

**Social Studies
Excursions, K-3
Book Three**

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**Book Three: Powerful Units on Childhood,
Money, and Government**

JANET ALLEMAN AND JERE BROPHY

With Contributions by Barbara Knighton

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To my husband, George Trumbull

—*Janet Alleman*

To my grandchildren Mark and Chris Speier,

Jered and Carmen Brophy

—*Jere Brophy*

We dedicate this volume to June Benson, who for many years now has contributed immeasurably to our work by providing us with fast and accurate tape transcriptions, reliable text processing, and many other forms of assistance with our professional activities.

Thank you, June, for all you have done for us.

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Series Preface

This series contains three volumes, each of which includes detailed plans for social studies units intended for use in the primary grades. The unit plans provide a substantive content base and learning and assessment activities designed to help primary-grade teachers provide their students with a powerful introduction to social education. Like the major primary-grade social studies textbook series, these units focus on cultural universals—basic human needs and social experiences found in all societies, past and present (food, clothing, shelter, communication, transportation, family living, childhood, money, and government). However, unlike the units found in the major textbook series, the units in this series are structured around powerful ideas and designed to develop those ideas in depth and with attention to their applications to life outside of school. Consequently, they are suitable for use as substitutes for, or elaborations of, material on the same topics found in the textbook series.

Such elaboration is needed because the textbooks produced for use in the early grades are primarily picture books that do not provide sufficient content to support a powerful social studies program. Concerning government, for example, textbooks typically include a few pages on the topic in units on schools, neighborhoods, or communities. Pages on school rules or voting might be located within the unit on schools; pages on community helpers (services) or on taxes might be located within a unit on community. A lesson here or there on the U.S. government or patriotic symbols and songs might be woven into a unit on our country that addresses location, our country's leaders, what makes states special,

and natural resources. Texts rarely introduce the topic by making personal connections to children, such as by illustrating how government functions and services are very much a part of their lives. While citizenship and core democratic values are expressed in every social studies textbook, it is not uncommon to find these topics treated as sidebars— isolated rather than woven into the narrative in meaningful ways. In contrast, our government unit explores multiple facets of this cultural universal in depth, beginning with citizenship within the classroom community. As the unit continues, it addresses the geographic, economic, and cultural reasons that have led various past and present societies to develop governmental structures and services to provide for needs and wants that people cannot provide for on their own. Students emerge from the unit with connected understandings about how the government is very much a part of their lives and serves to protect them and keep them safe. Students also learn that the government can't do it all and, therefore, volunteers are in high demand.

The series has been developed primarily for preservice and inservice primary-grade teachers who want a more substantive and powerful social studies program than the major textbook series can support. Each volume contains plans for three instructional units intended to support instruction for forty to sixty minutes per day for three to four weeks. Units are divided into lessons that elaborate the content base in detail and include plans for suggested learning activities, assessment tasks, and follow-up home assignments. The home assignments are not conventional worksheets but instead are activities calling for students and their parents to engage in conversations or other enjoyable activities connected to the unit topic. Along with the unit plans as such, each volume includes information about how and why the units were developed, suggestions about how teachers might adapt them to their students and local communities, and tips about planning and implementing the units from the authors and from Barbara Knighton, the teacher who has had the most experience teaching the units to her students.

Besides teachers who will use the units directly with their own students in their own classrooms, the volumes in this series should be useful to several other audiences. State- and district-level staff developers and social studies curriculum coordinators should find the volumes useful as bases for workshops and presentations on making primary-grade social studies more powerful and more in line with national and state standards. Each unit develops a network of powerful ideas (basic social understandings) about the topic and provides opportunities for students to apply these ideas in their lives outside of school. The instructional content and processes reflect the guidelines of the National Council for the Social Studies and related professional organizations.

Finally, the volumes should be useful to professors and others conducting preservice and inservice teacher education relating to social studies in the primary grades. Using materials from this series, instructors can show teachers how the cultural universals addressed in the early social studies curriculum can be developed with a focus on powerful ideas and their applications, so as to create a social studies program that reflects reform standards. Also, by assigning preservice teachers to teach one or more lessons from these units, instructors can provide opportunities for their students to experience what it is like to develop big ideas in depth and to begin to build habits of good professional practice.

Since the 1930s, there has been widespread agreement among primary-grade curriculum makers and teachers that cultural universals are appropriate topics for introducing students to social studies concepts and principles. Given this “wisdom of practice,” we believe that instructors will find that the approach taken in this series (i.e., retaining the cultural universals as unit topics but developing them much more coherently and powerfully) makes more sense as a response to criticisms of the contemporary primary-grade social studies textbooks than commonly suggested alternatives that call for shifting to something else entirely (e.g., a primary focus on history or on social issues). We elaborate this point at the end of the first chapter in each volume.

