Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan: *It’s Back to School We Go!*

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Abstract

*It’s Back to School We Go! First Day Stories From Around the World* by Ellen Jackson, is a fiction book, using short, first-person narratives to compare the first day of school for 11 children from different countries. The lesson plan, designed for grade levels 3-5, asks students to compare and contrast their own lives with those of the characters in the book. Students learn that humans from diverse cultural environments interpret similar childhood experiences from different, yet interesting, frames of reference. Exchange of perspectives and ideas may assist students in visualizing themselves as world citizens capable of promoting global understanding. The lesson plan includes graphic organizers and examples to implement the lesson.

“When children from every continent, from different races and traditions, different countries and cultures, see something of themselves in one another, they know deep inside that they are part of a universal family” (Steckel & Steckel).
It’s Back to School We Go! First Day Stories from Around the World Culture, Diversity, and Global Understanding (Grades 3-5) (2003) by Ellen Jackson with Jan Davey Ellis (illus), Millbrook Press, Minneapolis.

| **Book Summary:** | A series of short, first-person narratives describe the first day of school for eleven children from around the world. Each description is supported by a list of child-friendly facts, which address similar themes (e.g., length of school year, food, animals, recreation, school subjects, etc.). The author’s purpose is “…to capture the diversity of school experiences, compare and contrast the lives of children from different cultures, and—most of all—to emphasize their common humanity” (p. 5). |
| **NCSS Standards:** | **Global Connections**  
IX. (a) Explore ways that language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements may facilitate global understanding or lead to misunderstanding.  
**Culture**  
I. (a) Explore and describe similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures address similar human needs and concerns; (b) give examples of how experiences may be interpreted differently by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.  
**People, Places, & Environments**  
III. (c) Use appropriate resources, data sources, and geographic tools such as atlases, data bases, grid systems, charts, graphs, and maps to generate, manipulate, and interpret information. |
| **NCTE and IRA Standards** | 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.  
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). |
| **Materials:** | 1. 4-5 contemporary photos of children ages 8-11 from other countries/cultures  
2. Teacher’s copy, It’s Back to School We Go!  
3. Black/white board, transparency, or chart paper for whole class recording  
5. One Comparison Frame for each set of partners  
6. One Venn Diagram for every set of partners  
7. World map  
8. Highlighting markers, 10 (optional) |
### Objectives:

**Content:**
1. Given opportunities to explore and discuss worldwide human similarities, students will be able to explain how learning about people from other cultures may contribute to global understanding.

**Process:**
1. Students will be able to read, analyze, classify, and compare information.
2. Students will be able to locate countries on a world map.
3. Students will be able to discuss and share perspectives about the concept of global understanding.

### Procedures:

#### Exploration/Introduction:

**Development:**

Show 4-5 actual contemporary photos (preferably on a large screen) of children from other cultures, one photo at a time (see Appendixes A-E for example photos). Take time to have students study and analyze the faces, actions, and settings of each. Ask probing questions to prompt students to interpret each photo, make inferences, and possibly self-construct the idea that children from all cultures have similar characteristics and feelings, even though their environments require different ways of doing/constructing the same things (e.g., how students travel to school, recreation and games, food, buildings, chores, family and/or societal expectations, etc.).

**Examples:**
1. Describe what you see in the photo.
2. How old do you think these children might be?
4. How do you think these children are different from you? Similar? What leads you to believe this?
5. Where might the children’s homes be located in the world? What do you know about the people of that country?
6. Do you think you could be friends with these children? Why or why not?

After this initial discussion, show students the photos again; tell them where each child lives and help students locate the countries on a world map.

**Assess Prior Knowledge**

(1) After the introduction, explain the concept of global understanding.
(2) Conduct a whole class pre-lesson discussion as students name and discuss ways to promote global understanding among people of the world. **(Overarching questions:** What is it? Why do we need it? What happens in our world when we do not have it? How do people promote it? How could each of us help promote it?)
(3) Draw a web (see Appendix F for example) to record student input on board. **(Focus:** the idea of self-efficacy; children have the power to
promote global understanding by familiarizing themselves with people from different cultures and understanding that we share human similarities).

