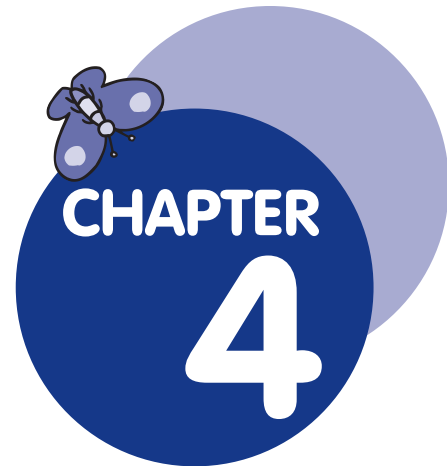


# Integrating Language Arts Across the Curriculum



The language arts are tools that help children explore all other areas of the elementary curriculum. When their teachers integrate reading, writing, listening, viewing, speaking, and visual representation throughout that curriculum, children learn to apply the language arts in all areas of their learning. In a real sense, as students learn concepts in social studies or science, for example, they are also practicing one or more of their language skills.



## Anticipation Statements

Complete this exercise before reading Chapter 4.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Circle your answer. Be prepared to discuss questions in blue.

1. Integration of the language arts throughout the subject areas promotes higher-level thinking skills and personal connections.	Agree	Disagree
2. <i>Literature-based</i> units are broader in focus than <i>integrated</i> units of study.	Agree	Disagree
3. Teachers need not completely examine all children's books/print resources before their use in integrated units.	Agree	Disagree
4. Social studies and science are the most common subjects used as a unifying element in a thematic unit.	Agree	Disagree
5. Primary sources are a valuable tool in making learning more interesting and accessible to students.	Agree	Disagree
6. Community resources help students connect their lives to other people and the world.	Agree	Disagree
7. Students should have limited input to theme topics and activities because integrated units require careful correlation with standards and curriculum guidelines.	Agree	Disagree
8. An initiating activity in an integrated unit stimulates student interest and piques curiosity in inquiry topics.	Agree	Disagree
9. Thematic units are carefully preplanned by teacher well in advance of implementation.	Agree	Disagree
10. Culminating activities for integrated units should include pencil-and-paper tests, essays, and formal research projects.	Agree	Disagree



## Integration: Definition, Principles, and Benefits

**Integration of language arts** means teaching listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and visual representation while teaching in the content areas of social studies, mathematics, science, music, and the arts.

Promoting language across the curriculum is based on three principles, according to Bullock (1975): The means to learn is one function of language, all genuine learning is based on discovery, and the best way to learn is using language arts for that discovery.

There are several benefits that occur when language arts are included in content area instruction. First, students are enabled through their language abilities to discuss and write

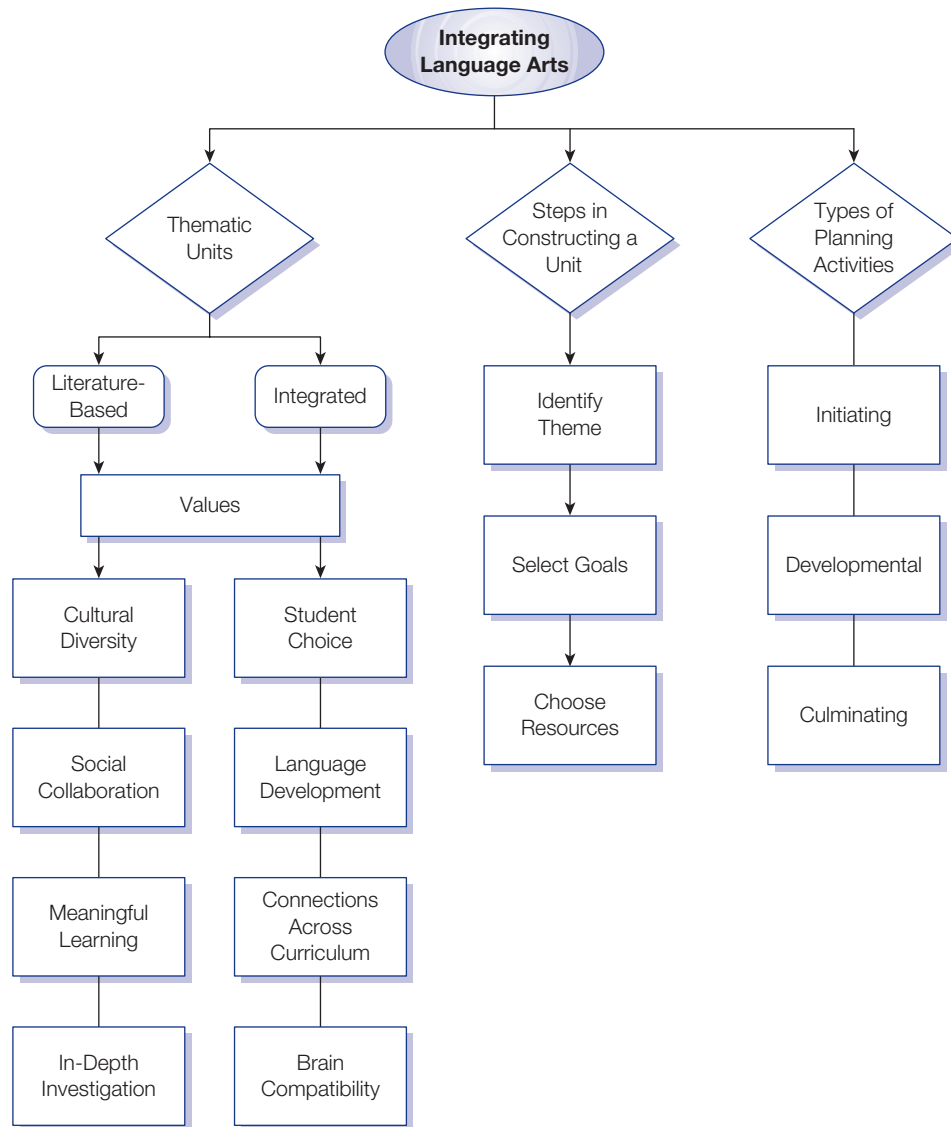
about concepts and ideas discovered in content areas (Shanahan, 1996). Teachers encourage such discovery together with the application of new knowledge to present-day situations. Second, integration encourages content area lessons to be more student-centered, departing from the usual teacher- and test-centered classroom. Britton (1970) synthesized the theories of both Vygotsky and Bruner (discussed earlier in this book) and urged schools to promote learners' inclination to use reading, writing, and oral language skills for real-life purposes.

Third, an integrated school day in which students participate more intensely and therefore develop deeper background knowledge about topics enables them to incorporate content information into their own lives. Textbooks cannot generally serve that purpose because their subject range is necessarily broad and does not allow for in-depth coverage of most topics. Furthermore, allowing English Language Learners (ELLs) and less able students to read children's literature and trade books (defined as any nontextbook books, including teaching materials devoted to particular topics) for content area instruction helps raise their self-esteem because the readability levels are often lower and the books more captivating and understandable (Caswell & Duke, 1998). Students consider trade books to be more informative, relevant, and enjoyable than textbooks.

