

The background of the cover is a light yellow-green gradient. Scattered across the cover are several stylized, light green leaf motifs, each consisting of two leaves on a short stem. These motifs are positioned at various angles and locations, including the top left, top center, top right, middle right, bottom center, and bottom left.

EXPLORING THE WORLD OF SPORTS

Linking Fiction to Nonfiction

Phyllis J. Perry

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Exploring the World of Sports

Literature Bridges to Social Studies Series

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Exploring Our Country's History: Linking Fiction to Nonfiction. By Phyllis J. Perry. 1998.

Exploring the World of Sports

Linking Fiction to Nonfiction

Phyllis J. Perry

1998

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For my swimming companions,
Jay, Jill, and David

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About the Series

In this era of literature-based reading programs, students are involved in reading narratives more than ever before, but they still face difficulty when confronted with expository text. Many experts believe that one of the best ways to teach any topic is to engage the learner, that is, to interest students enough so that their motivation to learn about a topic increases.

The Literature Bridges to Social Studies series seeks to use the power of fiction to bring students from the world of imagination into the world of fact. In this series, fiction is used to build interest, increase familiarity with a topic, enlarge background, and introduce vocabulary. The fiction is to be enjoyed, letting the power of the story create a desire to learn more about a topic. A variety of fiction titles is used with the class, to suit individual tastes and the breadth of experience in a group of students.

As student interest builds naturally, one or more “bridge” books are used to pique interest in a topical exploration. At this point, the teacher can introduce a main theme of study to the class with confidence that students have developed sufficient background knowledge of that topic. Interest in the topic might then be strong enough to motivate students to attempt the expository writing in nonfiction titles.

Just as a variety of fiction titles should be used to introduce a topic, the Literature Bridges to Social Studies series suggests that a variety of nonfiction titles be offered to students as they begin their topical explorations. Thus, the series is particularly useful to those teachers who are transforming their teaching style to a cross-curricular approach. Nonfiction titles selected for this resource represent the more literary treatments of a topic, in contrast to a textbook-like stream of facts.

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Introduction

This book is designed to assist any busy elementary teacher in planning an integrated unit of study involving sports. It includes suggestions for individual, small-group, and large-group activities across disciplines. Multiple titles allow for choice based on students' interests and skill levels. The titles, of various lengths and levels of difficulty, were selected from a large number of books recommended by children's librarians. This book is appropriate for teachers of kindergarten through fifth grade.

Between the fiction and nonfiction titles in each part are two suggested "bridge" titles. Bridge titles combine factual information with elements of narrative. They may also include interesting anecdotes and diary entries. This blend enables the reader to make an easy transition from fiction to nonfiction. Also included with the bridge titles is an appropriate book of sports poetry.

Parts I, II, III, and IV contain summaries of fiction titles, bridge and poetry titles, and nonfiction titles. For each fiction book, discussion starters and multidisciplinary activities are suggested. For each nonfiction title, topics for further investigation are suggested. These activities involve skills in research, oral and written language, science, math, geography, and the arts.

Each of these parts begins with a "bookweb," which lists all titles included in that part and suggests a variety of related topics to explore. All titles selected for this resource were published since 1980, the majority since 1990; and all are readily available. They represent many cultures and include many genres.



Teaching Methods



This book is designed to be used in a variety of teaching situations. It can be used by one teacher who is responsible for teaching a number of subjects to a group of students, by teachers in schools where there is departmentalization, and in team teaching situations.

One Teacher with Multiple Teaching Responsibilities

In most cases at the elementary level, a single teacher is responsible for teaching a variety of subjects to a group of students. If the same teacher is responsible for teaching language arts, social studies, math, and science, the multidisciplinary approach suggested in this book will have a unifying effect on the curriculum.

Before beginning a unit on sports, the teacher might, for example, read aloud one of the fiction titles in class. This will help set the tone for the upcoming unit of study. As students hear an interesting work of literature dealing with some aspect of sports, they will begin to learn the related vocabulary and to focus on their interest in sports.

The teacher might suggest that students be alert to information about sports and sports figures. Students might be encouraged to bring to class sports-related articles that they clip from newspapers and magazines for the beginnings of a classroom vertical file. If a scheduled television special will focus on some aspect of sports, such as the Super Bowl or the National Basketball Association (NBA) championship games, the teacher or another student might alert the class to the viewing opportunity.

Once the unit of study begins, the teacher might have each student select one of the fiction titles in Part I and then encourage small-group discussions and sharing among those who have read the same book. This will extend reading, listening, and speaking skills.

For the bridge titles, the teacher might want to assist students who are not as comfortable with nonfiction as they are with fiction. Because bridge titles combine elements of narrative or real-life adventure with nonfiction information and facts, they help students make the transition from one type of reading to the other. Students' growing vocabulary and knowledge about the world of sports will increase their interest in and appreciation of nonfiction.

In an expository writing assignment, the teacher might assign a writing topic related to sports and combine this with a math assignment for the students to compute (for example, the percentage of shots made from the free-throw line). In this way, a student will develop skills in researching, writing an informative paper (that explains, for example, the layout of a professional basketball court), and preparing a bibliography (if appropriate).

In a creative writing assignment, a student might write an original piece from the point of view of a young baseball player who surprises everyone by hitting a home run during an important game. A creative writing assignment is an excellent opportunity to introduce sports poetry. Students might experiment with writing their own poetry after reading a collection included in this resource.

Depending upon the books selected, the teacher might combine social studies with geography. For example, as students learn about the time in our history when baseball was segregated, a topic presented in the book *Leagues Apart: The Men and Times of the Negro Baseball Leagues*, they might locate the cities where Negro Baseball League games were played; or they might locate on a U.S. map the regions most effected by the Dust Bowl, a topic presented in the book *Cat Running* (Part IV).

Departmentalization with Team Planning

In schools where departmentalization is combined with team planning time, the language arts, social studies, math, and science teachers responsible for students in the primary or intermediate grades might plan a segment of time for a unit on sports. The math teacher might concentrate on helping students understand such sports topics as batting averages, earned run averages, and dimensions of playing fields. The social studies teacher might discuss desegregation in professional sports and the obstacles early pioneers like Jackie Robinson had to face, or baseball games played in the internment camps to which Japanese Americans were confined during World War II. The language arts teacher might assign reading, research, and writing assignments based on both fiction and nonfiction titles. Panel discussions and oral presentations of material will improve speaking and listening skills. Specific skills such as skimming, reading for information, note taking, outlining, and using an index or a glossary of terms might also be introduced or reinforced using nonfiction titles.

Some students will find it easy to understand factual information pictorially or in graphs and charts in nonfiction titles. For other students, these may be new sources of information. The teacher should explain how to "read" numerical data and might design assignments so that students will have an opportunity to construct their own tables and graphs.

Specialists in the school might also be involved. The music teacher might incorporate some sports songs. The art teacher might have students sculpt sports figures using clay or soft, flexible wire to create the illusion of figures in motion. Classroom and hallway bulletin boards might feature a sport that is currently in season or an international event, such as the Olympic Games. The physical education teacher can also contribute to this unit of study.

If the school has a computer lab, sports-related software and other media might be purchased, such as Sports Illustrated's *Multimedia Sports Almanac*, an interactive encyclopedia for CD-ROM. Students might write their reports for this unit of study using word processing software.