**Concept Acquisition Phase**

1. Introduce and explain the format of the book, *It’s Back to School We Go!*
2. Explain purpose for reading the book.
3. Explain procedures and expectations for student activities.
4. Place each student with a partner (can be as many as 10 partner sets).
5. Read one excerpt from book and model activities using student input. Show an example on a large screen (e.g., Smart board, transparency, etc.) of a **Comparison Frame** and **Venn Diagram** or draw them on white/black board or chart paper.
6. Give each set of partners a copy of one descriptive narrative and the accompanying fact page.
7. Ask partners to read and discuss the two pages together. They will organize key ideas or themes on a **Comparison Frame** (Appendix G).
8. Partners discuss their own personal first days of school and complete the second column of the frame, using the same themes.
9. Partners complete a **Venn Diagram** (Appendix H) comparing the two samples and share the information and conclusions during a whole class discussion. Partners will locate each country on a world map and show this as part of the class discussion.

**Assessment:**

See Rubric - Appendix J

**Suggested Extension Activities:**

**Application to New Situations**

1. Teacher teaches a skills lesson on interviewing techniques (see Appendix I). Students interview people from other cultures about their first day of school. Students compare the results during whole class discussion. This can be done with any “human” event (e.g., first haircut, first lost tooth, first flight, first pet, etc.). Supporting text, *The Milestones Project: Celebrating Childhood Around the World* (Steckel & Steckel, 2004). NCSS Notable Trade Book 2006.
2. Students write persuasive papers, editorials, or letters on any subject related to global understanding (e.g., global communication, world peace, nonviolent communication, sustainability, environmental issues, etc.). Supporting persuasive writing tutorial for students can be located on *Inspiration 8.0* software under “Examples – Curriculum – Language – Persuasive Writing.”
3. Use other books from the supplementary book list found in this lesson plan. Select text with information, which allows students to compare and contrast the similarities and differences of other universal human norms (e.g., first lost tooth, pets, friendships, responsibilities, etc.).

**Cross Curriculum**
## Higher Level Applications and/or Variations of the Same Lesson

1. Students read and analyze the pages and determine their own themes without explicit teacher direction (extension).
2. Students compare more than two scenarios (extension - see Appendix K for format).
3. Since all of the narratives in the book do not have information that is exactly common to each one, some of the spaces in the **Comparison Frame** will be blank. Students could research other resources to fill in the missing information. For example, if the space for “recreation” is blank, students could locate that piece of missing information for the **Comparison Frame** and the **Venn Diagram** (extension).
4. Students create their own **Comparison Frames** using *Microsoft Word* table maker (technology integration - see Appendix L).
5. Students research and import maps or pictures of each country from the Internet and place them onto the **Comparison Frame** (technology integration - see Appendix L).
6. Students word process the information into the **Comparison Frame** using *Microsoft Word* and highlight the similarities and differences with the highlighting tool (technology integration - see Appendix L).
7. Students create their own **Venn Diagram** using *Inspiration 8.0* software (technology integration).
8. Students research other countries, create imaginary children from those countries, and write first-person narratives and lists of facts like the format of the book. These pages can be made into a class book (language arts integration).
9. Students use the information gleaned from the text to write Contrast/Comparison essays (language arts integration).
10. Teacher reads the book to students and asks individuals or small groups to contrast and compare one specific event or situation in their lives to those of the characters in the book (e.g., sports and games, environment, traveling to school each day, etc.). Students work in small groups or independently to select, plan, and create their own products of choice to share with the class (e.g., poster, skit, song, teach a game, newscast, diary, book, puppet show, etc.). (language arts integration).
11. After studying **global understanding**, give 5th grade students a list of topics related to **global understanding** such as peace, sustainability, global warming, cultural diversity, international citizenship, etc. Each student is asked to ‘wonder’ about this topic and create five questions which stem from the wondering. Students, with teacher facilitation, “wander” through multiple resources during class time to research the answers to the questions. During day two, the student wonders and writes five more questions which have roots in the first five answers. This cycle continues, and after five days of personal questioning and research, the student will
have 25 questions and answers. At this point he/she has created and completed a personal inquiry.

12. The student is now knowledgeable about the topic and prepared to share information with the class. Again, give students choices about how to share or present the information with the class (language arts integration).

