

16MM FILMS AND PUPIL-CENTERED ACTIVITIES AS A METHOD
OF ENHANCING THE STUDY OF SOCIAL STUDIES
IN THE FOURTH GRADE

by 1264

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THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Today the 16mm projector and film have been accepted as standard equipment for classroom use due to their inexpensiveness, availability, ease of projection, and educational values. The techniques of utilizing such instructional media, no doubt, are numerous. Learning and performance on the part of the student can be significantly enriched through the employment of such audio-visual media.

The Problem

Statement of the problem. The efficient elementary school teacher is constantly looking for worthwhile methods and/or techniques to improve her instruction.

Objectives. It was the purpose of this study (1) to investigate the value of presenting 16mm films and pupil-centered activities to fourth grade pupils, (2) to provide a list of activities which may be used to enhance the social studies units, and (3) to provide a list of free films available to teachers.

Importance of the study. The motion picture today is firmly established in most school systems as an educative media of extreme value. However, too often its ease of presentation interferes with its effectiveness. It is too easy to simply thread the machine, turn on the projector, and let the film present itself. Even a follow-up discussion of the film is of little value if it is not organized and

graded effectively. In this study an attempt was made to study techniques of film presentation in an effort to discover more effective methods of instructing fourth grades in the social studies area and to compile a list of activities which would be beneficial towards the development of the child during the course of study of specific units.

Limitations. The researcher used library research as the method of gathering the data for the study. The data is presented through a review of the literature available, a listing of activities to be carried out at the desired time during the study of specific units, and the listing of free films available to teachers and the addresses of their producers.

Definitions of Terms Used

Educational film. An educational film was interpreted as a motion picture employed as an instructional device or material, the source of which was the local Instructional Materials Center or a company listed in the Educator's Guide to Free Films, 1968 edition.

Stop-action. When using a 16mm film in the teaching of social studies it is often effective to be able to stop the film at a particular point with the picture on the screen. A particular concept may need discussion at this point of the showing before continuation of the film.

Without sound. The running of a film without sound is an effort to persuade the students to use their visual ability in summarizing

what they believe to be the main points and to concentrate on the picture rather than the narration.

Stoppage of the film. Many times a film has definite sections and the study of a specific section before going on to the next could lead to the drawing of conclusions which may otherwise not be brought out. This helps the student use his reasoning ability which is often left stagnant.

Reshowing. A second showing of a specific portion of a film or the entire film itself, is used as a reinforcement of important facts or may be helpful in gaining a clearer understanding of specific facts or situations after questions have been raised.

Introducing, developing, and summarizing. A 16mm film is often helpful in introducing, developing, and summarizing a social studies unit. Many films may be used in all three situations while others may be appropriate in just one or two. A film may be used in introducing a unit to gain attention and interest in the unit; in developing and reinforcing facts being discussed throughout the study; or in summarizing concepts gained by the study and as a review for a final unit test.

CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF A FILM

Social studies as taught in our schools are intended to provide the basis for making the world of today intelligible to the pupils, for training them in certain skills and habits, and for developing ideals and attitudes that will enable them to take their places as efficient and effective members of a democratic society.¹

In deciding on the effectiveness of any audio-visual material as an aid to the achievement of the aforementioned goals certain assumptions must be made. One is that educational efficiency can be measured in only one place - the classroom. Another assumption is that the most important single element in any school is the teacher. Furthermore, the keys to classroom efficiency are the relationships, the motivations, and the strategies the teacher uses in teaching. It is also assumed that efficiency must increase in all classrooms in keeping pace with the tremendous increase of new knowledge that is expanding at an ever-inspiring rate. Thus, only through more efficient classrooms can this knowledge be imparted to students.²

The real beginning of the modern audio-visual movement was marked by the introduction of films into schools almost half a century ago.³ They were to replace the teacher, reduce the period of schooling,

¹Godfrey M. Elliott (ed.), Film and Education (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 146.

²G. K. Butts, "How Effective are Audiovisual Materials," High School Journal, 51:343, May, 1963.

³Edwin R. Carr, The Social Studies (New York: The Center For Applied Research in Education, 1965), p. 90.

and lessen the importance and extent of reading and study. While these are not the reasons for the use of films today, films have gained a place of recognized importance in education.⁴

Advantages of the 16mm Film

Films have much to contribute to social studies teaching. Through them a child can travel great distances and move through centuries of time, having before him a picture of places, persons, and processes impossible to obtain in other ways. The most essential aspects of a situation are singled out eliminating the nonessentials. The film is a demanding medium which holds the attention of the learner to a greater extent than do other learning aids.⁵

Among many special advantages through the use of films the following are of special value in social studies.

