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Content Reading Skills (7th Grade Social Studies) Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? So What?

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Although there is a national literacy rate of 99% and more people are using libraries now compared to fifty years ago, there is a definite literacy problem in the city schools. How does one raise a student from a sub-standard literacy level to his own “evaluated” reading level? It is an enigma. Needless to say, if someone could derive a method, he or she would be famous. This section suggests some approaches teachers may use in developing novice reading skills and comprehension in such content areas as social studies. The problems are many, the obstacles often insurmountable, the solutions few, the failures devastating, but the successes noteworthy.

Who does the New Haven middle school teacher teach? Inner-city adolescents, skeptical individuals who demand proof from you constantly and then rarely accept it. Although street-wise, they are worldly innocents. Their spirit of adventure is at a peak and it is to our advantage to capture their curiosity. It is through their creative faculty that we can best teach them. In order to get the student out of his immediate surroundings and into the world of mountains and deserts, we have to stimulate his creative powers. A bright, intellectually-experienced classroom decor is an asset to this process. Still, how can one teach without one of the basic means of communication . . . reading?

Adolescence is an age when the student has already been introduced to the basic reading skills. But these skills do not always surface when the students need them. Perhaps those who contend that lack of practice at home and at school is to blame for poor reading skills are right. After all, any individual has difficulty enhancing a skill or talent without exercising. By seventh grade these basic skills are usually left to reading teachers, and content area teachers are left to fend for themselves. Fortunately, in our school district the reading teachers have formulated the following *Basic Skills of Reading Student Profile* . As a social studies teacher, I intend to skim the first seven units, adapt additional sections and utilize them in a seventh grade curriculum. Those ideas that are enclosed in parentheses are additions.

Basic Skills of Reading Student Profile

Unit I: Consonants

- A. Initial Consonants
- B. Final Consonants

Unit II: Vowels

- A. Short Vowels
- B. Long Vowels

Unit III: Vocabulary

- A. Syllables
- B. Suffixes
- C. Possessives
- D. Compound Words

Unit IV: Special Syllables

- A. Prefixes
- B. Suffixes
- C. Superlatives—er, est endings

Unit V: Word Attack and Study

- A. Synonyms
- B. Antonyms
- C. Homonyms
- D. Contractions
- E. Abbreviations

Unit VI: Sentence Study

- A. Kinds of Sentences
 - 1. Declarative
 - 2. Interrogative
 - 3. Imperative
 - 4. Exclamatory
- B. Parts of Sentences
 - 1. Phrases
- C. Punctuation
- D. Capitalization

Unit VII: Parts of Speech

- A. Nouns
 - 1. Common Nouns
 - 2. Proper Nouns
- B. Pronouns
- C. Verbs
 - 1. To be verbs
 - 2. Action verbs
- D. Adjectives
- E. Adverbs

Unit VIII: Study Skills

- A. Table of Contents
- B. Encyclopedia, Dictionary (Textbooks, Atlases)
- C. Alphabetical order
- D. Following directions
- E. Radio, TV, Newspaper
- F. Summarizing
 - 1. Own Words
 - 2. Story Parts
 - 3. Own Ideas
- G. Outlining

Unit IX: Comprehension

- A. Main Ideas
 - 1. Titles (Subtitles)
 - 2. Paragraphs
 - 3. Re-phrasing
 - 4. (Scanning)
- B. Identifying Speaker
- C. Drawing Conclusions
 - 1. (reading without an opinion)
- D. Cause and Effect
- E. (Chronological Order)
- F. (SQ3R)
- G. (Propaganda)
 - 1. (fact or opinion)
 - 2. (recognizing half-truths)
 - 3. (contrast)
- H. (Organization)
 - 1. (Words that go together)
- I. (Map Reading)
- J. (Cartoon Analysis)
- K. (Interest, Experience Development)

Reading benefits the consumer for the experiences he/she will have. The very survival of the adolescent who leaves school without the ability to understand a sentence may be jeopardized. It is the responsibility of the instructor to guarantee that the individual, upon leaving the classroom, will be capable of functioning satisfactorily in the daily situations that he will encounter.

Directions are a necessary form of communication. The ability to follow and read directions is an essential task of everyday life. From the 15-year-old home economics student who ruins a batch of cookies by including 1/2 cup of baking soda instead of 1/2 teaspoon, to the student who critically burns himself near the railroad station by falling on high voltage wires, to the student that drowns in a no swimming area, following basic instructions is a must. The skill should be taught in the classroom, especially when most parents in the inner-city do their children's work with them.

