

# Teacher's Guide for My Guide to Current Events

*My Guide to Current Events* is a 40-page, supplemental social studies resource that enables your students to:

- learn and remember more information about our nation and world,
- further develop a range of writing skills through “writing across the curriculum,”
- create their own book about national and international events, while also documenting personal growth and progress during the same time period,
- meet state standards for collecting, organizing, writing, and illustrating social studies information.

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## How can it do all this?

While *My Guide to Current Events* 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, along with newspapers, magazines, and articles from school or home, your students can make *My Guide to Current Events* a personal reference and resource filled with relevant information that each student has truly learned and can now express.

Learning and writing about current events are particularly useful activities for students because they involve such a wide range of topics, which can also be integrated with units of study in other subject areas. As the following list shows, this diversity of topics also makes *My Guide to Current Events* a great resource for differentiated instruction, because students can write at an appropriate individual level about subjects of personal interest and relevance:

- Geography/Culture
- History/Politics/War
- Weather/Environment
- Economics/Business/Math
- Technology/Medicine/Science
- Literature/Music/Art/Entertainment
- Media/Advertising
- Sports.

In addition, as explained in the following section, students can use the different sections to write about these topics in ways that help them meet state standards for writing and language arts.

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## What's in *My Guide to Current Events*

- The first section is a two-page overview, where students can locate major events on a national or international map. The students then practice **summarization** by writing a brief description of each event. (They may need to develop their drafts on a separate sheet of paper, as they work on mastering this challenging but vital skill.)
- The next section contains a series of two-page units for news reports, where students practice **expository writing**. Each left-hand page provides a series of prompts and graphic organizers that help students prepare their ideas and information. The facing right-hand page provides lines for a headline and article, as well as an illustration and caption.

- The third section contains a series of two-page units for editorials, where students practice **persuasive writing**. As in the previous section, each left-hand page provides a series of prompts and graphic organizers that help students prepare. The facing right-hand page provides writing lines for a headline and editorial about an important event or issue.
- The fourth section contains a series of two-page units for product reviews, where students practice **critical analysis and response**. Again, each left-hand page provides a series of prompts and graphic organizers that help students prepare. The facing right-hand page provides lines for a headline and review, as well as an illustration and caption.
- The inside back cover provides lines for a Current Events Word Bank, where students can create a personal list of **vocabulary and spelling** words they can refer to quickly and easily.
- *My Guide to Current Events* also provides opportunities for each student to personalize his or her book. This helps create feelings of pride and accomplishment, as well as authorship 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, as well as an “About the Author” page at the end of the book.

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## **Integrating *My Guide to Current Events* with Your Curriculum**

To make the most effective use of this classroom tool, some initial planning will be needed to integrate it into your current 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, sources of information about current events, etc.) to determine how and when *My Guide to Current Events* can be integrated. Key considerations include how students will obtain the information on which they base their writing, and how their research and writing activities will tie in with other learning experiences. Remember that the book may be used in sequential order, but its open-ended format also allows you to use the pages in whatever order works best for you and your students.
- Once you have determined where *My Guide to Current Events* intersects with your social studies curriculum, make sure your students will also have the instruction and support they need to practice the different types of writing successfully. In addition to teaching and/or reviewing summarization, expository writing, persuasive writing, and critical analysis and response, your class will also benefit from analyzing and discussing professionally written news summaries, articles, editorials, and reviews. From a language arts perspective, key considerations include the types of wording used, as well as how different types of sentences, paragraphs, and completed pieces are organized.

Keep in mind where each student is as a developing writer and as a student of social studies, so you can help each student achieve success at his or her level — and continue to grow. The open-ended format of *My Guide to Current Events* not only supports work at different levels, it also enables students to proceed to progressively more comprehensive and complex writing activities.

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## **Planning the Use of *My Guide to Current Events***

Each section of *My Guide to Current Events* has different characteristics and prompts, so some consideration should also be given to how each will be used, as well as how they will be integrated with each other. Here are some suggestions and considerations for each section:

**Overview:** Identifying major events requires some perspective, as well as consideration over time. One way to start is to have students select one recent event to summarize, and then continue adding new summaries on a regular basis. Another possibility is to skip this section until the rest of the book is completed, and then have students review their work and decide which events to include. Whichever approach you use, the students should place the number of each summarized event on the map above it to help them locate it initially, and then review the larger pattern when the book is completed.

