

6th Grade Social Studies: A Primer

Welcome Back!

November 18, 2014

Agenda

Work to Do	Time Frame
Review Annotation	4:15-4:25
Importance of Class Discussion	4:25-4:40
What is a SAC?	4:40-4:50
Background and Reading Preparation for the SAC	4:50-5:20
Structured Academic Controversy	5:20-6:00
Course Reflection and Evaluations	6:00-6:15

Benefits of Discussion

- Engagement
- Democratizing the classroom
- Citizenship (not idiocy)
- Clear articulation of complicated ideas
- Listening carefully and intentionally
- Better content knowledge
- Dialoguing across differences
- Civic knowledge, skills, democratic values, participation

Nystrand (1997) and his colleagues measured the relationship between the amount of classroom discussion and student performance on knowledge exams and found a positive correlation. The “bottom line” for learning, they write, is “the extent to which instruction requires students to think, not just report someone else’s [the teacher’s] thinking. (Hess, 2011)

Grade 6 CCSS Speaking & Listening

CC.6.SL.1 Comprehension and Collaboration: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CC.6.SL.1.a Comprehension and Collaboration: Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

CC.6.SL.1.b Comprehension and Collaboration: Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

CC.6.SL.1.c Comprehension and Collaboration: Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

CC.6.SL.1.d Comprehension and Collaboration: Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

CC.6.SL.2 Comprehension and Collaboration: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

CC.6.SL.3 Comprehension and Collaboration: Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

CC.6.SL.4 Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CC.6.SL.5 Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

CC.6.SL.6 Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 6 Language standards 1 and 3 on page 53 for specific expectations.)

Characteristics of Effective Discussion: The Non-Negotiables

1. Focus on an interpretable text, issue, idea, etc.
2. The facilitator and the participants have prepared thoroughly.
3. Most of the talk comes from the participants, not the facilitator.
4. There is enough time spent on an idea to explore it thoroughly before going to another point.
5. Participants feel comfortable, but there is still meaningful argument.
6. Many people talk.
7. Participants and facilitator ask authentic questions and refer to previous points made in the discussion.

We all talk, so we can all learn.

- Setting expectations and norms that highlight the necessity of vast involvement is paramount;
- Open, inviting, worthwhile, respectful of diverse ideas and people;
- 78% of students surveyed in a study indicated that encouragement from classmates would make them more likely to speak during discussions.

Building capacity for discussion requires the use of multiple methods. SAC is a great entrance model.

WHY SAC?

- Encourages analysis and synthesis of multiple perspectives
- Different purpose than debate or pro/con conversation; encourages trying to better understand an alternate viewpoint
- Works well with historical and current questions in multiple content areas?
- *Very structured small group format holds students accountable and helps teachers maintain discussion focus*

SAC Goals for Students

1. Gain deep and nuanced understanding of an issue;
2. Find common ground in an area of great contention;
3. Make an informed decision based on evidence and reasoned logic

Teacher Preparation of SACs

1. Choose a historical question or policy issue that lends itself to contrasting viewpoints.
2. Find and select one - three documents (primary or secondary sources) that embody each side. (Remember that you can pull these from existing document collections on the web or in print.)
 1. Check out procon.org and dda.deliberating.org
 2. Can work with DBQs
3. Consider timing, make copies of handouts, and plan grouping strategies. The time you will need for a SAC will depend on the amount of experience your students have with the activity structure and the difficulty and familiarity of the documents. Plan on using about two class periods for your initial SAC.

SAC Question for Today

Which civilization, Aztec or Egyptian, had the most significant and lasting achievements?

SAC Groups

- Equal groups: Egypt & Aztec
 - Split to opposite sides of the room.

Silently read your assigned article. *(We will not be reading both articles today, although you would likely do this with your students.)*

- Work within your large group to decide which academic (Tier 2 & Tier 3 words) you would teach or define for students.

SAC Background

- What types of information would you include in background for students?
 - Topic introduction (part of a unit of study)
 - Breaking apart the question
 - Common vocabulary
 - Article specific vocabulary
 - Text annotation
 - Map/location information
 - Time/era information
 - ????

The Egyptians

For thousands of years, Egyptian civilizations thrived along the Nile River. About 3150 B.C., Upper and Lower Egypt united beginning the expansion of the Egyptian Empire.



The Aztecs

In the mid-1300s the Aztecs, known as the Mexica, settled on two islands in Lake Texcoco, where they built their great city Tenochtitlan. They conquered neighboring city-states to expand their empire.



Making a claim...

- A claim is an assertion that is based on evidence and reasoning.
- Take these two excerpts of textual evidence about the Romans and make a claim about them:
 - Pecunia non olet means “money does not smell”. This phrase was coined as a result of the urine tax levied by the Roman emperors Nero and Vespasian upon the collection of urine. The lower classes of Roman society urinated into pots which were emptied into cesspools and then collected where it served as the valuable raw material for a number of chemical processes: it was used in tanning, and also by launderers as a source of ammonia to clean and whiten woollen togas.
 - The Romans were a very clean people, taking regular communal baths. They had two main supplies of water – high quality water for drinking and lower quality water for bathing. In 600 BC, the King of Rome, Tarquinius Priscus, decided to have a sewer system built under the city. It was created mainly by semi-forced laborers.