## Applicable IRA/NCTE Standards

- Standard 1** Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
- Standard 2** Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
- Standard 7** Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
- Standard 8** Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
- Standard 11** Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
- Standard 12** Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

**SOURCE:** *Standards for the English Language Arts*, by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Copyright 1996 by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission. <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>



A Graphic Summary of the Contents of This Chapter

Finally, allowing children, especially boys, to read and write in areas of special interest as found in nonfiction content books enhances language arts skills and increases their knowledge of the subject matter.

Fourth, integration of content area topics and language arts instruction enables a focus on major ideas about our “human condition” (Bruner, 1998). This focus reduces teachers’ frustration over attempts to cover too many topics in too short a period of time. Intense concentration on a single topic can truly affect literacy skills of students and increase their higher-level thinking, as one hopes will occur in Miss O’Connell’s first grade when she introduces a unit on space in Vignette 4.1.

## VIGNETTE 4.1 Language Arts in Space



Each year Miss O'Connell anticipated introducing her first-grade students to the wonders of the universe. The children already possessed a natural curiosity about the sun, moon, and stars and always enjoyed the science unit on the solar system.

And she noticed that the students' enthusiasm for the material extended beyond the lessons she prepared. Many of the children also wrote in their journals about walking on the moon, drew pictures of themselves in space suits, or selected books on related subjects during free reading at the library. This year, Miss O'Connell planned to capitalize on their interest and intentionally incorporate language arts activities into the science curriculum.

In previous years she began by listing the planets in order and teaching a mnemonic device to help the children remember the lineup. Although she still wanted the students to absorb this information, she decided to emphasize the attributes of the various planets—instead of just their distance from the sun—at the beginning of this new unit. Friday afternoon she stayed late to finish final preparations for the first activity.

As the children arrived Monday morning, they were delighted to find the desks rearranged into 10 small groups around the room. Large color posters of the sun, the moon, and each of the eight planets perched near each cluster of desks, and for several minutes Miss O'Connell allowed the children to examine each picture. The students especially enjoyed the photographs of Saturn's rings, Jupiter's Great Red Spot, and the large canyon cracking the surface of Mars.

As the children found their seats, Miss O'Connell introduced the new unit.

"Today we're starting a study of space," she said. "To start, look at the poster by your desk and sound out the big word at the bottom."

The children again inspected the large images and she heard little voices reading the names of the planets. James raised his hand.

"Our poster is the moon, but the moon isn't a planet. I know because my big brother told me all the planets," he said proudly.

"You're right, James," Miss O'Connell answered. "We will study the planets, but space holds a lot more than that! We'll also talk about the moon, the sun, and stars."

"And black holes?" asked Clay. "They're awesome."

Miss O'Connell smiled—Clay must have an older sibling sharing advanced information as well.

"Clay, there's a book about black holes on our bookshelves—maybe you can check it out during silent reading." He nodded and she continued.

"Next to the big photographs near your desks, you should also see another poster listing three facts. I'd like you to read these sentences to the class. James, let's start with your group—please share some information about the moon."

To ensure a positive read-aloud experience and to maximize comprehension, Miss O'Connell had intentionally written each group of sentences at a first-grade level; she planned to introduce new vocabulary in later lessons. James and the other members of his group slowly took turns reading aloud the three facts from their poster.

“Great job!” she said when they finished. She quickly reviewed the information. “Our moon group taught us it doesn’t rain on the moon, the moon is smaller than Earth, and the moon is shaped like what?”

“An egg!” said Sanjeev.

“Right,” she said. “Okay sun group, your turn.”

One at a time she led each group in reading the new information to the class. The simple exercise not only provided excellent practice for the beginning readers but also reinforced good listening skills.

“We’ve learned so many interesting things today,” Miss O’Connell said after all the groups finished. “And we’re just getting started! Tomorrow we’ll find out more.”

“Can we still have the pictures?” Rachael asked.

“Yes, we’ll keep the posters in the room and I’ll give you more time to look at them,” Miss O’Connell replied, pleased at their interest in the images. “Right now I want you to write about your group’s planet—or sun, or moon,” she added, catching James’s eye. “You may write a poem, or a story, or your favorite thing you learned. Take a few minutes to think and then work quietly.”

As the students bent over their desks, Miss O’Connell evaluated her progress so far. Combining science content with language arts skills was new for her, but she had worked hard to incorporate reading, writing, viewing, listening, and speaking into the first day. In the coming week she would continue to include various techniques while emphasizing several of the skills in more depth.

For now, she looked forward to reading the finished products from this writing assignment and gauging the children’s comprehension. Like previous years’ classes, they already demonstrated a high level of interest in the subject matter—new opportunities for self-expression with language would only help them learn more.

Fifth, integration is a process that occurs within the learners themselves and is not something that teachers can plan and implement (Block, 2001). When curriculum units begin with children’s interests and are instigated by their concern about real-world problems, students can recognize the connections between themselves, the world, and reading and writing.

Sixth and last, with integration comes students’ increased understanding of themselves and their place in the world. As students gain the skills needed to be successful learners, their abilities in the language arts develop simultaneously with their gains in content areas. As a result, they become able to function as contributing members of society, according to Harvey (1998), with decision-making skills and social attributes that benefit not only themselves but also the classroom community and society in general.

## Thematic Units: Overview

A useful method for integrating the language arts is through thematic units. While authorities differ as to the names and/or number of such units, this book identifies two of them: **literature-based units** (or intradisciplinary units) and **integrated units** (or interdisciplinary units). The first has a



An integrated unit on physical science can include reading biographies of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Edison and applying the principles they discovered to students' own experiments.

narrower focus than the second as it integrates the language arts during a study of one author (e.g., William Steig or Patricia MacLachlan) or a particular literary genre (e.g., historical fiction or modern fantasy), but it does not directly include other curricular areas. An integrated unit, on the other hand, does include most or all of the curricular areas centered about a unifying theme (e.g., The Ocean or Ancient Egypt) and integrates more than just the language arts.

There are numerous values to using thematic units, as they encourage the following:

- *An understanding of cultural diversity:* Students from different backgrounds learn to appreciate each other's traits as they join together on projects and activities.
- *Social collaboration:* Students and teacher work together to develop and implement the units, accepting differences of opinion.



For material related to this concept, go to Video Clip 4.1 on the Student Resource CD bound into the back of your textbook.

- *Meaningful learning of issues and skills:* Issues of personal and social significance are more useful and relevant than practicing skills in isolation.
- *In-depth investigation:* Students are given both time and opportunity to pursue subject areas of special interest.
- *Choice:* Instead of whole-class assignments, students may opt to investigate projects that interest them personally and to do so in ways and with others who have similar outlooks.
- *Language development:* Students use all language forms purposefully in their investigations as language is integrated in the content areas.
- *Connections across the curriculum:* Students become aware of the need to move across curricular boundaries to solve problems.
- *Brain compatibility:* The more that knowledge is unified, the better the brain functions as it processes information effectively through patterns and connections (Roe & Ross, 2006).

Children's literature is the core component in the development of any thematic unit. By becoming knowledgeable about both the grade-level curriculum and quality children's books, teachers can learn to match literature to the content areas. They can do so by (a) making certain that books with a wide variety of reading levels are available as resources for all children; (b) matching books with individual student inquiries and interests; (c) connecting literature to reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visual representation activities in the content areas; (d) choosing related read-alouds that describe a common experience and focus on the language of a particular unit; and (e) introducing new genres for reading in the content areas.