One finds in the classroom that most students are unable to accurately complete assignments because they neglected to follow directions. Try not to verbally explain an assignment to the students; the results are depressing. The art of deciphering directions is twofold:

- The first phase is basically preparatory. The individual must listen, read, and ascertain whether he has the correct directions and whether he is fully aware of their meaning.
- The second phase is practical. The individual must thoroughly peruse the instructions and follow them sequentially.

Possible exercises:

1. Textbook Assignments
2. Daily Chore Assignments
3. Map Reading-Treasure Hunt
4. How to . . . Assignments

The primary resources for the seventh grade social studies student are the dictionary, encyclopedia, textbook, and atlas. The former two are best introduced by the school or neighborhood librarian. Your local library will be more than happy to accommodate and instruct your class and their needs if you make an appointment.

Dictionary and glossary skills are an overall priority. The correct usage of spelling, and meaning, are absolute necessities in every area of communication. Often Hispanic students need the reinforcement of written communication as opposed to oral accuracy. I have observed that one black male student could with 100% accuracy relate information orally, but with only 2% accuracy when he had to write. That will not suffice when he has to communicate with a teacher or employer. Accurate spelling is an essential requirement in content areas. Accurate meaning development is also an integral part of any classroom. All too often an adolescent

will not be able to use a word in context. The student is capable of memorizing a definition by rote; however, when asked to use it in a sentence, he is unable to use it correctly.

-Once a term or word has been introduced it should be used regularly in the classroom by the teacher and the student.

-Vocabulary words should be a weekly assignment for which the student is accountable.

The encyclopedia is the easiest source for the student to use when hunting for information. Reference work is both rewarding and enjoyable to the seventh-grade student. When doling out relevant research topics, stress the need to avoid copying word for word. Stress creativity at this point.

-The teacher should assign topics in the beginning of the academic year; the student should be choosing his own later.

-Monthly assignments should be given.

-Students have written to publishers to cite inaccuracies. With more advanced students encyclopedic corrections enforce confidence.

Textbook usage can be taught and learned by the seventh-grader. At first, the student is oblivious when text terminology is used. Within the first two weeks of school, the subject area should be explained and the students tested. This introduction also acquaints the student with what he will be expected to cover during the school year. A systematic analysis of the textbook should include:

1. Title, author, publisher
2. Preface
3. Table of Contents
4. List of illustrations and maps
5. Text contents
6. Glossary
7. Index
8. Footnotes
9. Bibliography

Atlas skills are pertinent in the middle school curriculum; therefore, if none are available, the teacher should send away to motor clubs or gas stations for a supply. Atlas awareness helps the student grasp concepts of regions. Their present sphere of awareness is their immediate neighborhood. The transition to a greater awareness of the world has to be handled delicately and imaginatively or else the student may be turned off forever. Asking the student to describe his neighborhood may be a start; however, if you begin the academic year with this introduction, you should end the term with a revised description of his community. You will be astounded at the increased maturity and awareness the student has achieved.

The instruction of map skills is time-consuming, redundant, exasperating, but essential. An incorporated social studies curriculum is usually the smoothest means of instruction. Needless to say, some skills are taught first—directions and definitions.

Areas to be covered:

1. legends, symbols
2. globes
3. maps (political, climactic, vegetation, topographical)
4. Longitude, latitude
5. poles, equator, prime meridian
6. waterforms
7. Landforms
8. zones
9. continents
10. cultural areas
11. countries, capitals
12. cities, capitals
13. charts, graphs, pictographs
14. road map reading

The best atmosphere for learning is an experience-related room with a secure structure. Many times what

appears to be a diversion may actually be a benefit. An opportunistic teacher will capitalize on such incidents and turn them into intellectual experiences. An adolescent's imagination is fun to play with and can be given direction. Making the best of a situation is often a learning process for the student and teacher as well. The instruction, development, and practice of reading may be greatly increased through such adventures.

After a child has left school, he often will not pick up reading material unless he has been caught up in the excitement of developing his own interests. A high school dropout may still be able to function lucratively in society if he is able to keep abreast with an interest through the use of media, magazines, periodicals, books, and newspapers.

- Regular current news assignments should be incorporated into the social studies classroom.
- Relevant television programs should be required for viewing and discussing.
- A skill should be learned through reading articles about it.
- Advertising should be analyzed for persuasiveness.
- Topics that have been introduced by the student should be researched.