13. Students use airline schedules, the Internet, or travel agencies to research travel mileage and travel time to and from different countries. Use this information to create and solve mathematics problems. Example: Plan a trip and daily schedule using an explicit number of days/hours for the imaginary trip (mathematics, research skills, and language arts integration).

Additional References and Web links:

| Thematic Strands: | http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/ |
| Resources Used for Lesson Plan | Global Connections, Culture, and People, Places, & Environment |
| http://www.underdown.org/interview_tech.html | |
| National Council for the Social Studies | |

Appendixes

Appendix A


Appendix B


Appendix C


Appendix D


Appendix E


Supplementary Resources


**Debriefing Questions and Potential Answers:**

**Q.** What do you think this lesson has to do with global understanding?  
**A.** When we learn about the things that people do in other countries, it helps us understand those people. Learning about the things that we have in common with people in other countries, makes their lifestyles easier to understand. Learning about the differences can also be interesting.

**Q.** What do you do when you meet a new person? Do you ever think, “We could be friends?” Why or why not?  
**A.** I talk to them to see if we have anything in common. I think that I could be friends with them. Maybe we could talk about ways that we are alike, and maybe we can enjoy learning about our differences.

**Q.** What do you think would be different about your life if everybody in the world understood each other?  
**A.** I think that we may have fewer things to argue about and, therefore, fewer wars. Maybe we could settle our problems by talking to one another, not violence.

**Q.** Do you think that you, as a child, can help promote global understanding? If so, how?  
**A.** Now, I think that I could help promote global understanding by learning about people from other cultures. I could talk with people from other cultures at my school and community and maybe be friends. Maybe, when I am an adult, I could travel to other places and meet them where they live.
Follow up this self-efficacy discussion with a read-aloud entitled, *Peace One Day: The Making of World Peace Day*. Jeremy Gilley. Illustrated by Karen Blesson. G.P. Putnam’s Sons. 46pp. It is also available on DVD. “This inspiring story depicts the efforts of actor Jeremy Gilley to create a world peace day. This story shows that one person can make a difference through determination and perseverance. (MWW) IX, X, II)” (Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People 2006, p. 7).
Appendix A - Iraq
Appendix B - Peru
Appendix C - China
Appendix D - Uganda
Appendix E - India
Global Understanding

What is it?

Why do we need it?

How do people in the world promote it?

What if the world doesn't have it?

How can we promote it?

Teaching with NCSS Notable Trade Books for Young People: It's Back To School We Go: First Day Stories From Around The World by Ellen Jackson. Lesson Plan Author: Janie Hubbard, Ed.D.
Appendix G (Comparison Frame-Basic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map or Picture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Students Learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Interesting Facts I Learned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**It’s Back To School We Go!**

Teaching with NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People: *It’s Back To School We Go! First Day Stories From Around The World* by Ellen Jackson. Lesson Plan Author: Janie Hubbard, Ed.D.
It’s Back To School We Go!

Comparison Themes
1. Food
2. Recreation
3. School Year
4. What Students Learn
5. Animals
6. Environment
7. _______
8. _______

CONCLUSION:____________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
By:______________ & _________________

Teaching with NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People: It’s Back to School We Go! by Ellen Jackson: Lesson Plan Author Janie Hubbard, Ed.D. (Venn Diagram Appendix H)
TIPS FOR CONDUCTING SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

Books, magazines, and websites aren’t the only sources for gaining information. People are excellent resources as well. Here are some tips for conducting successful interviews:

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Contact the person you want to interview and ask for an appointment.
- Clearly express the purpose of the interview.
- Tell the person approximately how much time you will need for the interview (keep it short).
- Write a list of questions.
  1. Reduce questions that give responses of yes and no because they give limited information.
  2. Some people may want a list of the questions before your meeting so that they can think about the answers before the interview.
  3. Limit each question to only one idea to avoid confusion.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Arrive on time and prepared.
- Take notes so that you remember exactly what the person said.
- If you want to audiotape the interview, you must ask the interviewee for permission to do so.
- Watch the clock.
- If you do not understand a response, you may ask the person to repeat or clarify the answer.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Summarize the points that you recorded and ask the person if the summary is correct.
- Thank the person.