As mentioned earlier, content area teaching and learning demand the use of children's literature and trade books primarily because textbooks treat many topics in a superficial manner (Temple, Martinez, Yokota, & Naylor, 2002). Quality books, on the other hand, including trade books, engage child readers and open up new perspectives to keep them learning as well.

Finally, the most important characteristic of thematic teaching is that it helps children make sense of their world (Mitchell & David, 1992). It demands that teachers become fully aware of their students' needs and interests. Teachers can list possible themes that children would enjoy exploring, as suggested from the following sources: age-appropriate knowledge, themes defined by state or district standards, and community or culturally related themes. Furthermore, thematic teaching also demands that teachers know themselves—their own interests and experiences and their knowledge about the subject matter. Such information will assist them in developing activities based on their strengths. It will also alert them to the need to learn more about a theme before teaching it.

## Constructing a Thematic Unit

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Whether it is a literature-based unit or an integrated unit, there are general steps involved in constructing a thematic unit. Although there is some overlap among these steps and some back-and-forth actions among them, it is wise to consider each step carefully, as third-grade teacher Mrs. Reid does in Vignette 4.2, before finally embarking on a unit that may take a month or longer to teach.



## VIGNETTE 4.2 Healthy Eating Across the Curriculum

Mrs. Reid sighed as she stared at the blank sheet of notebook paper. Already today she'd cleaned out two closets and washed a sink full of dishes. Her house looked wonderful, but it was time to stop procrastinating and start planning the next unit for her third-grade class.

She knew her students retained more of the material when a theme integrated the main ideas across several subject areas. But even after ten years as an elementary school teacher, she still found the planning process a little overwhelming.

Fortunately, she'd already completed the first task—selecting a theme. Last week as she walked through the cafeteria at lunch time, she'd been appalled to see many of the students eating nothing but French fries, candy bars, and other snacks.

“Shouldn't you eat some fruits and vegetables with your lunch?” she asked one of the children.

“I have ketchup on my hot dog,” he replied, then resumed munching.

Mrs. Reid shook her head ruefully at the memory. She knew the importance of eating for health and worried that her young students were establishing bad habits. When she realized the third-grade health curriculum called for an emphasis on nutrition, it seemed the perfect time to launch a new unit.

It's still a good idea, she thought to herself. Just get to work!

After considering a few titles, Mrs. Reid settled on “Healthy Eating Choices” and began brainstorming goals for the unit. She liked to involve the students in determining some of these goals, but she retained responsibility for ensuring that the unit covered a variety of subjects and explored the theme comprehensively.

The curriculum required that students learn about vitamins, the food pyramid, and the connection between nutrition and health. Mrs. Reid jotted down these broad goals. Connecting food choices to personal health is a good start, she thought. But I'd like to include some science experiments, and I want to reference the cultural and ethnic backgrounds represented in the class. She noted these thoughts as well, beginning to feel excited about the possibilities.

Next, resource selection, she thought, turning to a fresh notebook page. She planned to research new materials at the library, but several books already on her shelves would be perfect for the unit. *Bread and Jam for Frances* (1993), about a little badger who discovers the wonderful variety of foods after limiting herself to only bread and jam, was a classic favorite. Mrs. Reid also liked *Little Pea* (2005), a charming picture book about a small pea who must eat his dinner of candy so he can have spinach for dessert. Her struggling students would enjoy the easy-to-read story during independent reading. *Gregory, the Terrible Eater* (1989) would be another great addition on the fiction side, and fun informational books like *The Monster Health Book* (2006) would teach the food groups, the importance of exercise, and more.

As the students read about food choices, she could also offer homework choices across the spectrum of language arts. Some children would enjoy creating collages of healthy foods, while the more analytical might be drawn to “pro and con” menu reviews. And of course she would ask the students to write—perhaps requiring the children to write essays describing the changes they planned to make in their own eating habits would be a positive culminating activity.

As she reviewed her resource list, Mrs. Reid also began building connections to other subjects. What a great opportunity to explore different cultures, she thought. Perhaps the students can bring homemade food—a favorite regional specialty or family recipe—to share with the class. She knew many of her students' families came from Mexico, and she looked forward to made-from-scratch guacamole and tortillas.

Mrs. Reid also remembered *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* (2005), a wonderful photographic essay detailing the eating habits of families around the globe. Although some of the text might challenge her young students, the better readers would enjoy the book as an extended or supplementary selection, and every child would benefit from examining the pictures.

*And we could cook in class!* she thought, pencil flying over the page as she captured each new thought. *I know of so many wonderful cookbooks for kids, and some lessons teach valuable science principles as well. Even a simple study of why popcorn pops or why gelatin congeals would be interesting—and delicious.*

It was coming together. She could also explore the possibility of a short field trip to a local organic farm, and her good friend Greg worked as a chef in a downtown hotel. He'd love to visit the class.

She stretched her neck and set down her pencil, pleased at the progress she'd made in just over an hour. *That wasn't so bad,* she thought. *It feels great to have so many ideas. And if even one student stops thinking of ketchup as a vegetable, it will all be worth it.*

## Identifying a Theme

Several factors must be considered when selecting a theme: students' areas of expressed interest, curriculum requirements, compatibility with state and district standards, and students' developmental needs. Kindergarten–primary children can understand concrete themes readily (e.g., a “hands-on” theme such as Growing Plants) or those that involve an abstract theme such as Friendship brought to a concrete level. Intermediate students can work well with more abstract concepts such as Water Quality in Our Community and State. At both primary and intermediate levels, it has been recommended that there be a “tension” to the theme, which encourages students to stretch their thinking and develop a deeper understanding of an abstract topic. Here are sample themes that can be explored to some degree at all elementary grade levels:

Authors and/or Illustrators

Family or Family Roots

Journeys

Growing Things

Courage

Stories in Which the Heroine Is the Problem Solver

Changes in Seasons

The Importance of Being Different

The Fun of Eating

Fantasy Versus Reality

Typically, the unifying framework is provided by social studies or science. When planning thematic units, the teacher should consider both language arts standards and content area standards. He or she should also wisely consider a theme that is broad enough to incorporate a varied group of books, resources, and activities but not so broad that the children miss the connections that exist among areas to be studied. The theme may even be selected with the help of the students themselves to give them a sense of ownership. Finally, it should challenge them to go beyond their present knowledge levels (Roe & Ross, 2006).

## Selecting Unit Goals

Once again, the standards mandated by the state board of education, the local school district, and (in some cases) federal legislation—both language arts standards and content area standards—must play a determining role in the choice of goals for a thematic unit. Teachers must be aware of the major concepts and generalizations that students at a particular grade level should acquire. They must also consider their knowledge of the students (in this particular classroom) and their own knowledge of language arts skills and concepts and of the skills and concepts in other subject matter areas required in the district curriculum.

Once a theme has been selected, some teachers shrewdly assess their students' prior knowledge by using the K-W-L procedure (What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I Have Learned) and helping the class complete the first two columns. It becomes easier to plan the unit when teachers are familiar with the levels of understanding that a class already has (or is interested in acquiring) in a subject.

## Choosing Resources

One of the objectives of thematic learning is to provide students with experiences with a broad range of learning resources (Pappas, Kiefer, & Levstik, 2006). Such a broad range is particularly significant for exploring varied cultural perspectives, which are represented in books readily available today.

