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Introduction

What is a Smart Starter?

A Smart Starter changes “extra” moments in a classroom setting into teachable moments. They are designed to take short amounts of time. However, Smart Starters are NOT short on substance. The Smart Starters in this book are packed full of important skills to practise and polish or to reinforce and extend.

When are Smart Starters used?

As their name suggests, they are good for igniting learning. Instead of the slow move into a class period, lesson or school day, a Smart Starter quick-starts the action. Each one warms up the brain with a sparkling challenge. Students also need this kind of spark at times other than the beginning of the day or class period. Use a Smart Starter any time there is a lull, or any time students need a break from a longer activity. They work effectively to stimulate thinking at the beginning, end or middle of a class period, or any other time you can squeeze in an extra ten minutes.

Why use Smart Starters?

They’re energising! They’re stimulating! They’re fun! They nudge students to focus on a specific goal. They “wake-up” tired minds. They require students to make use of previously acquired knowledge and skills. Because of their short length, they give quick success and quick rewards – thus inspiring confidence and satisfaction for the learners.



How to Use This Book ...

Kick-Off a New Unit

The starters are grouped by subject strands. One or more of them might help to ease students into a new area of study. For instance, start off a unit on economics with *Economically Speaking*. Or, use *No Words Allowed* to introduce students to important cultural concepts.

Spark a Longer Lesson

Any one of these short activities can be expanded. A starter may inspire your students to develop questions along the same lines – expanding the warm-up into a full-blown Humanities and Social Sciences lesson.

Review a Concept

Dust off those rusty skills with a Smart Starter. For instance: Have students been away from the study of geography for a while? Refresh what they know about world countries with *The Shortest Path*. Or, strengthen their knowledge of world history events with *Which Came First?* Any of these Smart Starters will help to reinforce concepts previously introduced.

Charge-Up Thinking Skills & Ignite Creativity

The Smart Starters are not only for Humanities and Social Sciences lessons. Use them any time to stimulate minds. Doing a Smart Starter will sharpen thinking processes and challenge brains. In addition, Smart Starters work well as starting points for students to create other (similar) questions and problems.



Skill: Cultural Patterns

No Words Allowed

Use actions (without words) to convey cultural patterns. Divide students into small groups. Give one category to each group. Ask them to devise a way to communicate a cultural pattern (from their own culture or a culture they have studied) without using spoken language. Find time later for the groups to share their non-verbal communications with the whole group.

symbol

rule

tradition

belief

role

custom

ritual

rite

taboo

mores

For example: Use action to communicate the tradition of using fireworks to celebrate New Year's Eve.



Skill: World Geography Locations, Directions

The Shortest Path

This is a game of imaginary travel. Students will need a world map to help answer these two questions about each trip. In each case, they should imagine traveling from the first country named to the second country.

*If you are following the shortest route, which direction will you travel?
Will you cross the Equator or the International Date Line on your trip?*

1. from Suriname to Sudan
2. from Taiwan to Peru
3. from Sweden to Gabon
4. from Argentina to Papua New Guinea
5. from Iceland to Malaysia
6. from Libya to Paraguay
7. from Albania to Cuba
8. from Botswana to Kazakhstan
9. from Canada to Philippines
10. from Sri Lanka to Nepal



Economically Speaking

Use this quick drill to review economics terms and ideas. Divide the class into teams, read the questions aloud and have each team record their yes or no answers. If time permits, team members can discuss and explain their answers as a class.

1. Could you spend money that is out of **circulation**?
2. Would you expect **stock prices** to go up in a **bull market**?
3. Would you keep rare plants in a **safe deposit box**?
4. Could you open a savings account at **NASDAQ**?
5. Would you find security guards at **Ft. Knox**?
6. Could you use a **debit card** if you had no bank accounts?
7. Would you keep a **certificate of stock** in a **portfolio**?
8. Could you share a **share** of **stock**?
9. Would you expect to pay **interest** on a **loan**?
10. Could you type a **PIN** into an **ATM**?
11. Would you be able to visit your nation's **GDP**?



Which Came First?

Put brains to work sorting out the sequence of key events in world history. Read each group and call on volunteers to tell which historical event happened first.

1. U.S. Civil War; English Civil War; Korean War
2. Mayan civilisation flourishes; Balboa reaches Panama; Cortez conquers the Aztecs
3. Mexican Independence; Bolivar defeats Spain in South America; Haitian Independence
4. The Middle Ages; the Age of Exploration; the Industrial Revolution
5. Hubble Space Telescope is launched; First space station launched by the USSR; Space Shuttle Challenger explodes
6. Argentina, Brazil and Chile hold free elections; U.S. Civil War ends; Canada joins NATO
7. Quebec settled by French; Restoration of English monarchy; first English settlement at Jamestown
8. Mexican Independence; U.S. Independence; Canadian Independence
9. World War II ends; Great Depression; collapse of the Soviet Union