1. Films combine 'sight in motion' with various sounds to act upon two senses at one time.
2. Films compel attention through the use of motion and directed sight in a semi-darkened room.
3. Films can help to overcome important intellectual barriers to learning. For example, they are efficient idea communicators which depend very little upon skills of reading. Students who lack interest in a topic may be drawn to it by a moving, dramatic, colorful film presentation.
4. Films provide 'front seats' for students for many learning experiences.

⁴Edgar Bruce Wesley, Teaching the Social Studies (New York: D. C. Heath and Company, 1937), p. 345.

⁵John Jarolimek, Social Studies In Elementary Education (second edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), pp. 107-108.

5. Films overcome many physical limitations to learning. What better way is possible for the class to study the life of the people of China or Spain?⁶

In conjunction with these advantages, Fenton stated that, "a film can cover a wide range of material in a very short time and bring far greater reality than verbal description along, thus providing concrete experiences which children need before they can think abstractly."⁷

Limitations of the Educational Film

Although it is an excellent instructional device, the motion picture has its faults. Perhaps the principle deterrent to proper film use in most schools is the failure to regard the motion picture as a teaching tool, learning aid, or piece of instructional material.⁸ Many teachers look upon the film as a device for filling in extra time; some consider it an entertainment feature rather than teaching aid; and others fail to correlate it effectively, if at all, in the development of a unit of work.⁹

Among other limitations to the 16mm film are (1) the cost, it being the most expensive of all visual materials; (2) distribution, or being able to have the film at the needed time; and (3) availability,

⁶ James W. Brown, Richard E. Lewis, and Fred F. Harclerod, A-V Instruction: Materials and Methods (second edition; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 168-169.

⁷ Edwin Fenton, The New Social Studies (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1967), pp. 71-72.

⁸ Robert E. Schreiber, "Minimum Essentials of Film Utilization," Audio-Visual Guide, April, 1956, p. 44.

⁹ Harry G. McKown and Alvin B. Roberts, Audio-Visual Aids to Instruction (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1940), p. 153.

receiving the film in time for previewing, making definite plans for its use, and having a satisfactory showing.¹⁰

Standards for Film Selection

Educational films should not present facts in an authoritative way which the pupils are supposed to accept blindly. They should offer opportunities of observation, experience, and provide individual follow-up work which will consolidate and re-enforce the points made in the film itself.¹¹

Developing Class Readiness

Although many films seem stereotyped, they can be useful with the right teaching strategy. Films should be used to supplement, not substitute for the teacher. Materials in the film must be taught, not just seen.¹² William H. Allen states that "learning can be increased significantly by motivating students to attend more closely to instructional material used, by employing such techniques as:

1. A study of difficult words and phrases that appear,
2. A study of questions and problems relating to the content,
3. A listing of points to look for,
4. A reading of a brief descriptive story of the content, and

¹⁰Ibid., p. 152-153.

¹¹Svend Hollbaek, "The Dangers of Using Film in Schools," Audio-Visual Media, 2:86-87; Summer, 1968.

¹²Handbook for Social Studies Teaching (The Association of Teachers of Social Studies of the City of New York, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1967), p. 23.

5. Pointing out the importance of learning the content by means of a simple motivational statement, anxiety-producing instructions, or the announcement of a test to follow the showing of the film."¹³

Although all teachers develop class readiness for seeing films in many different ways one aspect must be kept in mind. It should be made clear to the pupils why they are seeing the film and what they are expected to learn from it.¹⁴

Presentation of the Film

"It is much more difficult to see with the open eyes of a researcher after an authority has told you what you should be seeing, than if you must be your own authority first."¹⁵ Thus, one method of showing an educational film is that of turning off the sound. This allows students to make their own judgment and guesses as to what is important. This method may lead to questions about facets of living that the film has ignored.¹⁶ A second reason for using this method may be that the sound track does not lend itself to the level of your class.¹⁷ In this case, a projector with a microphone plug-in may be of use for narration by the teacher.

¹³William H. Allen, "Audio-Visual Communication," Encyclopedia of Educational Research (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 115.

¹⁴Brown, op. cit., p. 182.

¹⁵Millard H. Clements, William R. Fielder, and B. Robert Fabachnick, Social Study: Inquiry in Elementary Classrooms (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966), p. 179.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Brown, loc. cit.