Acknowledgments

The units presented in this series could not have been developed without the assistance of a great many people. Most prominent among them is Barbara Knighton, the teacher who first makes our unit plans come to life in her classroom and provides us with many suggestions for improving them. We also wish to acknowledge and thank Gina Henig, Barbara's colleague, who also has provided us with useful feedback and suggestions; the principal, parents, and students associated with the school at which Barbara teaches; Carolyn O'Mahony and Tracy Reynolds, who interviewed students before and after they experienced the units; and June Benson, who transcribed the audiotapes of the class sessions and the interviews. We also wish to acknowledge and thank the College of Education at Michigan State University for its support of the research and development that led to these units and the Spencer Foundation for its support of a related line of research on what K–3 students know (or think they know) about topics commonly addressed in early elementary social studies. Finally, we thank Danny Miller for his feedback on Book Three and Lynne Reed for her invaluable editorial work on all three volumes in the series.

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Lesson 3

A Day in the Lives of Children Around the World

Resources

- Globe
- Photocopies of pictures of children around the world as portrayed in the book *Wake Up, World!*
- Pen pal data and Internet access

Children's Literature

Ajmera, M., & Ivanko, J. (1991). *To Be a Kid*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

Ajmera, M., & Versola, A. (1997). *Children from Australia to Zimbabwe*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

Hollyer, B. (1999). *Wake Up World: A Day in the Life of Children Around the World*. New York: Henry Holt.

General Comments

This lesson underscores how early elementary school children all over the world have much in common but may seem different because of availability of resources, climatic conditions, cultural identity, and other factors. It relies heavily on *Wake Up, World! A Day in the Life of Children Around the World*. If this book is not available, other materials can be substituted. For example, *Children from Australia to Zimbabwe* is a viable option.

General Purposes or Goals

To help students understand and appreciate: (1) certain ways in which childhood around the world is very different, even though all children have much in common; (2) the many factors that contribute to childhood around the world and why it is experienced differently; and (3) how they can apply what they learn about childhood to their own lives—and more ably explain the reasons for their experiences.

Main Ideas to Develop

- Children's lives around the world are alike in many ways, yet different in other ways.
- Differences in children's lives are based on culture, geographic conditions, economic resources, personal choices, and so on.

Teaching Tips from Barbara

The students enjoyed finding similarities between their lives and those of other children. I copied pictures of the children from the book *Wake Up,*

World! and marked on the globe the places where these children lived. This added to students' interest and understanding of the information.

Starting the Lesson

Discuss the results of the home assignment.

Begin this lesson by asking students how they think children's lives around the world are alike or different. List their responses. Then introduce *Wake Up, World! A Day in the Life of Children Around the World*. Make copies of the eight photos of the children described in the book and attach them to the appropriate locations on the globe.

Optional Establish a pen pal Internet e-mail exchange with a class in some other part of the world or with children in many places. This would be a perfect place for volunteers to provide support for instruction.

Suggested Lesson Discussion

In certain ways childhood around the world is very different. Yet children everywhere have much in common. [As you read *Wake Up, World!*, ask students to listen for likenesses and differences between the lives of children in other parts of the world and those of children in your classroom.]

All over the world, children live with their parents, brothers and sisters, and sometimes with other relatives. Some families also include pets. Children all over the world usually begin their mornings by eating breakfast. Many help with family chores, and most get ready for school by washing, brushing their teeth, and getting dressed.

Depending on where they live, children make the trip to school in different ways. Some walk while others ride a train, ride a bus, or go in a car.

School is very important for children around the world. Children in America learn about children in other countries while they are learning about us. Schools differ in what they look like and in the availability of resources for learning.

Children throughout the world find enjoyment in playing. Some create their own games and make their own toys, while others have lots of opportunities to use technology and engage in activities that involve expensive play equipment.

Children around the world share their lives with their families, friends, and others who live in their communities. They help out in a variety of ways: taking care of animals, cleaning their rooms, picking up toys, folding laundry, setting the table, caring for younger brothers and sisters, preparing meals, and so on.

Every place in the world has special foods. Families have different ways of cooking and eating the foods. Some families have lots of choice in the foods that they eat, while others eat the same foods almost every day. Some children have access to desserts daily while for others, a sweet is available only on special occasions.

Children everywhere go to bed. The types of beds they sleep in and the bedtime practices vary, but at night children everywhere rest their bodies and minds.

[At the conclusion of the story, revisit their initial responses to the question. Then, as a class, make a chart comparing the lives of children in other parts of the world and children in your classroom.]

LIKENESSES IN CHILDREN'S LIVES	DIFFERENCES IN CHILDREN'S LIVES
Children everywhere have the same basic needs: food, shelter, clothing.	Children eat different foods, live in different kinds of homes, and often on special occasions wear different kinds of clothing.
Children all over the world enjoy playing.	Some children do not have toys, so they play with sticks, stones, old bicycle wheels, etc.
Children all over the world go to school.	Children read and write at school in different languages.