Luckily, American teachers have more leeway than British teachers. Instead of being required to follow a set manual, we are able to ascertain individually what is the right and wrong method to be used at a given time. An experience-related classroom teacher may have difficulty keeping up the momentum; therefore, contact with other faculty members is a necessity. If a teacher remains secluded so that his only communication is with the student, his ideas and materials may not be as mature as they ought to be. By communicating with other teachers you will find that other instructors will have ideas and experiences to lend to you.

Reading is not simply decoding; it includes the assimilation of experiences and the application to the reader's life. Fader has observed that in New York City low-level students will begin accurately using terms and vocabulary in their conversations that they have read. Therefore, a reader should be geared upward, with the goals, temporarily, out of grasp. How can one tell if the student is grasping anything he has read? Text testing, although an aversion to many, is a means of evaluating a student's comprehension. Unfortunately, most students fare poorly in this area because they have not been advised in study skills. It is unfair to give a test in the classroom if the adolescent is still unaware of retention techniques. It is the duty of the seventh grade teacher to help the student acquire the ability. I have found two very effective means for study: outlining, and the SQ3R method. If the student is not well versed in study habits, the beginning of the academic year is the best time to introduce them.

Outlining

Outlining is best taught by the English teachers. If they are unable to do the assignment, it is the content area teacher's job to instruct the adolescent. An outline of a chapter is an effective review.

1. Each unit in the outline should contain only one item or statement.

2. The other ideas in the outline should be proportionately subordinated, and must be related to the main topic.
3. The appropriate relation of items should be designated by the proper indentation.
4. A consistent set/number of symbols should be used.
5. Full content as opposed to key word outlines should be introduced first.

Acceptable:

- I.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
- II.
 - A.
 - B.
 - 1.
 - 2.

SQ3R Method

This method is the most effective preparation for taking tests. It has been included in most city curricula content area units. This method of study gives the student a systematic, inclusive approach to the chapter.

- *Survey* After a student has skimmed the entire unit, he then begins to scan the chapter from the beginning. Noun-verb groups and main idea headings are speed-read. If a summary has been compiled it is to be utilized at this stage.

- *Question* The student then has to turn the main idea of each paragraph into relevant and essential questions. Sequentially, he rereads the units in an attempt to answer the formulated questions. This yields direction, helping those with reading problems.

- *Reading* Now the student reads for a purpose, i.e. to answer the questions. The type of reading will vary with the subject. If the material is known to the reader, skimming will suffice; if the student is a novice in the area, technical reading is in order.

- *Recitation* Recall, oral or written, is the next stage in this study method. Try to make the classroom environment as undisturbing as possible during this phase. Immediate recall of what has been read is stressed in order to prevent retention loss. This process may be either group or individual oriented though the latter is preferable.

1. The student should read the paragraph silently.
2. Then he should look away from the text and recite silently what he remembers.
3. Finally, he should look over the material to see if he has left anything of importance out of his recitation.

- *Review* The teacher controls the implementation of the review, the final phase of this study process.

1. At first reviews should be given often and consistently.
2. As the semester progresses, reviews should be spaced at greater intervals. As students' retention processes are fortified, you will notice that the adolescent incorporates the knowledge in other work. He will begin to grasp patterns and relationships between old subjects and new ones.

The study process is a necessary section of any content area and is learned best if the instructor shows enthusiasm for a unit. Rewarding the student for comprehension achievements should be structured into the lessons and so should a means for promoting the desire to do better. It is not difficult to lose students when they begin questioning competition; therefore, I suggest an individually-oriented achievement record at first. A daily record should be compiled for each adolescent. This enables the teacher to check an individual's personal academic growth. As the student matures and feels more secure, group competition will evolve.

Organization of thought and material is another area in which the adolescent falls short. This skill is usually developed in the English classroom. There are a few exercises that will help the sequential thought structure to evolve.

- Outline assignments help the student organize thoughts.
- Drilling the student in event order gives the adolescent a sense of time/space. Chronological order solving is usually fun for the student, especially if it deals with an area or topic that he can identify.
- Grouping sentences, concepts, and words that belong in the same categories brings order into the seventh-grader's mind.

The middle school teacher has many challenges confronting him with each student. Although it is difficult to disperse your energies in ninety directions, remember that each student is an individual with separate needs and needs to be communicated with individually. If this cannot be done during lesson time, try to allow a little time during the day to become familiar with your students. This aids in your understanding and ability to develop their content reading skills. Above all enjoy your students and your work; the academic results will be noteworthy.