An ordinary procedure in using a film is to show it all the way through without interruption. This provides a general overview of the film content and organization. During this first showing questions are apt to arise in the students' minds. Thus, upon completion of this first showing they should be allowed to raise questions and discuss their questions and their reactions. This procedure will set the stage for a second showing which will reinforce facts and/or concepts presented by the film.¹⁸

There may be times when only a part of the film is necessary for accomplishing the teaching objectives. If this is true, then only the essential part should be shown. Quite often films are produced in sequences which can be interrupted to discuss specific facts and/or concepts presented.¹⁹

Aside from the fact of how to present the film, the teacher may also be concerned about the problem of when to present it. In social studies units, films may be appropriate at a variety of stages.

1. Films are commonly used at the beginning of a unit to build common background experience or to arouse interest.
2. They may be used during the work stages to add meaning to material which is being read.
3. Films may be used at the final stages of the unit to summarize and reinforce ideas which have been presented.²⁰

¹⁸McKown, op. cit., p. 176.

¹⁹Brown, loc. cit.

²⁰Jarolimek, op. cit., p. 108.

Evaluating the Achievement of Important
Instructional Objectives

The Yale Chronicles of America was one of the first film series to be introduced. Although these were silent films, they did stimulate the students to discuss and recite more in class than in the ordinary teaching situation.²¹

Today the sound motion picture offers considerable possibility for influencing attitudes that information can present visually and orally, identifying figures can be shown, and a pleasant reaction can be experienced by the observer.²² "As May (1946) pointed out, learning skills from observing film presentation involves delayed imitation; therefore discussion both before and after the film presentation is needed in order to profit from most of it."²³

Quite often a teacher questions the true value of using educational films. Perhaps the best answer is found in the findings of research.

1. Pupils do learn from films. They can learn factual information, motor skills, and concepts. They can change or develop attitudes and opinions as a result of viewing educational films.
2. Pupils learn more quickly and retain what they learn over a longer period of time. This is particularly true if the films are appropriately selected and effectively used.

²¹Butts, op. cit., p. 345.

²²Herbert J. Klausmeier, Learning and Human Abilities: Educational Psychology (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 278.

²³Ibid.

3. Pupils may be stimulated to pursue other learning activities. Students are likely to do more voluntary reading and discuss more topics than they would in a conventional teaching situation.
4. Pupils may learn as much from educational films as from an average teacher. This value is limited to the teaching function concerned with the communication of facts of the demonstration of procedures.
5. Pupils may develop the skill of problem-solving by viewing well-produced films.²⁴

Thinking is a process of using what a person knows. If this thinking leads to problem-solving or becomes critical thinking, the person must comprehend new relationships or patterns in the perceptions and ideas he is using. The experimental evidence from at least four carefully controlled studies indicates that films aid in promoting comprehension or understanding to a greater extent than they do the learning of specific facts of a rote memory nature.²⁵

The 16mm film enables a teacher to re-create events, action, or processes occurring anywhere in the world at any time, thus bringing many real experiences into the classroom to be shared and discussed. Such handicaps as time, size, and distance may be overcome. Educational 16mm films improve learning in a wide variety of classroom situations.²⁶

²⁴Robert E. DeKieffer, Audiovisual Instruction (New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1965), p. 44.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Brown, op. cit., p. 163.

PUPIL-CENTERED ACTIVITIES

"If one interprets the terms 'learning activity' broadly enough, it includes most of what the child does while he is in school."²⁷ It includes intellectual activities such as thinking, listening, reading, and writing; appreciative activities such as experiences in art, music, and literature; and physical activities such as running, playing games, constructing, and manipulating. Learning is an interactive process on the part of the learner with his environment in which intellectual, appreciative, and/or physical activity plays a major role. The types of activities, the purposes of them, and their contribution toward the development of the child are of major concern to educators today.²⁸

The foundation for future living in the Universe, and dealing with problems of the times, is molded during the first years of a young person's life. This is a responsibility every elementary teacher must assume. Failure to learn and adjust to present problems may result in an unproductive and unsuccessful life. Success in realizing social concepts contribute to satisfaction and adjustment to societies of the world for which the pupils will ultimately assume responsibility. Learning to live with others, to understand the likenesses and differences of peoples, to realize responsibilities to those living around us and to act in such a way that allows each to reach his optimum is one of the most important developmental tasks of a lifetime and essential to the very existence of the world as we know it and wish it to be.²⁹

²⁷Jarolimek, op. cit., p. 206.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Mary M. Roy, Spark (Benton Harbor, Michigan: Educational Service, Inc., 1965), pp. 2-3.