From beginning to end, always approach the interview with common sense and courtesy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions</strong></td>
<td>Routinely provides useful ideas when participating with his/her partner and in classroom discussion. A definite leader who contributes a great deal of effort.</td>
<td>Usually provides useful ideas when participating with his/her partner and in classroom discussion. A strong participant who tries hard.</td>
<td>Sometimes provides useful ideas when working with a partner and in classroom discussion. A satisfactory participant who does what is required.</td>
<td>Rarely provides useful ideas when participating with a partner and in classroom discussion. May refuse to participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison Frame</strong></td>
<td>Chart is complete, contains relevant information, is focused on all of the targeted themes possible. Shows thorough understanding.</td>
<td>Chart is complete, contains mostly relevant information, is focused on most of the targeted themes possible. Shows understanding.</td>
<td>Chart is complete, contains some relevant information, but may not be focused on many of the themes. Shows general understanding.</td>
<td>Chart may not be complete, may include irrelevant information, and may not be focused on the themes. May not show a general understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Venn Diagram</strong></td>
<td>Diagram is complete. Most similarities and differences are thoughtful and completely written. Shows an understanding of how to select and compare relevant information from the chart.</td>
<td>Diagram is complete. Similarities and differences are thoughtful and completely written. Shows an understanding of how to select and compare relevant information from the chart.</td>
<td>Diagram is somewhat complete. Some similarities and differences are written. Shows an understanding of how to select and compare relevant information from the chart.</td>
<td>Diagram may not be complete with similarities and differences written. May not show an understanding of how to select and compare relevant information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concept Attainment</strong></td>
<td>Student uses multiple, insightful, and original examples to illustrate and support perspectives about global understanding. Demonstrates ability to connect ideas.</td>
<td>Student uses some examples to illustrate and support perspectives about global understanding. Demonstrates recognition of related ideas.</td>
<td>Student uses few examples that may not illustrate and support perspectives about global understanding. Demonstrates some recognition of related ideas.</td>
<td>Student may not use examples to illustrate and support perspectives about global understanding, may not offer perspectives. Student may not demonstrate the ability to recognize related ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td>Student shares information plus extra information, locates/shows country on world map accurately.</td>
<td>Student shares information and locates/shows country on world map.</td>
<td>Student shares information and locates/shows country on world map with assistance.</td>
<td>Student may not share information, may not locate/show country on world map.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### It’s Back To School We Go!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Map or Picture</th>
<th>Student(s)</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Recreation</th>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>What Students Learn</th>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Other Interesting Facts I Learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Teaching with NCSST Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People: *It’s Back To School We Go: First Stories From Around The World* by Ellen Jackson. Lesson Plan Author: Janie Hubbard, Ed.D.
### It’s Back to School We Go!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Peru</th>
<th>(Our Country)</th>
<th>India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>(Our Names)</td>
<td>Rajani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>bananas, rice, manioc</td>
<td>pizza, hamburgers, apples</td>
<td>dal (lentil stew), chapati (flat bread), pizza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>canoe race, tag, hopscotch, sing</td>
<td>baseball, tag, movies, sing</td>
<td>cricket, kho-kho (chasing game), movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Year</td>
<td>August - June</td>
<td>July - April</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Students Learn</td>
<td>counting, reading, writing, geography</td>
<td>math, reading/writing, science, social studies (geography)</td>
<td>Hindi, English, Sanskrit, geography, science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>toucan, tanager, puff bird, monkey, parrot, capybara, dolphin, river snake</td>
<td>squirrel, cardinal, fox, rattlesnake, chipmunk</td>
<td>(You may have students research and record information, such as this, which is not found in the trade book.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>rainforest, Amazon River is the main means of transportation.</td>
<td>deciduous forest, small and large cities travel to school in cars or school buses on streets and highways</td>
<td>(You may have students research and record information, such as this, which is not found in the trade book.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Interesting Facts I Learned</td>
<td>School is a hut with dirt floor, no books</td>
<td>School is free. Our building is brick (taxes pay) All children are required to attend. Resource centers, books, computers, supplies</td>
<td>Some people believe school is more important for boys than for girls.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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