Nine Week Program

Weeks one and two

1. Introduction and dissection of textbook.
2. Introduction and development of study skills.

Week three

1. Introduction to Earth
2. Introduction to maps

Week four

1. Latitude
2. Longitude

Week five

1. Landforms
2. Waterforms

Week six

1. Introduction to the U.S.
2. U.S. geographical highlights

Week seven

1. Graph, pictograph, chart skills
2. Road map reading-vacation planning

Week eight

1. Newspaper analysis, *New Haven Register's* filmstrip
2. Recognizing propaganda

Week nine

1. Unit summation and review
2. Unit exam (quizzes have preceded)

Sample Lesson #1 SQ3R 2 days

Concept A student will retain more and test higher with adequate study skills.

Objectives Student will master the SQ3R method.

Student will begin reading for a purpose.

Student will organize thoughts through categorizing them.

Student preparation: Student has not been prepared in method.

Timing *This lesson should be administered in the beginning of the academic year prior to any test evaluations.*

Motivation *A talk about a student's responsibility for his own learning.*

Materials *Social studies notebook, writing implements, chalkboard, selected paragraph.*

Procedure: Day 1

1. Go over two phases for following directions.
2. Write the SQ3R method on the board and have students transfer it into their notebook.
3. Explain each section by utilizing a paragraph that has been placed on the board.
4. Go over the technique with the group.
5. Group recitation.

Content *a selected paragraph from **The New Exploring a Changing World , Unit I, Chapter 1, paragraph two:***

Wherever people live, they have developed ways of working, playing, and governing themselves. How people live day by day, how they work, the songs they sing, the god or gods they worship, the sports they enjoy—all these things make up their culture. The culture of a people is passed onto their children and their children's children. It may change greatly or very little over the years. Ours is a fast-changing culture. Among the Tasadays of the Philippines, ways of living changed little since the dawn of history. These people still hunt with stone weapons and gather food from trees.

Survey *Skim the paragraph with the class emphasizing the main ideas.*

1. People develop ways of working, playing, and governing themselves.
2. Culture consists of how people live daily—work, play, sing, worship.
3. Culture is passed on through generations.
4. Culture may change greatly, as in the U.S., or may change little, as with the Tasadays.

Question *Have students turn main ideas into questions. Place on board.*

1. What do people develop wherever they live?

2. What does culture consist of?
3. How is culture passed on?
4. Does culture change?

Reading *Re-read the paragraph and answer the questions.*

Recitation *Now ask the students the same questions. At this point it is best to call upon a student that has raised his hand.*

Review *Go over the main ideas.*

Conclusion *Have students write in their notebooks what they think about the lesson and the classroom for the day.*

Homework *Have the students write a paragraph about their own culture.*

Content: Day 2

1. Collect homework.
2. Review previous lesson.
3. Have each student read a selected paragraph and follow the techniques. Walk around the room and help them. Video-tape the classroom during the process.
4. Paragraph from text, Chapter two, paragraph 5:

What then, is race? A race is a group of people who have similar bodily characteristics. Their children inherit these characteristics. Language, religion, nationality, customs, dress, are not passed on the same way as race. A person may choose them as he wishes. They are part of his culture, not his race. They are learned. His race is inherited.

Review *Ask students for oral feedback.*

Quiz *Ask students for definitions of culture and race.*

Conclusion *Daily entry in the notebook.*

Homework *Label the following either race or culture (worksheet) derived from text.*

1. The color of a person's skin
2. The church a person attends
3. The food a person eats
4. The music a person listens to
5. The texture of a person's hair
6. The color of a person's eyes
7. The type of furniture a person has
8. The bone structure of a person's face
9. The shape of a person's lips
10. The political party one belongs to
11. The height of a person
12. The occupation a person has
13. The language a person speaks
14. The country a person lives in
15. The clothes a person wears

Sample Lesson #2 Map terminology 2 days

Concept *Simply defining words is not enough. The student has to be capable of using them accurately in the proper context.*

Objectives *Students will select proper definitions. Students will use words in context.*

Students will master basic map terms and transference.

Student preparation: Students are familiar with dictionary work.

Timing: This lesson should be administered at the beginning of the academic year prior to map lessons.

Motivation *If you were from another solar system and came to Earth, how would you know what was where and what was important to our planet?*

Materials: Writing implements, notebook, dictionaries, glossaries, map outlines, direction cards, atlases, maps, globes.