Therefore, a critical aspect of constructing a thematic unit is selecting and locating resources needed for that unit. That responsibility lies with the teacher and must be completed before he or she develops instructional activities and lessons from one of several major types of resources.

*Printed resources* rank first, especially children's literature, and guidelines for selecting such literature include (1) the use of a variety of genres (e.g., picture books, nonfiction informational books, nonfiction biographies, historical fiction, realistic fiction); (2) the inclusion of books at different levels of difficulty or readability; (3) the representation of students' interests in the topics within the overall theme or the writings of favorite authors or illustrators; and (4) the avoidance of stereotyping in illustrations and texts to promote cultural authenticity.

Next, the teacher must actually read the selected books (or, in the case of books for intermediate grades, skim them) and carefully consider whether they match the theme and unit goals. The teacher should also separate them, according to Templeton (1997), into the following three categories:

1. Core selections for the entire class, usually in a read-aloud format; for example, Spare's *The Sign of the Beaver* (1983), which students can discuss intensively in a unit about Colonial America
2. Extended selections for some children; for a unit on the theme of the Civil War, students can discuss in small groups Cosner's *The Underground Railroad* (1991)
3. Recreational or motivational selections for individual readers during sustained silent reading; for example, Lee's *Landed* (2006), which concerns immigration in the early 20th century

Children's literature that promotes student knowledge of the content areas of mathematics, science, and social studies is shown in Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, respectively. Children's literature that adds to student appreciation of the fine arts is listed in Figure 4.4.

All titles appear in one or more of the following reference books: Barr and Gillespie's *Best Books for Children* (2006), McClure and Kristo's *Adventuring With Books* (2002), and *Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People: 2007* (2007). Experienced teachers try to include both fiction and nonfiction books in a thematic unit, and therefore both kinds are included in Figures 4.1 through 4.4.

Another consideration when collecting books for a thematic unit is the *purpose* for which certain materials will be used. Teachers should ask themselves the following questions when selecting materials:

- Are they materials suitable for read-alouds? These include books that students would not read for themselves (e.g., poetry) that apply to all grade levels as well as books that are developmentally appropriate for only certain grade levels. Read-alouds may provoke questions about writing styles or stimulate discussions about sensitive and important issues; such queries and deliberation will affect the unit under study, making it more meaningful to this particular group of students.
- Are they materials suitable for group activities? Such books not only have literary qualities but are appropriate for literature circle groups or other small group work that does not demand direct instruction. Books like O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (1990) or Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (2004) encourage reading that allows students to reflect beyond the book narrative itself and thereby develop their critical thinking skills.
- Are they materials suitable for personal exploration? As teachers become familiar with the special interests of individual students, they should include books that some children will enjoy reading simply for personal pleasure. They may read these during sustained silent reading time or other times when they have completed their regular assignments satisfactorily and are waiting for their peers to finish as well (Pappas et al., 2006).

**Figure 4.1** Recent Children's Literature That Promotes Student Knowledge of Mathematics

### Counting and Number Operations

- Anderson, L. (2000). *Tea for Ten*. R&S Books.
- Capucilli, A. (2001). *Mrs. McTats and Her Houseful of Cats*. McElderry.
- Cuyler, M. (2000). *100th Day Worries*. Simon & Schuster.
- Guettier, B. (1999). *The Father Who Had 10 Children*. Dial.
- Hoban, T. (1999). *Let's Count*. Greenwillow.
- MacDonald, S. (2000). *Look Whoooo's Counting*. Scholastic.
- Tang, G. (2001). *The Grapes of Math: Mind-Stretching Math Riddles*. Scholastic.
- Wells, R. (2000). *Emily's First 100 Days of School*. Hyperion.

### Geometry and Algebra

- Demi. (1997). *One Grain of Rice: A Mathematical Folktale*. Scholastic.
- Fleischman, P. (2000). *Lost! A Story in String*. Henry Holt.
- Franco, B. (1999). *Grandpa's Quilt*. Children's Press.
- Grover, M. (1996). *Circles and Squares Everywhere*. Harcourt.

- Harris, T. (2000). *Pattern Fish*. Millbrook.
- Hoban, T. (2000). *Cubes, Cones, Cylinders & Spheres*. Greenwillow.
- Murphy, S. (1996). *Too Many Kangaroo Things to Do*. HarperCollins.

### Measurement

- Axelrod, A. (1997). *Pigs in the Pantry: Fun With Math and Cooking*. Simon & Schuster.
- Maestro, B. (1999). *The Story of Clocks and Calendars: Making a Millennium*. HarperCollins.
- McMillan, B. (1996). *Jelly Beans for Sale*. Scholastic.
- Mollel, T. (1999). *My Rows and Piles of Coins*. Clarion.
- Murphy, S. J. (1996). *The Best Bug Parade*. Harper Trophy.
- Nagda, A., & Bickel, C. (2000). *Tiger Math: Learning to Graph From a Baby Tiger*. Henry Holt.

**Figure 4.2** Recent Children's Literature That Promotes Student Knowledge of Science

### Earth Sciences

- Bortz, A. & Bortz, F. (2001). *Collision Course!* Millbrook.
- Gans, R. (1997). *Let's Go Rock Collecting*. HarperCollins.
- Lauber, P. (1996). *You're Aboard Spaceship Earth*. HarperCollins.
- Ross, M. (2001). *Earth Cycles*. Millbrook.
- Steele, P. (1998). *Rocking and Rolling*. Candlewick.
- Sutherland, L. (2000). *Earthquakes and Volcanoes*. Reader's Digest.
- Vogel, C. (2000). *Nature's Fury*. Scholastic.

### Life Sciences

- Batten, M. (2000). *The Winking Blinking Sea*. Millbrook.
- Cerullo, M. (2000). *The Truth About Great White Sharks*. Chronicle.
- George, J. C. (2000). *How to Talk to Your Cat*. HarperCollins.
- George, T. (2000). *Jellies: The Life of Jellyfish*. Millbrook.
- Goodall, J. (2001). *The Chimpanzees I Love*. Scholastic.
- Markle, S. (2001). *Growing Up Wild: Wolves*. Atheneum.
- Swinbourne, S. (2001). *Bobcat: America's Cat*. Boyds Mills.
- Webb, S. (2000). *My Season With Penguins: An Antarctic Journal*. Houghton Mifflin.

### Physical Sciences

- Branley, L. (1996). *Day Light, Night Light: Where Light Comes From*. HarperCollins.
- Challoner, J. (1997). *Floating and Sinking*. Steck-Vaughn.
- Fowler, A. (1997). *Energy From the Sun*. Children's Press.

### Health Sciences

- Darling, K. (2000). *There's a Zoo on You*. Millbrook.
- Ganeri, A. (1997). *Funny Bones and Other Body Parts*. Scholastic.
- Simon, S. (1997). *The Brain: Our Nervous System*. Morrow.