Learning can be promoted through the provision of numerous and varied activities, enabling children to be active learners rather than passive compliers.³⁰

Advantages of Activities

Varied activities to supplement the usual classroom reading, questioning, and discussion have long been urged. Following is a partial list of the many advantages of using activities in the classroom.

1. A higher level of learning and increased interest is promoted with such activities.³¹
2. They are of valuable assistance in teaching required materials.
3. Drill that usually seems dull to pupils will be enlivened.³²
4. Classroom experiences beyond the usual verbal activity is provided.
5. Deeper and richer meanings, clearer concepts, and deeper understandings develop when pupils have several different avenues to learning available.³³

Types of Activities

"The most fundamental of all learning activities are those which call for the finding and organizing of information which leads to the

³⁰Wesley, op. cit., p. 104.

³¹Chester W. Harris (ed.), Encyclopedia of Educational Research (New York; Macmillan Company, Inc., 1960), p. 306.

³²Roy, loc. cit.

³³Carr, op. cit., p. 63.

the solution of problems."³⁴ Research activities stress working together - defining problems, locating sources of information, and sharing the results with the entire group. Pupils are given a specific problem and guided through the steps of reaching a sound conclusion.³⁵

Most children love to build things and through sensory-motor play and creative building activities pupils are given various valuable opportunities for thinking, planning, creative expression, use of tools, physical activity, and development of coordination. These exercises lend themselves toward the extension and enrichment of the aspect of the social studies unit under consideration.³⁶

Through the use of music activities, pupils may extend their communication to other peoples, races and cultures, both past and present. Such activities are not limited to the singing of songs related to the unit of study. Rhythmic expression, or dancing, may be quite enjoyable. Folk dancing and folk games are well suited for fourth graders. Listening to music is an imaginative experience for pupils. They may learn to identify the music of different groups of peoples throughout the world.³⁷

Dramatic activities help sharpen the pupil's power of observation, give purpose to research activities, give insight into another's feelings by putting himself in another's place, provide experience in

³⁴Jarolimek, op. cit., p. 208.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p. 212.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 219-221.

democratic living, and help create and maintain interest. They also provide an excellent situation in which the teacher may observe the behavior of the pupils.³⁸

Activities when carefully selected play an important part in developing the idea of democratic citizenship within pupils. Being able to think situations over and come to a sound decision will help make our young people more able to cope with problems encountered.³⁹

Principles of Activities

When selecting various activities for implementation within a unit, specific principles must be considered. Although the pupils will play a major role in either the success or failure of an activity, the principles are concerned solely with the activity and the standards it must meet. Ragan and McAulay suggest the following as appropriate.

1. The activity must be significant enough to be worthy of evaluation.
2. The activity must be suited to the maturity and ability of the students. If the activity is beyond the ability and maturity of the students, learning from it will be sketchy and fleeting and therefore difficult to evaluate.
3. The activity must be concrete and realistic. The more practical the activity, the more efficient the evaluation.
4. Some activities will apply to the individual rather than to the group. Group activities help pupils to gain self-confidence, widen their interests, learn cooperation, and direct their energies for the good of the whole. Individual activities help pupils develop self-reliance, inner resources, initiative, and various abilities.

³⁸Ibid., p. 222.

³⁹Ibid., p. 224.

5. If an activity is worthwhile, it can be evaluated on its own merits.⁴⁰

Objectives of Activities

The number of different activities in which pupils may engage while they are working on a social studies unit is quite broad. However, not all of them may be related to the objectives of the unit. The teacher should take careful note when selecting activities to be used that such activities will help pupils achieve these objectives and the specific objectives of all activities.⁴¹

Jarolimek recommends that the teacher should see that the activities chosen meet most if not all of the following objectives:

1. to stimulate pupil interest,
2. to stimulate various aspects of thinking,
3. to give direction and purpose to learning,
4. to encourage initiative, exploration, and research,
5. to aid in applying factual information obtained through research to concrete situations,
6. to provide a setting in which to use socialization skills,
7. to clarify complex procedures,
8. to aid in developing an understanding of concepts and generalizations,
9. to relate various aspects of the school program to one another,
10. to provide opportunities for thinking, planning, sharing, doing, and evaluation,

⁴⁰William B. Ragan and John D. McAulay, Social Studies for Today's Children (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), pp. 342-343.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 342.

