Initiating Historical Thinking in Elementary Schools

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Abstract
With an ever-expanding focus on reading and mathematics, many elementary schools have chosen to reduce time previously reserved for social studies. Elementary teachers who understand both the relevance of social studies content and the effectiveness of interdisciplinary teaching regularly incorporate applicable history-based children's tradebooks in their curricula. Locating developmentally appropriate books is simple. Teaching history using children's literature can be effective. It can be counterproductive, however, if the selected book is replete with historical misrepresentations. Teaching historical thinking in elementary school is problematic no matter what the teaching tool, and there are few methodological roadmaps for elementary teachers. Here, I first suggest ways for teachers to nurture elementary students' historical thinking using anecdotes from everyday activities and literature with themes germane to history and multiculturalism. Then, I suggest ways for elementary educators to locate and develop engaging, age-appropriate, and historically accurate curricular supplements. Using literature on Christopher Columbus as a reference point to facilitate young students' historical thinking, I propose an interdisciplinary approach, discipline-specific historical literacy strategies, and history-themed authentic assessments.

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Then, I suggest ways for elementary educators to locate and develop engaging, age-appropriate, and historically accurate curricular supplements. Using museum resources to engage high school students in historical thinking. June 2004. Stephen Mucher.