Content: Day #1

1. Ask students motivation question. Add the answers to the vocabulary list.

geography	legend, key	southeast	vegetation
map	symbol	southwest	population
globe	directions	compass	density
distortion	cardinal	scale	products
*North Pole	intermediate	political map	
*South Pole	north	country	
*Equator	south	capital	
*Prime Meridian	east	physical map	
*continents	west	topography	
axis	northeast	climate	
23-1/2° tilt	northwest	weather	

2. Go over terms to assure accuracy.

3. Using atlases and maps, label and locate *words on world outline maps. Collect, correct, and save for further entries.

Conclusion Daily entry in notebook.

Homework Put vocabulary words into sentences. Instruct students not to write definitions. They should be gone over thoroughly during another class session.

Content: Day #2

1. Collect homework and review previous lesson.

2. Direction Game—Have cardboard cards with directions on them.

-select 4 students to stand in the corners of the classroom

-select 4 students to stand between others, against the walls

-give one student a card with a direction written on it

-have another student pass out the remaining cards to the appropriate persons

-if incorrect, have the cards arranged by another student

-if correct collect cards

-repeat several times

3. Directions with atlas

-open atlases to the page with the world map on it

-ask students to give the proper directions

-sample questions:.

The U.S. is *north* of the equator.
Africa is *east , northeast* of South America.
Asia is *east* of the Prime Meridian.
Australia is *north* of the South Pole.
Europe is *east , southeast* of Greenland.
North America is *south* of the North Pole.
Puerto Rico is *south* of the U.S.

4. Legends, symbols

- have the students realize that it is impossible to place everything on a map
- re-define legend, key, and symbol
- draw an imaginary island on the board with a legend space -ask the students to label the directions
- ask the students to fill in the island, give an example—suggestions, if needed: railroads, trees, airport, schools, rivers, hospitals.

Conclusion Daily entry in notebook

Homework On a mimeo outline the block surrounding the school. The students are to fill in the map with symbols, using a key.

Sample Lesson #3 Waterforms 2 days

Concept A student will understand a subject better if he can experience it.

Objective Student will practice dictionary skills.

Student will become familiar with waterforms.

Student will master paragraph's concepts through experience.

Student preparation: Students will have been assigned to bring in pictures of waterforms from magazines, etc., which will be made into a classroom collage.

Timing The lesson should be administered prior to any map identification of major waterforms.

Motivation Water, water, everywhere but not a drop to drink. If class is cooperative, have another teacher run in with a waterpistol and shoot you.

Materials Writing implements, notebook, atlas, maps, overhead projector, transparencies, mimeo-sheets, bus

Procedures: Day 1

- definitions are placed on transparencies (students give them) -example is given from an atlas
- the waterform is cited by the student on a map
- then it is drawn on the transparency under the definition

Vocabulary

water	bay	brook	delta
salt water	lake	source	course
fresh water	sound	downstream	pond
ocean	strait	mouth	reservoir
sea		river	upstream canal
gulf		tributary	waterfall

-students copy transparency work into notebook

Conclusion Daily entry in notebook.

Day #2 Bus trip along Mill River

Try to arrange to have a Science teacher accompany the group on the trip.

1. When the students enter the bus, they will be given the following paragraph to read:

Mill River is a fresh water stream that flows along a set course. Its source is in Cheshire. As it flows downstream, toward the mouth, it passes through and forms part of Clark's Pond, Sleeping Giant Park, Lake Whitney (a man-made reservoir), the base of East Rock, and Grand Avenue. Its mouth is at the Long Island Sound. The Sound is salt water; therefore, Mill River is mixed with salt water when it first flows upstream toward its source. Along the river's course there are ponds, a man-made lake, brooks, and waterfalls. The river is not straight. The course curves. Parts of the river are extremely polluted, and other parts are very clean and pure. In the river are such fresh water fish as perch, trout, blue-gills, bass, and pickerel. Mill River has no tributaries.

2. The ride will begin in New Haven at the mouth. The students will remain in the bus until we reach Rice Field. A leisurely walk along East Rock's footpath to Lake Whitney's waterfall in Hamden will ensue. Be sure the students do not trespass on Water Company property. The group will reboard the bus and proceed to Sleeping Giant where we will see the river as a brook, waterfall and a pond. We will lunch in the park. If time permits, the group will proceed to Cheshire.

Conclusion Daily entry in notebook.

Homework Study the paragraph for a quiz.

Classroom Material

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Audio-visual aids:

globes transparencies
maps video-tape equipment
overhead projector bulletin boards

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