**Figure 4.3** Recent Children's Literature That Promotes Student Knowledge of Social Studies

### U.S. Biography

- Calenza, A. (2006). *Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue*. Charlesbridge.
- Giblin, J. (2006). *The Amazing Life of Benjamin Franklin*. Tandem Library.
- Laskey, K. (2006). *John Muir: America's First Environmentalist*. Candlewick.
- Parr, A. (2006). *Gordon Parks: No Excuses*. Pelican Publish.
- Rodriguez, R. (2006). *Through Georgia's Eyes*. Henry Holt.
- Wong, L. (2006). *Good Fortune: My Journey to Gold Mountain*. Peachtree.

### U.S. History and Culture

- Avi. (2001). *Prairie School*. HarperCollins.
- Curlee, L. (2000). *Liberty*. Atheneum.
- Freedman, R. (2000). *Give Me Liberty! The Story of the Declaration of Independence*. Holiday House.
- Haskins, J., & Benson, K. (1999). *Bound for America: The Forced Migration of Africans to the New World*. Harper.

### U. S. Historical Fiction

- Borden, L. (2006). *Across the Blue Pacific: A World War II Story*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Cotton, C. (2006). *Abbie in Stitches*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Murphy, J. (2006). *Desperate Journey*. Scholastic.
- Spooner, M. (2001). *Daniel's Walk*. Henry Holt.

### World History and Culture

- Ancona, G. (1999). *Carnaval*. Harcourt.
- Kurlansky, M. (2001). *The Cod's Tale*. Putnam.
- Levine, E. (2000). *Darkness Over Denmark: The Danish Resistance and the Rescue of the Jews*. Holiday House.
- McMahon, P. (1999). *One Belfast Boy*. Houghton Mifflin.

**Figure 4.4** Recent Children's Literature That Promotes Student Knowledge of the Fine Arts

### Music and Musicians

- Austin, P. (2001). *The Cat Who Loved Mozart*. Holiday House.
- Cutler, J. (1999). *The Cello of Mr. O*. Dutton.
- George-Warner, H. (2001). *Shake, Rattle, and Roll: The Founders of Rock and Roll*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Koscielniak, B. (2000). *The Story of the Incredible Orchestra: An Introduction to Musical Instruments and the Symphony Orchestra*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Weatherford, C. (2000). *The Sound That Jazz Makes*. Walker.

### Art and Artists

- Brenner, B. (1999). *The Boy Who Loved to Draw: Benjamin West*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Browne, A. (2000). *Willy's Pictures*. Candlewick.
- Christelow, E. (1999). *What Do Illustrators Do?* Clarion.

- Elleman, B. (1999). *Tomie dePaola: His Art and His Stories*. Putnam.
- Emberley, E. (2000). *Ed Emberley's Fingerprint Drawing Book*. Little, Brown.
- Gherman, B. (2000). *Norman Rockwell: Storyteller With a Brush*. Atheneum.
- Greenberg, J., & Jordan, S. (2001). *Vincent van Gogh: Portrait of an Artist*. Delacorte.
- Marciano, J. (1999). *Bemelmans: The Life and Art of Madeline's Creator*. Viking.

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- Marshall, J. (1999). *Swine Lake*. HarperCollins.
- McMahon, P. (2000). *Dancing Wheels*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Tallchief, M., & Wells, R. (1999). *Tallchief: America's Prima Ballerina*. Viking.

### Drama and Dramatists

- Coville, B. (1997). *William Shakespeare's Macbeth*. Dial.
- Ganeri, A. (1999). *Young Person's Guide to Shakespeare*. Dial.

- Are there primary source materials suitable for supplementing other printed resources? Newspapers, magazines, maps, ledgers, and other materials that offer firsthand information about the community (e.g., aerial photographs) or about real persons who lived in other times (e.g., journals they kept) are not always easy to obtain. However, such primary sources help make the thematic unit come to life, especially for children who may not otherwise be interested in the core subject matter.

*Technological resources* such as the Internet are now accessible in most elementary schools. They help students gather information and also provide opportunities for them to collaborate with other students both locally and in other parts of the country/world. For students in preK through Grade 12, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed basic standards of technology literacy that cover (a) the use of basic operations and concepts; (b) the use of tools for productivity, communication, research, and problem solving; and (c) the understanding of social issues relating to the use of technology. Appendix A lists software titles that present elementary students with concepts and information relevant to thematic units.

*Hands-on resources* consist of both natural objects and objects such as tools and machinery that are products of human culture. Human-made artifacts vary from Indian arrowheads and ceremonial masks to old watches and household items. They are valuable for use in certain units because they help students speculate and hypothesize about how different peoples live today and how they lived in the past.

*Community resources* are readily available to connect the classroom to people, places, and events in the community. There are museums of various types as well as farms, zoos, aquariums, and even cemeteries that are resources for thematic units and can be reached by short walking trips or longer field trips, depending on district resources. Teachers should also realize that the children themselves are a good resource, offering firsthand information on such topics as national parks or the desert to which they have traveled during school breaks. Some parents too may be willing to share their expertise on cultural traditions while others may be willing to discuss their business or professional careers.

*The arts as resources* can and should be incorporated into thematic teaching. These include the fine arts as listed in Figure 4.4 as well as architecture, crafts, television, and film, among others. They provide sources of information about the past and the present in American culture and cultures around the world. The arts are an especially valuable resource for at-risk students and English Language Learners as they embody all six of the language arts in an engaging and exciting manner.

## Planning Instructional Activities

Depending on the maturity of the class and the students' prior knowledge, the teacher should involve the children in each step of the thematic unit from selecting the theme to implementing it. In any case, the teacher should especially ask them to brainstorm possible activities and then add these to his or her own list to provide a well-rounded unit (Brazee & Capelluti, 1995). They may be whole-class, small-group, or individual activities.

Wiseman and colleagues (2005) warn, however, that thematic instruction must be more than a series of activities; instead it must make connections between the language arts and other subjects. Unless activities are centered around critical concepts/beliefs and connected by standards, they are “nothing more than a loosely connected series of ideas” (p. 48).

Three different types of activities are contained in the typical thematic unit:

1. *Initiating* activities at the start of the unit that promote interest in the theme and set goals for the unit. Here are two examples:
  - a. Thematic unit on insects and spiders for grade levels preK–3 could be initiated as follows: The teacher brings in several clear jars (with small holes in the lids) that each contain an insect or a nonpoisonous spider for the students to observe. Each jar is placed on a table with a magnifying glass. Children observe the insect or spider and write or tell everything they can find out about the creature.
  - b. Thematic unit on humpback whales for Grades 2–5 could be initiated as follows: The teacher reads aloud Tokuda and Hall's *Humphrey, the Lost Whale: A True Story* (Heian, 1992) or shows the video with the same title. Then she or he arouses curiosity by asking such questions as “How would a whale get stranded?” and “Can you find out on a map where Humphrey was stranded?” Finally, the children are told that they will be learning much more about humpback whales (Roe & Ross, 2006).
2. *Developmental* activities running throughout the unit, which involve the bulk of the lessons that provide the actual instruction concerned with the theme. Some examples from a thematic unit on American pioneers for Grades 4–8 are as follows:
  - a. The teacher provides individual maps of the United States so that students can mark the routes of early pioneers (e.g., Oregon Trail), identifying natural hazards for each route and computing the mileage.
  - b. The children learn folksongs and ballads sung during the pioneer period such as “Sweet Betsy From Pike,” and the teacher makes an audio recording of their musical efforts.
  - c. The students identify problems of frontier life (e.g., preserving food) and determine solutions.
  - d. The teacher helps form literature circles that will read different Wilder's *Little House* books; later, members of each circle will choose a scene to dramatize in front of their classmates.
  - e. The students create art projects such as models of covered wagons and murals of pioneer villages.