Reasoning

- Reasoning is the “so what” part of an argument.
- You state a claim and give evidence. Your reasoning links the evidence directly to your claim or further explains your evidence.
- Evidence never speaks for itself! It needs the help of reasoning.

Parts of an Argument *(super simple version)*

- **Overarching Argument (Super Claim)**
 - I deserve this job.
- **Claims**
 - I am a self-starter.
 - I work hard.
 - I collaborate well with others.
 - I learn new things quickly.
- **Evidence & Reasoning**
 - Last summer, I worked for my uncle for three months, 35 hours a week, doing construction. While my friends were sleeping in, I chose to get up early and earn my keep.
 - Although I had never had used power tools before, within only 2 weeks, I was put in charge of a small job that required me to use three different tools.
- **Counterclaim** (another side that contradicts your claim)

Another far too simple example

- Claim: Pizza is a healthy alternative to fast food.
- Evidence: Pizza is made with tomato sauce.
- Reasoning: Tomato sauce has many vitamins and minerals as well as antioxidants, so eating pizza with tomato sauce can be a healthy alternative.

Evidence & Reasoning

- Evidence is ALWAYS evidence for something! Reasoning gives us that answer!
- Example Statistic: 74% of high school students read at a minimum of an 8th grade level.

American schools are failing!
According to a new national study, 26%, or, in other words, 1 in every 4 high school students, cannot read at a 9th grade level. If 1 in 4 people in the country had a disease, we would call it an epidemic of mass proportions!

In a recent study of U.S. students' reading, the U.S. was given a B average. 74% of high school students reads at or above an 8th grade level, the level necessary to read most newspapers and popular fiction texts. The study factored in the nearly 10% of students who have learning disabilities or are learning a second language to come to the average grade of "B."

Questions to Develop Reasoning

- **So what? Why should anyone care about this evidence?**
- **What does this information imply?**
- **I've just described what something is like or how I see it, but why is it like that?**
- **Why is this information important to understanding why I made my claim?**
- **How is this idea related to my claim? What connections exist between them?**
- **Can I give an example to illustrate the application of this evidence?**
- **What are the consequences of thinking this way or looking at a problem this way? (for evidence of a counterclaim)**

Structured Academic Controversy

Question:

My argument: _____

Background Reading	
Vocabulary terms/meanings I should know and use when I speak	Important facts from background reading that support my side
Preparing My Argument	
My Claims (statements that support my argument)	My Evidence and Reasoning to Support My Claims
1.	
2.	

SAC Steps

1. Organize students in groups of four. Split each group into two pairs. Each pair studies one side of the controversy by reading the background material and identifying arguments to support their assigned position. The pair figures out a game plan for advocating that position.
2. Pairs take turns advocating their positions. The pair not speaking takes notes on the other position.
3. Pairs reverse positions using their notes to demonstrate understanding of the other position.
- ★ 4. Students work together as a group of four to synthesize the ideas and come to consensus on at least one major point.
5. The whole class engages in a debrief and individual students reflect on their learning about the issue.

Grouping Students

- Divide students into groups of 4
 - Split each group into two: Pair #1 & Pair #2
 - Make sure to place stronger readers and/or more willing participants with those less able or willing.
 - Each pair receives one side of the argument whereby becoming representatives of each side of the topic.

Discussion Preparation

- Each group of two reads the text/s that support their side of the argument.
 - Vocabulary
 - Annotation
- While doing so, they record Claims, Evidence and Reasoning in their grade appropriate note taker.

SPECIAL NOTE: This can be done in two large heterogeneous groups or in the small groups of 2.

Preparing for the SAC

- In your large groups, move into pairs.
- Gather the evidence that best supports your side and write down your claims, reasoning, and evidence.
- Decide who will present which parts of the argument when you meet with your opposing side partners.

TODAY'S SNAPSHOT SAC

1 min	Introduce yourselves in your group of four.
3 min	First pair shares their position (claims, reasons, evidence).
2 min	Second pair demonstrates their knowledge of first pair's argument.
3 min	Second pair shares their positions (claims, reasons, evidence).
2 min	First pair demonstrates their knowledge of second pair's position.
5 min	The group of four openly discusses the issue and tries to find some common ground or consensus on the issue and prepares to share position with the whole class.
5 min	Share out ideas of consensus or sticky points
10 min	Student reflection and individual self-assessment

Reflect

- Why is each step of the SAC important?
- How much class time would you need to accomplish the reading, research, collaboration, discussion, and reflection aspects of a SAC?
- How do the consensus and self-assessment portions contribute to the learning?
- How might this prepare students for writing?
- How might you use this in your classroom?

6th Grade Primer

- What can we do better next class?
- What aspects did you most appreciate?
- Please fill out the evaluation form.

*We hope you will join us again for future work
with 6th grade teachers!*

It's been a true pleasure working with all of you!