains, “Crowds and cliques are the two major types of groups in the adolescent culture (Smart & Smart, 1973). The crowd offers group identity, and the clique provides a context whereby members meet each others’ needs to ‘belong with’” (1996, p.112). Parents of eleven-year olds notice a sharp increase in the amount of time their children spend on the telephone; children at this age feel a need to be in constant contact with peers to achieve this sense of “belonging” (Wood, 1994). As friendships and group identity are such strong motivating factors for sixth graders, it is wise to incorporate socializing into school work, as it can motivate pre-teens to become involved in classroom activities, as well. In this curriculum, students not only work frequently in small groups during class time, but also read and respond to one another’s written work, promoting engagement with classmates intellectually as well as merely socially.

Emotionally, defining one’s self and one’s abilities, particularly in relation to one’s peers, is central to the development of eleven- and twelve-year olds. They become focused on their academic achievements (Wood, 1994), and begin to define themselves by what they can and cannot do. They crave both peer acceptance and the acceptance of adults (Stevenson, 1996), and are motivated by personal success and accomplishments.

Accordingly, this curriculum offers students the opportunity to self-direct their work to a large extent, choosing which aspects of a country or continent interest them and developing research and analysis that springs from this interest. Further, Sections IV and V of the curriculum diverge from merely following Salopek on his walk and allow students the independence and authority of becoming “journalists” and “walkers” who shape the learning for themselves and for their peers. These projects were developed in hopes that students of this age will find stimulation in observing their own accomplishments and those of their classmates as they work independently and according to their interests.

Perhaps the most significant strand of development in the context of this curriculum is the cognitive. Just as the sixth grader is experiencing rapid physical growth, so, too, is he or she experiencing rapid changes in cognition. At eleven and twelve, children are able to think abstractly as well as to develop hypotheses and apply deductive reasoning. They have a more mature world-view at this age, as they are newly able to understand various perspectives far removed from their own (Wood, 1994). Developmental psychologist Jean Piaget’s system of cognitive developmental stages places the sixth grader on the border between concrete operational thought, which occurs from around ages six to twelve, and formal operational thought, occurring from around ages twelve to nineteen (Lightfoot et al., 2009). Within concrete operational thought, students are able to “think flexibly” (Lightfoot et al., 2009, p.399) and consider multiple solutions to a problem. They also begin to view the world with less egocentrism, considering both how others may perceive them, as well as how others may be thinking and feeling. In the formal operational stage, young adolescents can consider and solve

complex problems systemically, considering all possible solutions. Children at this stage of thinking also are “interested in universal ethical principles and critical of adults’ hypocrisies” (Lightfoot et al., 2009, p.524). Sixth graders fall squarely between these two stages of cognition, and their academic capability will likely jump back and forth between the simpler understandings of concrete operational thought and the fuller complexity of formal operational thinking.

The milestone levels of cognitive maturity reached around the sixth grade year are in many ways the foundation of this curriculum. Students’ cognitive abilities, stretched to encompass the viewpoints and perspectives of distant others, will allow them to engage with global stories and news on a different level than they might have previously. Indeed, as students begin to develop abstract thinking, they will be able to successfully learn about foreign places, even without direct, physical engagement with those places. Perhaps most powerfully, children of this age can consider global issues from multiple angles, allowing them to flexibly consider multiple outcomes as well as posit possible solutions. Further, their burgeoning interest in universal ethical issues will hopefully impel students to immerse themselves fully in the study of world issues that may not always reflect parity across the globe. Students will be given the chance to experiment with these new dimensions of understanding within the realm of the classroom, where they will be guided by teachers and peers to extend their thinking and apply to it meaning from their own lives.