A volunteer aide can help young children in an integrated unit on growing plants by helping them draw or visually represent the plants they are studying.

- f. The teacher helps the children plan a menu and prepare the food for a typical pioneer lunch (e.g., baked beans, dried apples, soup, and other foods whose ingredients can be purchased at a local market today) and then enjoys the meal with the class (Roe & Ross, 2006).
3. *Culminating* activities that occur near the conclusion of the unit as students review their new-found knowledge and put that learning into action. Two examples from the thematic unit on insects and spiders for Grades preK–3 (discussed under initiating activities) are as follows:
  - a. Children each create an imaginary insect or spider, naming it, describing it, and labeling its parts. All are encouraged to write stories about their creatures that will be published and placed in a class book.
  - b. The teacher helps each child write and illustrate one page in a class dictionary of Insects and Spiders, alphabetizing the pages and publishing it as a reference book (Roe & Ross, 2006).

In all grades, field trips often are the culminating activity in a unit. In the intermediate grades, however, teachers may also assign action projects on aspects of the unit that allow students to apply their learning to real-life situations (e.g., writing letters to the editor of the school or local newspaper expressing their concern about the growing problem of litter in the public parks and how it could be resolved).

Teachers contemplating the construction of a thematic unit, especially the interdisciplinary kind, may wish to review the outline of a sample unit shown in Figure 4.5. They should recall, however, that units come with varied outlines and headings; *no two units are ever alike* even if they are prepared for the same grade level and the same theme. The major difference among them is always the intended audience of learners.

**Figure 4.5** Outline of a Sample Thematic Unit

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Cross-Curriculum Connections</b>
<b>Grade Levels</b>	Science
<b>Duration</b>	Social studies
<b>Goals</b>	Math
Standards: State-mandated, etc.	Literature
Standards: Language arts	Music
Standards: Content areas	Visual and performing arts
Concepts in content areas	Health
<b>Resources and Materials</b>	Physical education
Printed resources: Trade books	<b>Instructional Activities</b>
Printed resources: Children's literature	Initiating
Technological resources: Internet, etc.	Developmental
Hands-on resources: Artifacts, etc.	Teacher-directed
The arts: Graphic, decorative, etc.	Student-directed
Community resources	Culminating
	<b>Evaluation</b>

## Implementing a Thematic Unit



For material related to this concept, go to Video Clip 4.2 on the Student Resource CD bound into the back of your textbook.

The teacher may present the children with a carefully preplanned unit or else choose to involve them from the beginning in preparing that unit. That decision will depend mainly both on the maturity of the class and the expected length of the unit. In either instance, since a thematic unit has a flexible framework, each child should have the opportunity to offer ideas and make choices regarding his or her role in the evolution of the unit. The teacher, however, must never lose sight of the fact that the integration of content material from across the curriculum takes exceptional and continuous planning since *thematic units do not match textbook chapters from subject areas*.

One useful approach to involving students from Pappas and colleagues (2006) concerns agreements made between the teacher and each student, whereby both are able to track the child's progress in meeting the responsibilities involved in completing certain tasks. While initial expectations may be general, soon specific assignments with dates must be clearly outlined. Only in that way will the children be able to participate in a wide variety of activities that use language across the curriculum. At that point, agreements may have to be renegotiated.

At the start of the unit, the teacher must decide on several activities that represent primary ways to introduce and promote the theme. Students then each decide which activity interests them and whether they wish to work independently or with a small group. Once that point has been negotiated (as the teacher recognizes the strengths and potential weaknesses of each child), he or she must furnish sufficient materials for each group so that members can explore the various activities and individually decide their top choices. Then the teacher must again renegotiate group membership to accommodate student interests and abilities (rather than reading levels) so that during the days to come children will each work productively with different classmates. Final agreements are then signed with due dates for varied assignments to promote self-monitoring by the students.

It is the teacher, however, who must still decide the pace at which the unit moves and how much time can be spent on each segment by any group. This timing will depend to a great extent on the duration of the unit (usually from one to two months), the grade level, the enthusiasm of the students, and the length of each day's lesson.

For the teacher who has developed much of the unit personally or has purchased a commercial unit, another approach is to incorporate the children's abilities and interests into each day's lesson plans while still overseeing the progress of the unit. Day-to-day lesson planning, together with weekly planning, is critically important under either approach but especially so for a commercial unit for which the class has not had much opportunity to offer input or make choices in its construction.

Some teachers prefer to immerse the class in a unit with substantial time spent every day on its implementation while others prefer a slower pace of shorter sessions three times a week. Any unit, however, should end before the children's interest dissipates, and it is a wise teacher who senses when it is time for a culminating activity for the unit finale.

A sample lesson plan incorporating the concepts introduced in this chapter appears on p. 102.

## Assessment

Integrated units provide frequent opportunities for ongoing assessment of student learning in the language arts and throughout the subject areas. Formative assessments supply teachers with important diagnostic information at the outset and during the course of a unit. Regular evaluations help teachers determine both students' background knowledge and what students have learned and assist in planning future instruction. Teachers can assess students as they engage in a variety of activities that a well-planned thematic unit contains. Students can be observed in both cooperative and individual learning tasks, permitting teachers not only to evaluate their level of understanding but also to learn about areas that may require reteaching and the strengths and weakness of the unit itself. Was the unit successful in achieving the expected learning outcomes? What modifications are needed to improve the unit and increase student learning of stated objectives?

Culminating activities such as cooperative and individual projects offer teachers a means of summative, or end-of-unit, authentic assessment. Through challenging activities, students can synthesize and demonstrate learning according to individual learning styles and interests. Teachers should provide students and parents with a clearly written rubric and/or guidelines, and all stakeholders should be notified well in advance of due dates and deadlines. However, criteria for language arts skills and standards need to remain distinct from other content area requirements. For example, in grading a science research report, distinctions should be made among oral presentation, writing, research skills, use of visual aids, and subject matter knowledge. If the culminating activity is a collaborative project, then group work performance is assessed under separate criteria.

Additionally, activities that require students to present projects to the whole class not only serve as a type of summative assessment but also provide additional learning opportunities for students. When students share with the class, they receive practice in oral language skills, experience alternate viewpoints, obtain new information, and reinforce newly acquired vocabulary and concepts. End-of-unit assessments should include a self-evaluation component that allows students to reflect on what they have learned, what questions they may still have, and areas of weakness they can improve upon in the future.

## Working With English Language Learners

Well-organized, standards-based thematic units provide all learners with comprehensive and rich learning experiences, but English Language Learners (ELLs) in particular benefit from the extra support of integrated learning. When units are carefully designed to align with the existing curriculum and include a wide variety of challenging tasks, ELLs receive increased comprehensible input across the domains and frequent practice in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and

visual representation. Interdisciplinary learning gives students the opportunity to develop background knowledge, make meaningful connections, and pursue personal interests. Within the structure of a interdisciplinary unit, ELLs are better prepared to grasp difficult concepts and vocabulary, most notably in social studies and science. Through in-depth exposure and multiple experiences, ELLs build concepts and develop literacy and higher-level thinking skills throughout the content areas.