Activity

Describe the activities of a child from another part of the world using the information found in *Wake Up, World*. (Summaries follow.) Select countries and cultures considering the demographics of your class, places that your students have been exposed to in literature, places in the news, and so on. Show a picture of the child. Have each table discuss where the child might live, what his or her cultural heritage might be, and what could be said about his or her family's available resources. During the interactive discussion, reiterate that differences are often due to culture, geographic conditions, economic resources, personal choices, and other factors.

India This child helps his mother make flat bread called *chapattis*, outside the kitchen. He also helps his father with house repairs. His own job is feeding and milking the goats every day. He walks to school in a nearby village. The walk is very hot and dusty and most of the children go barefoot. He loves art class. He also loves soccer.

France This child speaks French. She also learns English at school. Often she rides her bicycle to a nearby bakery early in the morning to pick up a long loaf of crusty white bread called a *baguette* for her family. She learns a lot about vineyards and wine by listening to her family talk about the weather, seasons, and prices they can get for grapes. Her favorite sports are cycling and soccer.

Brazil This child sleeps in a hammock. When she awakens, she has a bucket shower every morning. After her shower she has breakfast, which consists of coffee mixed with manioc flour. She feels lucky that she can go to school. Not every village has a school. Her school has few instructional materials besides a few books and a blackboard. Her school subjects include reading, writing, math, and geography. She loves to play soccer.

Vietnam This child lives in a very small apartment with his family. He shares a bed with his brother, mother, and father. The family sleeps, eats, and watches television all in the same room. He also has to do his homework in this room—usually as he lies on the bed. One of his jobs is to wash rice for his mother to cook with fish and vegetables for breakfast. Then he walks to school. He only attends half days because in his country there are not enough teachers or schools for all the children to go to school full time. He loves to play badminton and soccer.

Village in Ghana This child lives in the country. He usually sleeps on a mat, which he shares with other family members. When it's hot the family sleeps outside. Often he gets up early with his father to let the animals out of their walled yard to graze in the open during the day. He washes in the bucket of water he has carried from the well, then gets dressed in shorts and a shirt, eats breakfast, and walks a couple of miles to the school. One of his favorite after-school activities is playing in the dirt and making toys out of the claylike soil. After the objects dry in the sun, the children are able to play with them. The family does not have money to buy toys and there are no stores in the area where toys are sold. Soccer is another favorite activity of his.

Optional Share *To Be a Kid* by Ajmera and Ivanko. The brilliant photographs convey the idea that children everywhere have much in common, including creative play and a love for family and friends.

Summarize

- Children around the world participate in many of the same activities (e.g., eat, sleep, play, go to school, help family members, etc.).
- Children do different things or do the same things in different ways because of their cultural heritage, their location or climatic conditions, available resources, their personal choices, and so on.

Assessment

Describe an activity in the life of a child and have students give “thumbs up” if it is an activity common to the children in your classroom and “thumbs down” if it is uncommon or does not happen at all in your community. Encourage students to give reasons for their responses.

1. Thumbs up Playing soccer after school
2. Thumbs down Bathing in a wooden tub or with a bucket
3. Thumbs down Herding, feeding, and milking goats or cows before going off to school
4. Thumbs down Gathering firewood for mother to use when she cooks dinner over the wood-burning stove
5. Thumbs down Making your own toys out of sand, mud, water, pieces of wood, or recycled parts of old bicycles or cars
6. Thumbs up Bathing in a bathtub or taking a shower
7. Thumbs up or down Riding a bus, a train, or a car to school
8. Thumbs up Playing basketball after school
9. Thumbs up or down Bicycling to a nearby bakery to pick up a loaf of bread for breakfast
10. Thumbs down Helping mother wash clothes at the river
11. Thumbs up or down Learning English as well as another language at school
12. Thumbs down Going to bed in a hammock
13. Thumbs down Walking barefoot on dirt roads to get to school
14. Thumbs down Watching your father shave outside using a small bucket of water from the river

Home Assignment

Encourage the students to share with their parents some of the information they have learned about children’s activities around the world. Then as a family, they should select a place in the world they would like to investigate in order to learn more about the typical activities of a child there. Encourage them to use the Internet and other library sources to gather data. Students should be prepared to share the information at an upcoming class session.

Dear Parents,

Your child has been learning that children around the world participate in many of the same activities (e.g., eat, sleep, play, go to school, help family members, etc.); however, they may do these things in different ways based on their cultural heritage, geographic location or climatic conditions, their family’s available resources, and their personal choices.

We encourage you as a family to select a place in the world to investigate. Use encyclopedias, books, videos, and/or the Internet to learn more about the activities of a child in that place, noting similarities with and differences from children in our community. The information will be shared during an upcoming social studies lesson. Thank you!

Sincerely,

FIGURE 5 Model Letter to Parents