I believe this curriculum’s emphasis on cross-cultural and global understanding is also essential for sixth grade education because despite students’ cognitive abilities to understand disparate perspectives, their social and emotional behavior does not always

reflect the kindness and understanding this development might suggest. Children of this age often begin to exhibit impulsive, rude, and self-absorbed behavior (Wood, 1994), and the development of social groups and cliques creates a slippery slope that begins with exclusion and may lead to other cruel behaviors towards one another. A curriculum of this nature, promoting not only understanding of the different lives of people around the world through reading current events and news articles, but also an understanding that human beings are all inextricably linked to one another, may encourage fair and compassionate treatment of peers.

Annotated List of Web Resources

Adichie, C.N. (2009, July). The danger of a single story. [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en

Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk is a collection of interwoven personal stories that illustrate the detrimental effects of having only a "single story" of a person or a place. In particular, she powerfully illustrates how widespread and damaging it is to encounter only single, one-dimensional stories of Africa.

CNN StudentNews. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.cnn.com/studentnews

CNN Student News is intended for use in middle and high school classrooms. It provides news articles appropriate for this age group. You can search through articles based on key words or theme, and it is an excellent resource for students when they are searching for news articles to use in their research.

EverydayAfrica. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.instagram.com/everydayafrica

EverydayMiddleEast. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.instagram.com/everydaymiddleeast

There exists on Instagram several accounts dedicated to showing photographs of everyday life in a specific country or location. The movement started with an "Everyday Africa" account created by photographer Peter DiCampo and writer Austin Merrill in 2012, but has since expanded to include "Everyday" accounts for the Middle East, Latin America, the U.S., Iran, Egypt, and even the Bronx. The goal of the social media

accounts is to eradicate stereotypes that develop from the media's constant recycling of only certain images of a place.

Maptia. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.Maptia.com

Maptia is a fantastic website which houses a collection of travel stories written by members of the Maptia community. You can search stories by theme or by location, and there are stories written from all over the world, including the United States. These stories, accompanied by beautiful and compelling photographs, offer an intimate glimpse of life in another country. I propose using stories from this website as a companion to news articles. This way, students are given a chance to engage with two unique ways of writing about a foreign place.

NatGeo mapmaker interactive. (n.d.). Retrieved from

http://mapmaker.education.nationalgeographic.com/?ar_a=1&b=1&ls=000000000000

This tool from the *National Geographic* website allows you to look at a location from a series of base maps: topographic, satellite, street view, terrain, ocean, and a gray, unlabeled map. It is an enormously helpful visual aid for students to understand the terrain and topography of a country. I have also found the street view to be useful in showing the differences in roadways across different places, countries, and continents. Users can also add shapes, lines, and text to the map, and can save their edited maps for later viewing and use.

Neatline. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.neatline.org

This is essentially a more complex version of Tripline (see below), designed for scholars rather than travelers. Using historical maps or documents from a web database, students can annotate maps and show changes overtime with a sliding dateline. It may be a complex tool for middle school age students, but is worth taking a look at.

Place matters. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.placematters.net

This web project, begun in 1998, seeks to locate and protect sites of cultural, historic, and community significance in New York City. It contains a database of such places as well as their locations and descriptions of their importance. Students can search the database by location, theme, use, and type. It is an excellent resource for learning more about the city and the places that make up its history.

Salopek, P. (2015). *Out of Eden walk: A journey through time*. Retrieved from www.outofedenwalk.com

This website is the digital home-base of the Out of Eden Walk. It contains links to Salopek's milestone videos, has blog content, thematic maps, and links to an archive of Salopek's dispatches, published through the *National Geographic* website. Each "milestone" video also contains an interview with a person near to Salopek at the time. This site also has a map showing Salopek's progress as he walks across the globe; students can find his current location, as well as look at his planned route.

Tripline. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.tripline.net

This website allows users to plot on and annotate a map. It was designed for people to share their own travel stories, but it is often used for educational purposes; users can construct current or historic trips and journeys, adding explanations and analysis. I propose using it as a possible digital resource for the “classroom map” in this curriculum, if a large wall-map would not adequately serve the needs of a large class of students, all of whom have map annotations to contribute. Students can make individual maps, or various classroom maps can be set up with each student contributing an annotation for a specific place they studied.

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