



SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

LETTING SWIFT RIVER GO

By Jane Yolen

Teacher's Guide

By Barbara Ashby

Lesson Overview

This lesson is designed to integrate the concepts of civic education across curriculum using Jane Yolen's book, *Letting Swift River Go*. This book tells the story of the people of the Swift River towns that were flooded to form the Quabbin Reservoir to provide water for the city of Boston. It is best used after teaching the concepts of "civic virtue" and "common good" in *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution*, Lesson 3. Concepts from *Foundations of Democracy* are also applied.

Suggested Grade Level

Upper elementary

Estimated Time to Complete

One class period or more depending on chosen activities

Lesson Objectives

Students will

- use photographs to enhance their skills of critical thinking;
- write a persuasive letter to express opposing viewpoints;
- understand the concepts of "common good" and "civic virtue."

Materials Needed

- Multiple copies of *Letting Swift River Go* by Jane Yolen
- Classroom set of *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution*
- Classroom set of *Foundations of Democracy* (Authority, Responsibility, Privacy, and Justice)
- Classroom set of STW activity ("What do I See? What do I **T**hink? What do I **W**onder?")
- Cause and Effect chart
- Computer access to the Internet and World Book Online or supplemental printed research materials

Before the Lesson

1. The teacher should read *Letting Swift River Go* several times to
 - become familiar with the text;
 - choose vocabulary words to be examined;
 - identify where you will stop and ask for predictions;
 - determine background knowledge required to fully understand the story;
 - develop questions for the read-aloud; and
 - anticipate student responses.

(Suggested vocabulary for word work: trade-off, reservoir, eiderdown, quench, sacred, caissons, watershed, natural resource, Grange Hall, centuries, harvested)

2. Choose and prepare additional extension activities.
 - Present a lesson on persuasive letter writing. Students reread *Letting Swift River Go* and discuss opposing viewpoints related to the development of the Quabbin Reservoir. Students write a letter to the editor supporting the building of the reservoir or a letter to the editor opposing the building of the reservoir. Persuasive letter writing rubric: http://teacher.scholastic.com/LessonPlans/LtrWritg_Rubric.pdf
 - Conduct an author/illustrator study of Jane Yolen and/or Barbara Cooney
 - After the read-aloud, have students use the Library Media Center or computers to conduct research on the history of the Quabbin Reservoir, the towns affected by the building of the reservoir, why the Swift River Valley was chosen for the reservoir project, and what trade-offs were made by the people living in the towns. Use primary source photographs to engage in a discussion of how the images provide information about the time period. What is the area like today? (See Friends of the Quabbin Reservoir at <http://www.foquabbin.org/>)

Lesson Procedures

1. Conduct a picture walk through the book before the read-aloud. Have students explore their prior knowledge by using an STW chart: “What do I See? What do I Think? What do I Wonder?”
2. Conduct an interactive read-aloud of *Letting Swift River Go*. Be sure to read the Author’s Note at the beginning of the book.
3. Conduct a discussion on how the lives of the Swift Valley residents changed following the building of the reservoir. Have students identify cause-and-effect relationships in the book.
4. Review “civic virtue” and “common good.” Both concepts are found in Unit 1, Lesson 3 of *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution*. Discuss how the people living in the Swift River Valley communities demonstrated these important concepts of republican government.
5. Working in small groups, have the students reread the book and additional informational materials to determine how the decision was made to build the reservoir in Swift River Valley.
 - Who was responsible for the decision?
 - Were the people living in the area included in the decision making process?
 - What did the people in the towns receive in compensation for giving up their homes?

6. Using the *Foundations of Democracy* curriculum, integrate the concepts of authority, responsibility, privacy, and justice. Examples:
 - Who had the authority to make a decision that affected so many citizens?
 - What were some of the costs and benefits of taking on the responsibility to build the reservoir?
 - Was the privacy of the residents in each community taken into consideration?
 - Were the people in each community treated fairly?
7. Conduct any other activities you chose before the lesson.

Assessment

Sample persuasive letter writing rubric

http://teacher.scholastic.com/LessonPlans/LtrWritg_Rubric.pdf

Research project rubric

<http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/rubrics/elemresearchrubric.html>

Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts Standards, Reading: Literature, Grade 5

Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

English Language Arts Standards, Reading: Informational Text, Grade 5

Key Ideas and Details

3. Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

Craft and Structure

6. Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

English Language Arts Standards, Writing, Grade 5

Text Types and Purposes

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

English Language Arts Standards, History/Social Studies, Grades 6–8

Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

Correlations to SVPDP Curricula

SVPDP Curricula	Location	Lesson Related Content
<i>We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution</i>	Elementary Text Unit 1 Lesson 3	Civic Virtue and Common Good, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary
<i>Foundations of Democracy</i>	Responsibility, Authority, Privacy and Justice text	Various concepts from each text, Cost and Benefits, Privacy issues, Fair Treatment, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary