

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 390 783

SO 025 748

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TITLE The USA: A Diverse Country and People.
PUB DATE Nov 95
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for Social Studies (Chicago, IL, November 1995).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; *Cultural Exchange; *Cultural Interrelationships; *Cultural Pluralism; *Cultural Traits; Culture; Culture Contact; Elementary Education; *Multicultural Education; *Social Studies; Sociocultural Patterns

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on three activities for elementary students to develop the concept of diversity of peoples within the United States. Students are asked in each activity to select elements representative of their geographic area in the United States, while noting the differences within the common elements. A short booklist of titles about selected Native Americans and Hispanic Americans is included. (EH)

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The USA: A Diverse Country and People

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Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for Social Studies, November, 1995,
Chicago, Illinois

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Learning Cycle Ideas

Exploration:

1) Ask small groups of 3 to 5 students to examine a display named "The USA". Include a map of the USA which clearly identifies state boundaries. Have a tape recorder playing American music, perhaps New Orleans jazz or a group such as "Alabama". Include pictures of the USA from encyclopedias, travel brochures, newspaper weather maps and/or any other materials which represent the USA and many of the areas considered in social studies -- geography, history, sociology etc. As they examine the learning center, ask students to consider the key question, "What is the United States of America like?"

Ask each group to select a picture that shows them something about the USA that is not from their own area or, ask each group to select a picture that is very representative of their area. As a whole group, discuss their selections and responses to the key question.

2) Give the groups fifteen minutes in which to draw a rough sketch of the USA, filling in as many states as they can recall. They should not look at the center but try to draw what they remember.

Invention:

1) Have each group describe what they were able to draw and then place it on a bulletin board. Where did they start their map? Which section of the country are they most familiar with? Did they draw states in their home section bigger than they should be? What part of the country are they least familiar with? Were different members of the group most familiar with different sections of the country? Did they remember to include Alaska and Hawaii? What does an activity such as this tell the course instructor about their knowledge of the geography of the USA? about the areas of the country with which they are most familiar? How would this activity enable the instructor to better determine what types of future activities could be most effectively used?

2) Ask the groups to return to the learning center. When their group is at the learning center, tell each student to select a picture from it. Have them tell what attracted them to the picture they selected? Do you know anything about what is shown in the picture? What are two questions that this picture prompts you to think of?

3) Next, ask each student to fill out a form containing the the following questions:

- A. What is your ethnic background?
- B. Where were you born?
- C. What is your favorite food?
- D. What is your favorite song?
- E. What is your favorite hobby?
- F. What language(s) do you speak?
- G. How old are you?

Ask each student to cut apart his or her questionnaire. Then have the students place each question in a pile that is labeled with the question. Next, assign each question to a small group. This group will examine the responses for their question and report them to the class as a whole.

4) Discuss the following information.

Nearly half of the nation's populace considers itself to be descended from the Germans, the Irish, or the English, the Census Bureau says. but one person in 20 forgoes any ethnic identification in favor of "American."

One American in four is of German ancestry, making it the largest ethnic group.

Next are the Irish, one American in six, followed by the English, one in eight; Afro-American, one in 10; and Italian, one in 17.

Looking at the data from our class survey above, decide if our class is typical of the USA as a whole , or, is it unique in some ways?

5) Ask each student to sort through a selection of pictures from magazines and choose one that represents the USA in some way to them. The pictures should vary from those of soft drinks to military aircraft to tennis shoes to a Rocky Mountain scene. Or, students can select them from a pile of magazines. The pictures they choose should be mounted on the bulletin board with the maps students drew earlier.

5) Closure: Ask students to contribute to a definition of an American (a citizen of the USA). What is an American? As a result of the activities completed above, the definition should reflect the diversity that is evident in being an American. Accept all ideas and write them on the chalkboard. Some may disagree with others. After students have no more ideas to give, reflect on the component which should be evident - that of diversity. Discuss how the activities in this section developed the idea of diversity as an essential component of the concepts of America (the USA) and of an American. Other components may also be essential but this lesson focused on developing this component. Discuss ways in which we can learn more about the diversity of America and Americans.

Expansion:

1) Show a set of slides of the USA and discuss the diversity evident in them. Or, ask students to sort through a set of your

old slides and put together their own set for a slide show on the USA.

2) Give students a set of books that indicate the diversity evident among Americans. The members of a small group could read a book then present it to the rest of the class. Use the following guide questions:

Had you heard of this person before you read this book?
In what part of the USA did this person live most of his or her life?

After reading the book, what do you think was the most important thing this person tried to do?

Was this person successful in what he or she most wanted to do?

What was this person's contribution to America?

The following are books produced by Raintree publishers in their *American Indian Stories* series and in their *Raintree Hispanic Stories* series. These are an example of the type of books which could be used.

Carlos Montezuma

Sitting Bull

John Ross

Luis Alvarez

Vilma Martinez

Jim Thorpe

Sarah Winnemucca

Plenty Coups

Geronimo

Hole-in-the-Day

Draw the USA

In the space below, draw a rough sketch of the USA, filling in as many states as you can recall.