

Teacher's Guide for My Guide to the American Revolution

My Guide to the American Revolution is a 40-page, supplemental social studies resource that enables your students to:

- learn and remember more social studies information,
- meet state standards for collecting, organizing, writing, and illustrating social studies information,
- further develop a range of writing skills through “writing across the curriculum,”
- create their own book about a crucial period of American history,
- document personal growth and progress over time.

How can it do all this?

While *My Guide to the American Revolution* is a supplemental response book, it is also a work in progress that can anchor an important part of your social studies program. By using the school library, the Internet, and your social studies textbook as resources, and by taking advantage of guest speakers and field trips, your students can make *My Guide to the American Revolution* a personal reference and resource filled with relevant information that the students have truly learned and can now express.

Using *My Guide to the American Revolution* shares some similarities with journal writing, in that:

- it helps students learn through writing, allowing them to respond in their own voice and in a variety of ways,
- it allows for student-generated ideas,
- it keeps together work that helps students (and their teacher) monitor progress
- it develops pride of authorship.

However, unlike traditional journal writing, which is usually focused on personal thoughts or experiences — and narrative writing — *My Guide to the American Revolution* provides a unique format for developing information-based expository writing, while also supporting and encouraging various types of creative writing.

What's in *My Guide to the American Revolution*

- The first section is a two-page overview, where students can draw or paste an original American flag and explain its meaning on the left-hand page. On the right-hand page, students identify the original 13 colonies on a map and write their names underneath.

- After the overview, the book is organized into a series of two-page units, each of which has a specific title that corresponds to one of the topics usually covered as part of the curriculum about the American Revolution. Each left-hand page has space for a drawing or other illustration, the compilation of vocabulary words, and notes or a graphic organizer. Each right-hand page provides blank lines to be used for a brief essay or other written response.
- *My Guide to the American Revolution* also provides opportunities for each student to personalize his or her book, helping to create a sense of pride and “ownership” of the material. The student’s name should be written prominently on the front cover, and there is space for a dedication on the inside front cover. There is also an “About the Author” page at the end of the book, and an American Revolution Word Bank on the inside back cover, which becomes a personalized spelling/vocabulary resource.

Integrating *My Guide to the American Revolution* with Your Curriculum

To make the most of this classroom tool, some initial planning will be needed to integrate it into your social studies and language arts teaching. Here’s a plan for proceeding:

- Begin by reviewing your social studies curriculum (text and teacher’s guide, teacher-generated materials, etc.) to determine where *My Guide to the American Revolution* can address key concepts and/or state standards. Jot down the *My Guide to the American Revolution* topic page number beside the concept. Although the book may be used in sequential order, its open-ended format also allows you to use the pages as they best fit your curriculum.
- Once you have determined where *My Guide to the American Revolution* topics intersect your curriculum, brainstorm interesting and grade-appropriate activities that personalize the content and make it relevant to your students’ lives. You may be able to integrate the book’s use with an existing lesson plan, or you may want to create a new one linked more directly to research and writing activities. Think about involving other school personnel and community professionals, incorporating field trips, applying technology, and using community-wide library resources for teaching the topic concepts and skills.
- Decide on a writing activity that will culminate the topic study. (A list of ideas for writing activities follows this overview.) Also, remember that it is possible to design different writing activities for the same topic, based on individual students’ writing competencies. Using the topic “Life in the American Colonies” as an example, here’s how a teacher could teach to individual writing abilities based on a single classroom learning activity, whether the activity is a field trip to a museum or historical site, a class project to create dioramas about colonial life, an internet-based on research project, or the reading of historical fiction:
 - struggling writers may be asked to draw a picture of colonial life and then write facts about what is shown in the picture,
 - average writers may be asked to write a letter from a colonist,
 - advanced writers may be asked to write a well-constructed paragraph about colonial life.

- Be sure to identify the specific writing skills inherent in each writing activity. *My Guide to the American Revolution* provides an excellent format for practicing different types of writing. However, since writing skills develop somewhat sequentially, it is important not to present writing activities that are overwhelming and far beyond a student's capabilities. As a general rule, teaching one new writing skill within a topic study is manageable, provided the student has demonstrated some competency with previously taught skills. Of course, students may be exposed to other new skills in group work and through class presentations and discussions without being held accountable for their mastery.

Knowing where each student is as a developing writer, then matching that knowledge to activities at his or her own cognitive level will help you develop appropriate and successful activities for all students. The open-ended format of *My Guide to the American Revolution* also encourages teachers to develop — and students to respond to — progressively more comprehensive and complex social studies writing projects.

Written Responses

The following is a list of ideas for incorporating social studies concepts and skills into written responses that appear on the right-hand side of the two-page units within *My Guide to the American Revolution*. Many of these ideas could be used for more than one topic:

- List important facts
- Compile and explain research
- Brainstorm a list of questions for future individual or group work
- Describe a drawing
- Have students respond in writing to photos, other illustrations, plays, movies, historical fiction, or field trips relating to the American Revolution
- Write a vocabulary (or other) word vertically and have the students write topic descriptors for each letter
- Write sentences or a paragraph using the topic vocabulary
- Write a story about an imagined activity or event
- Create and describe a timeline
- Write a letter about a historic event from a participant's point of view
- Write a brief biography
- Create an imagined diary entry (be sure that all historical fiction is accurate)
- Write an imaginary interview with a participant
- Write a newspaper article or letter to the editor about a historic event (These ideas and some of the others listed above can be combined into a class newspaper)

- Write a poem about a historic event
- List suggestions for solving a problem faced by the participants in an event
- Create a graph or chart and explain it
- Write descriptions using similes or metaphors
- Using an overhead projector or chart paper, work with students on developing a graphic organizer, such as a word web, relating to a topic. Then display the web and have the students write a paragraph based on it.

These are only a few ideas. You can probably think of others, and because student interest is a powerful motivator, don't forget to elicit your students' suggestions for response ideas.

Conclusion

Too often, social studies remains a content-area subject that is confined to a particular time of the school day, with little relation to other subjects or activities. It may be included as part a "thematic unit," but nonetheless, have little to do with other subjects or have meaningful relevance to students' lives.

To help students understand our society and government, as well as our ability and responsibility to protect, support, and improve our society and government, social studies as a subject area must come out of its time slot and into the lives of the students. In addition to helping students formulate social studies concepts and develop other academic skills, *My Guide to the American Revolution* has the added benefit of encouraging teachers and students to take an active approach to learning about the foundations of our nation.

Through students' participation in this process, they can not only increase their learning and meet state standards, they can also become more informed and involved citizens.



PO Box 167, Rosemont, NJ 08556
1-800-627-5867 or Fax 1-888-558-7350

Copyright ©2003 by Modern Learning Press
My Guide to the American Revolution, Item #789

All rights reserved. For information, address Modern Learning Press, Inc., Rosemont, NJ 08556.