**Beginning ELLs:** Through collaborative learning and the support of peers, beginning ELLs can experience accelerated progress in oral language acquisition and concept development. While working in positive and nonthreatening group situations, ELLs have increased opportunities to use both social and academic language. Like their English-speaking counterparts, ELLs are more likely to be motivated when learning is based on personal interests and connects to real-life situations. Basal readers, beginning-level readers, and trade books related to the topic can help students practice phonics skills in a meaningful context while enriching content area knowledge. Frequent read-alouds of quality children’s literature based on the theme scaffold ELLs’ retention of new concepts and terms. The inclusion of concrete materials, word banks, teacher modeling, and brainstorming activities helps ELLs process and understand new information.

**Early intermediate and intermediate ELLs:** Intermediate ELLs continue to benefit from collaborative and cooperative learning situations. When activities and group members are carefully selected, teachers maximize learning and foster the interdependency of individuals within the group. Teachers should continue to brainstorm, model, and use visual aids and concrete materials as integral resources. Demonstrations and hands-on activities are an excellent way to introduce ELLs to new vocabulary and concepts. For example, rather than reading about the process of erosion in a textbook, students can build mountains of sand, clay, and topsoil and pour water down the slope; students thus concretely and tangibly experience how the water alters the landscape. Additionally, when students perform the experiment with a partner or small group, ELLs receive social and academic oral language development in a meaningful context. Intermediate ELLs can draw, label, record, and begin to read simpler texts with support. In the upper grade levels, if students are required to take notes, teachers can provide ELLs with outlines or a “fill-in” template to facilitate writing and a focus on understanding of key concepts.

**Early advanced and advanced ELLs:** At the advanced levels, ELLs begin to engage in more complex tasks. Teachers can continue to provide quality and culturally relevant literature for independent reading periods. Because content areas become more rigorous and abstract at the higher grade levels, teachers can supplement ELLs’ instruction with prereading and preteaching activities in small, sheltered groups that scaffold comprehension and retention. Teachers support students in their evolving awareness of reading and writing for a purpose and enable them to practice comprehension skills with different types of texts. Although advanced ELLs are capable of completing many reading and writing tasks independently, teachers should not abandon the use of concrete examples, hands-on activities, and read-alouds because these instructional strategies motivate and benefit ALL learners in forming new concepts, meeting the linguistic demands of complicated informational texts, and making real-life connections.

## Practical Instructional Activities and Ideas

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- *Adopt-a-tree:* Teachers can have students adopt a tree on campus or at a local park. Students can sketch, measure, research, compare/contrast, and describe their palm tree, alder, or oak. Students can make leaf rubbings and compose poems.

- *Interactive bulletin boards:* For the theme under study, teachers can create a bulletin board that invites exploration and critical thinking. On it teachers can display student work; ask trivia questions; and provide challenge activities, maps, games, books, and music. The bulletin board can be part of a learning center or a place for “early finishers” to visit and investigate.
- *Magazines:* For a small investment, a teacher can subscribe to children’s magazines such as *Zoobooks*, *Ranger Rick*, *National Geographic Kids*, *Calliope*, and *Cricket* that pique student interest and provide exposure to both fictional and informational articles. Their colorful pictures, photographs, and illustrations heighten their popular appeal. Many publications are written at different “levels” to accommodate a range of reading abilities.
- *Internet Web sites:* Although teachers need to carefully review Web sites for appropriateness and educational value, many quality sites exist that will enhance learning during the course of a thematic unit. Students can watch volcanoes erupt, view an orchard of cherry blossoms in Japan, or operate a lemonade stand. Teachers can bookmark links for quick and easy access. For example, if learning about ocean life, teachers can preview and provide access to kid-friendly Web sites that contain information on topics ranging from jellyfish to the Mariana Trench.
- *Own backyard:* Field trips offer great opportunities for discovery, but unfortunately, organized excursions are not always practical or possible. Teachers can encourage students to explore their own immediate environments (e.g., backyard, school grounds, or neighborhood) for sources of scientific inquiry. Teachers can start the “I wonder . . . ?” wheels spinning by bringing in their own items or questions. For example, an odd-looking seed pod might inspire “where did this come from?” questions. Or, an everyday item such as a Red Delicious apple can be looked at through new eyes and examined for symmetry, internal structure, smell, and taste. Thus, the ordinary assumes an extraordinary status when examined through the eyes of a careful observer. Students can write descriptive paragraphs, record ideas in a science log, or complete compare/contrast activities. If space permits, teachers can provide a center for students to display their discoveries or a special “I wonder . . .” box in which to submit thoughts.
- *Beyond their own backyard:* Teachers can help students brainstorm and carry out a plan based on new learning to benefit the neighborhood or community. Ideas can be as simple as picking up litter at a local park after a lesson on ecology, or singing songs at a retirement community after a unit on Sharing or Family. Older students can begin a buddy-tutoring program with a primary class. Teachers supervise and facilitate, but project ideas should be student-centered so learners can take ownership and pride in their accomplishments that travel beyond the boundaries of their “own backyard.”
- *Music centers:* Teachers can set up a listening station with songs about the current theme. Many tapes and CDs are commercially available on a wide variety of topics from seasons to animals to the solar system, or teachers can easily create their own custom versions. Environmental music that re-creates sounds heard in nature (e.g., under the sea, in a forest) can also be a selection in the listening center or played for the whole class during quiet, independent work periods.
- *Simulations:* Teachers can have students participate in “make-believe” but realistic activities that re-create historical time periods, events, or situations. Activities might focus on stock market speculation, how a bill becomes a law, or assuming the role of an immigrant to Ellis Island or Angel Island. Similar to thematic units, simulations can range from short to long term in length and require the same extensive research and planning as an integrated unit to provide students with a successful and rich learning experience.
- *Fictional country:* Students can work individually or in groups to create a “country.” Each group/student must outline the climate, population, topography, and natural resources of a fictional country. Based on these parameters, students use critical thinking skills to address

such issues as supply/demand, food production, manufacturing, tourism, and any other factors that influence the prosperity and quality of life of a country and its people.

- *Explicit instruction in the use of trade books:* Teachers can familiarize students with the unique format of informational trade books by providing instructional activities that help students locate specific features such as the table of contents, chapter headings, glossary, charts, graphs, and bold print words. Often students are not aware that the graphic features are there to assist them in finding information or, in the case of illustrations and photos, to help in understanding and visualizing key points.



## LESSON PLAN 4.1 Artifact Box: Clues From the Past

This lesson plan is the anticipatory lesson plan in a thematic unit titled The Great Depression. The unit investigates the causes and effects of the Great Depression such as the Dust Bowl, migration, and the impact on economics and the people through the start of World War II while incorporating Hesse's work of children's literature, *Out of the Dust* (1999).

Language Arts Components: Viewing, Reading, Speaking, and Writing

Grade: 5

ELL Level: Beginning to Advanced

Topic: The Great Depression

Time Frame: 1 week

### Objectives

- Students examine a variety of objects from the Depression era (1929–1939) and make predictions about life during this time period.
- Students generate questions on what they want to find out about life and culture during the Depression.