11. to provide an outlet for creative abilities, and
12. to provide an opportunity for recognition for the non-verbal, nonacademic child.⁴²

⁴²Jarolimek, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

ACTIVITIES

The study of social studies is concerned with helping children develop an understanding about the world they live in. The 16mm film is but one of the many sources of information essential in the development of such understanding. The teacher may use a film as a stepping stone to the introduction of activities which will further the students understanding. Following is a partial list of activities which the teacher may use within the social studies curriculum. The first portion of the activities listed are related to specific units of study included in the textbook Learning To Look At Our World by the Silver Burdett Company. The remainder of the activities are those which could be applied to any unit of study.

Living in The United States

1. Find information about the capital cities of the states studied. You could include the population, climate, industries, historical buildings, and interesting annual events of each one.
2. Prepare a cut-away chart which shows how high above sea level the land is at about twenty different places along a parallel of latitude from New York to San Francisco.
3. Play "What's My Line?", using some occupations from throughout the United States.
4. Make a papier-mache globe out of a balloon by covering it with newspaper, painting it blue, and pasting on a cut-out map of the world.
5. Collect pictures from magazines that show the places visited in the United States.
6. Write letters to the Chambers of Commerce of cities in which there is particular interest requesting information about their cities.

7. With a partner, practice changing from one time zone to another. Make up problems like: if it is ten o'clock in Salina, what time is it in Chicago? in Miami? in Cheyenne? in San Francisco?

Lands of The Midnight Sun

1. Make a pair of Eskimo sunglasses. Make narrow slits in a piece of cardboard 6" long and 1-1/2" wide, and use a string or rubber band to hold them in place. Find out why Eskimos needed such sunglasses.
2. Make an outline map of Alaska on brown wrapping paper showing the Arctic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and Canada. You could also draw pictures of the animals and fish that the Eskimos and Indians caught and used for food and show how the Indians traveled in the southeast and how the Eskimos traveled in the far north.

The Hawaiian Islands

1. Find out how the Hawaiian Islands were formed.
2. Find out what a volcano is and how and why it erupts. Make a working model of a volcano. It could be made out of papier-mache and painted. Consult a chemistry instructor in a nearby high school for the proper chemicals to use in depicting the eruption.
3. Prepare a ship's log of Cook's voyage.
4. Plan and carry out a luau. Have the students plan a menu and design their own Hawaiian costumes.
5. Have various sugar and pineapple products including labels from the Dole and other products brought in.

New Zealand and Antarctica

1. Make a set of poiis out of newspaper covered with cloth and held by heavy cord. Experiment with different methods of twirling them.
2. Make a model of a Maoris village out of popsicle sticks and paint.
3. Make a report about one of the following subjects and report to the class: whales and whaling, dolphins, penguins, plant life in Antarctica, crevasses in the ice, icebergs, how dogs are used in the Antarctic.

4. Make up a story about a heat wave that hits Antarctica. The ice begins to melt, and the ice shelf disappears. What will happen? Make up a good ending.

The Islands of Japan

1. Learn to write some Japanese characters with a brush.
2. Arrange flowers and leaves for the classroom in the Japanese manner.
3. Learn and practice Japanese paper folding. See Origami by Florence Sakade, C. E. Tuttle Co., 1959.
4. Try raising silkworms. You can buy the eggs from many biological supply houses. When you get the eggs, which have been refrigerated put them on a tray or box enclosed with fine screening. In 7 to 10 days the larvae will hatch. It takes 30 to 40 days for the silkworms to spin their cocoons. Meanwhile, they must be fed either mulberry leaves or osage orange leaves.
5. Have boys fly paper fish kites and girls show doll collections on Children's Day, which is held on May 5 in Japan.
6. Make a hanging scroll, called a kakemono, for the classroom.
7. Assist the more able and interested students in preparing reports on World War II.
8. Set aside a table to collect objects made in Japan. Label each item.

City and Village in India

1. Make a chart or paint a mural showing some of the work that is done by hand or by animal power in a typical Indian village of today.
2. Read Claire and George Loudon's book about an Indian village called Rain in the Winds, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.
3. Trace the origin of the North American Indians and their relation to those from India. Study the time in history when Asia and North America were joined at Alaska and follow the route which the Indians took when crossing Asia and coming into North America.
4. Make a report on how burlap is made from jute; art, music, and dances of India as compared with those of Japan; the Taj Mahal; the sacred cow; the Himalayas.