**News reports:** Depending on your students, you may want to assign topics, have students choose their own, or allow students to progress from assigned topics to their own choices. Modeling is a very helpful teaching tool, so you may want to start by demonstrating how you would use the left-hand page to assemble information, organize ideas, and outline the news report. Students may need to be told (and occasionally reminded) that complete sentences and correct spelling are expected in the article on the right-hand page, but not in the notes on the left-hand page. And some students are likely to need help with the summarization required for a good headline, the use of interesting ideas and words in a headline or lead sentence, and the composition of effective transitional and concluding sentences.

**Editorials:** Many of the same points in the previous paragraph apply to this section. The main difference is that editorials require the students to combine the reporting of facts with the advocacy of a specific opinion. Students may need help presenting their main idea and supporting details, as well as acknowledging opposing points of view and responding to them. Again, your modeling of the pages' use, along with analysis and discussion of published editorials, will encourage and support students' work.

**Reviews:** This section can be especially motivating for some students, who show little interest in — and are reluctant writers about — other topics, but then reveal enthusiasm and insight when given the opportunity to write about products of special interest to them. Students may need help with the evaluation of products, such as identifying good and bad points before reaching an overall conclusion about the product. Here, too, modeling and the analysis of published reviews will be helpful in showing students how to proceed. Also, you can have students brainstorm and select from the range of products reviewed in newspapers and magazines today, including the following:

- books
- movies
- television shows
- music videos
- video games
- computer software and hardware
- advertisements
- sporting goods
- toys
- other consumer products.

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## **Introducing *My Guide to Current Events***

As with all new materials for classroom use, explicit instructions on how to care for and use *My Guide to Current Events* will reap immediate benefits for you and your students. Students who are comfortable with a new classroom “tool” readily take ownership of it, increasing their productivity and allowing you more time to concentrate on the content they will create.

Here are a few suggestions for introducing *My Guide to Current Events*:

- Have students look through the book and discuss what they find. Ask guiding questions, if necessary. Remind them how to use a Table of Contents and practice using the page numbers. Discuss the different types of writing that are encouraged in this book.
- Discuss what kind of writing and illustrating tools can be used in the book. Students will be working on the front and back of all pages, so coloring with markers will “bleed” through onto the other side. One solution is to declare that only pencils, colored pencils, and crayons will be used in these books.

- Discuss the place for the student's name on the cover, the dedication space on the inside front cover, and the About the Author page. Explain that these are just as important as the rest of the book, and discuss when and how these should be filled in. You may want to assign specific times to consider and prepare the dedication and autobiography (possibly when the rest of the book is completed), in order to obtain a high-quality response.
- Discuss how to care for a book that will be used for an extended period of time, including treating it carefully, not tearing it, not stuffing it into a desk or book bag, not getting it wet, etc.

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## **Expanding the Use of *My Guide to Current Events***

In addition to the individual writing activities discussed earlier, this book can also be used in additional ways, including the following:

- Students can select or be assigned specific countries, regions, or states to research — individually or in teams — and then develop news reports or editorials about relevant topics.
- After two articles, editorials, or reviews written about the same topic have been read aloud, students can compare and contrast them, exploring similarities and differences in the facts, opinions, writing or other aspects.
- Students can read their editorials to the class or smaller groups; then other students can explain why they agree or disagree. (This can also help develop speaking and listening skills.)
- A video camera can be used to record a news broadcast that includes selected students reading their articles, editorials, and reviews.

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## **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 of a “thematic unit,” but nonetheless, have little to do with other subjects or have meaningful relevance to students’ lives.

*My Guide to Current Events* can help students connect personally to current events and related social studies themes, as well as better comprehend the complexity of our society and world. This book can also help students link social studies to other subject areas in meaningful ways. And by thinking and writing about current events — as well as developing their own opinions and considering those of others — the authors of *My Guide to Current Events* will not only become better students, they will also become more informed citizens.

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