### Materials

- Decorated box or container with pictures, maps, postcards, recipes, copies of letters/newspaper articles from the Depression era or another suitable container that will pique student interest
- Suggested objects for artifact box:



- Photographs (e.g., Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans) of Dust Bowl, migrant workers, hoboes, stock market crash; produce (fresh or play food) such as oranges, lemons, and ears of corn; war ration booklets; cookbooks; postcards from “Sunny California”; maps; copies of WPA posters or newspaper articles or sections (advertisements, want ads, cartoons); toys or reproductions; period dress (a doll or teacher can dress up); household items such as eggbeater, clothespins, food tins, and any items that reflect life during the Depression to World War II period
- *Optional:* Audiotapes or CDs (recorded accounts, both songs and interviews, are available from the Library of Congress; *American Memory Collection* as a good primary source) or a song selected from a Woody Guthrie CD such as *Dust Bowl Ballads*
- Chart paper
- Felt-tip markers

## Content Standards

### English Language Development (ELD): Listening, Speaking, Writing

- Students listen attentively to information and identify main ideas of discussions and conversation.
- Students use standard word order and grammatical forms.
- Students use drawings and write words and sentences to respond to information.

### History/Social Studies

- Students use critical thinking skills to make predictions about life in the Great Depression based on visual and written information.
- Students distinguish among past, present, and future events.
- Students work cooperatively in groups to achieve common goals.

### Language Arts: Viewing, Writing, Reading

- Students write to communicate ideas to an audience.
- Students read written text to draw conclusions/make predictions.
- Students examine artifacts and draw conclusions.

### Vocabulary

- Archaeologist
- Artifact
- Great Depression



## Open

### Engage

- Teacher (dressed in period clothing if desired) introduces and displays artifact box to whole group.

- Teacher explains to class about the artifact box while it is passed around the room for each student to examine outside only (no peeking!). Teacher asks students to define the word *artifact*. Teacher invites discussion about how *artifacts* are “clues” to people’s daily lives or a specific period of time in history. (Optional: Teacher may elect to introduce the term *primary source*).
- Teacher elicits examples from students of how a person may glean information based on simply examining object(s). Examples: items in a shopping cart, a curbside garbage can, how a student decorates a notebook or bedroom, or a fossil.

## Body

### Explore

- After the box has circulated around the classroom, teacher pulls each item out individually. Teacher asks students to first describe each object without disclosing predictions yet. This process will give all students time to form thoughtful responses and help clarify any confusion about items with which students may not be familiar, such as an old-fashioned potato masher or a photograph of people in line at a soup kitchen.
- When all of the artifacts have been unearthed and examined (or “listened to” if using audio), Teacher explains to students that now that they have observed the items, they will use these “clues” as *archaeologists* to develop hypotheses in small groups.
- Teacher assigns students to heterogeneous groups of no more than five students and instructs students that each group will record and/or illustrate its ideas on chart paper. Teacher suggests categories such as work, home, children, or school. Teacher can hold up a picture of a migrant family and ask, “What clues or story does this photograph tell you about this family?” Teacher elicits responses and discusses with students to model thoughtful and relevant responses.

### Expand

- Teacher distributes several items to each group to ensure a good variety of print, visual, and audio materials.
- Teacher circulates around the room, mediating and offering guidance as needed. However, students should be allowed freedom to explore and form hypotheses with minimal input from Teacher. Teacher’s main role during this portion is to monitor behavior and ensure that students are on task and participating.
- When students have finished recording at least one hypothesis for each item, Teacher will bring class back together to share and discuss response in whole group.

## Close

### Apply

- Teacher asks students to continue in groups and generate questions about artifacts and add it to their group’s chart paper.
- Teacher records information on a KWL (or similar) chart.
- Teacher displays charts for future reference and adds additional information later during course of unit.



- Teacher defines “depression” and explains that this is the topic of their next theme of study. Teacher adds any additional questions to K-W-L chart as needed.

### Assessment

- Teacher observes students during class discussions and group activities.
- Teacher evaluates group charts for completeness.

### Extension

- Students can create a personal artifact box.
- Students can bring in one personal artifact to share/discuss with class.

## Parents as Partners

- *Questionnaires:* At the beginning of the school year, teachers can distribute surveys and/or questionnaires asking parents (or anyone they know who is willing!) about skills, hobbies, jobs, and interests that they would be willing to share with the class. If Miguel’s aunt is a veterinary assistant or Jordan’s great-grandfather painted murals for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Depression, find a way to incorporate their skills, talents, and personal histories. Resend “pleas” for speakers, presenters, and “guest” teachers throughout the year as needed for special themes and projects. Teachers can encourage parents to participate and share their backgrounds and knowledge with the class.
- *Resources on loan:* In conjunction with the guest teachers described above, teachers can also request family members, friends, and community members to loan resources. Guest teachers can be encouraged to bring supporting concrete materials. However, since these items are most likely prized possessions, teachers need to review with students clear expectations about treatment of and respect for personal property. Items to share might include photographs, newspaper articles, cookbooks, clothing, toys, books, fossils, paintings, and any other realia that will help students visualize and connect with the topic. For example, a geologist might bring in a variety of rock samples of quartz, mica, obsidian, granite, and shale. These types of objects are tangible and sturdy, permitting curious students not just to look but also touch.
- *“Engraved” invitations:* Because thematic units stretch over longer periods of time, culminating activities give students opportunities to showcase their hard work in creative ways. Teachers can have students write invitations to family, friends, and community members to visit, view, and participate in these activities—the invitations certainly need not be “engraved,” but a personal touch encourages families to attend and directly involves students in the planning process.

- *Enrichment activity suggestions:* Teachers can provide parents at the onset of each thematic unit with a list of suggested activities that they can do together with their children, thus strengthening the “big ideas” of the unit. Activities can include going on short excursions, cooking, interviewing family members, and reading books. For example, for a unit titled The Food Pyramid and Healthy Living, teachers can prompt parents and children to read nutritional labels on favorite snack foods or cereal boxes. Teachers can challenge students to see if they can go a day (or maybe even a week!) without eating any junk food.
- *Think tank:* Teachers can provide opportunities for parents to help brainstorm ideas for thematic units. Just as students should be involved in the creative planning stages of the unit, parents can also be valuable contributors. Teachers can hold “think tank” sessions and get parent input. Teachers should make sure, however, that the units maintain a central focus and remain student centered.

## Student Study Site

The Companion Web site for *Language Arts: Integrating Skills for Classroom Teaching* [www.sagepub.com/donoghuestudy](http://www.sagepub.com/donoghuestudy)

Visit the Web-based study site to enhance your understanding of the chapter content. The study materials include chapter summaries, practice tests, flashcards, and Web resources.

## Additional Professional Readings

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## Anticipation Statement Answers

1. Agree
2. Disagree
3. Disagree

4. Agree
5. Agree
6. Agree
7. Disagree
8. Agree
9. Disagree: Organization and preplanning by the teacher are essential for a successful unit. However, student interests and student questions should help shape and direct the unit.
10. Disagree: Teachers should include some formal or standardized assessments. However, activities such as multi-media presentations and those that require students to synthesize new learning are more authentic and meaningful.



# PART II

## Reading as a Language Art



CHAPTER 5 Word Recognition Skills and Vocabulary Development

CHAPTER 6 Reading: Principles, Approaches, Comprehension, and Fluency

CHAPTER 7 Reading and Children's Literature



