

Cooperative Learning &
Social Studies
Towards Excellence & Equity

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With contributions by John Myers
In consultation with Dr. Spencer Kagan



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Part 1

INTRODUCTION:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

That was the pattern of school life—a continuous triumph of the strong over the weak. Virtue consisted in winning: it consisted in being bigger, stronger, handsomer, richer, more popular, more elegant, more unscrupulous than other people—in dominating them, bullying them, making them suffer pain, making them look foolish, getting the better of them in every way.

—George Orwell, *Such Were the Days*, 1947

Orwell paints a horrid image of ruthless student competition, a school yard version of Picasso's *Guernica*. Most teachers would imagine a much more attractive picture of their own school, but many years later in his landmark study, *A Place Called School* (1984), John Goodlad presented a different, but equally unappealing portrait of school life in North America. Two images dominated, a teacher talking at students and students working alone. There was little cohesion or common purpose among class members in many of the hundreds of classrooms Goodlad's team visited. Though students saw social studies topics as potentially exciting, the classes were not. The emotional tone was flat. If this were the painting of classroom life, it would be an amorphous abstract done in beige and grey pastels.

Fortunately, many of the social studies teachers with whom I work are creating more vibrant classroom settings, far removed from either the brutal or the bland. They want classes characterized by lively,

purposeful discussion about important content and issues, classes in which all students are contributing and using their minds well. They want caring classes where all students, regardless of ability or achievement level, are eager and able to learn—classes which value both excellence and equity. These teachers see cooperative learning approaches as their primary colors for painting such classes.

I wish to acknowledge especially the excellent teachers in the **British Columbia Cooperative Learning Association**, the students and teachers at **John Oliver Secondary School**, and **John Myers** of the Toronto Board of Education. **Jeanne Stone** gave useful ideas for revision, **Wendy Staroba Loreen** developed the layout, and **Catherine Hurlbert** formatted this book.

While *Cooperative Learning and Social Studies: A Guide for Secondary and Middle*

School Teachers is based on **Spencer Kagan's** Structural Approach, I also should credit many other cooperative learning researchers, in particular **David and Roger Johnson** whose names and spirit appear throughout this guide. The book also reflects the work of **Elizabeth Cohen** and her colleagues at Stanford University who have given both John Myers and I an appreciation of how diversity can work in the classroom through using students' multiple abilities.

Above all, I wish to acknowledge the profound cooperation of my wife, **Rose-Hélène Gagné**, ma compagne de vie, and dedicate the book to her and our daughter **Chloé**.

Tom Morton
Vancouver, 1996



NARRATIVE OF LESSONS USING MIX-N-MATCH

Rhythms of Resistance in Southern Africa

Themes

- Culture
- Power, authority, and governance
- Global connections
- People, places, and the environment

Values

- Freedom to participate in the political process

Janet Bibb was planning a lesson on political change and culture in Southern Africa that she hoped would integrate social studies with music and literature. She wanted students to understand the role of popular music in expressing political and social themes as well as to learn the recent history and geography of Southern Africa. She would use Mix-N-Match often during the unit.

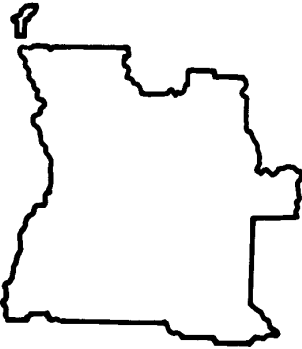
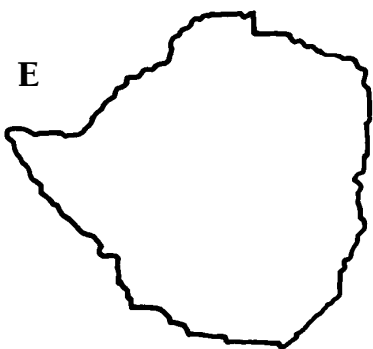
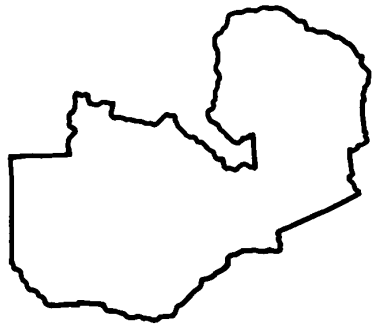
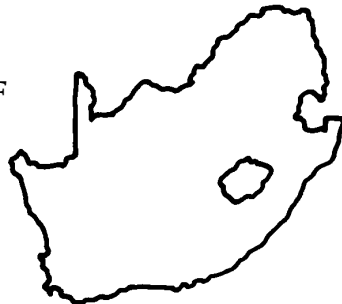
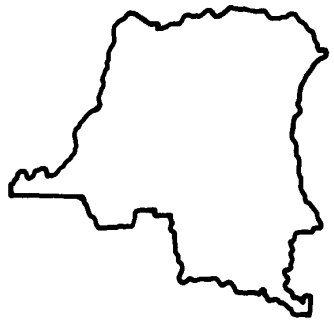
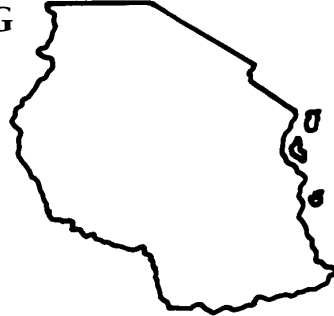
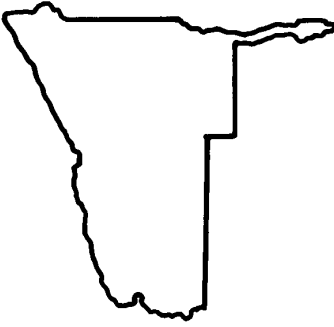

The class began by completing maps of the political boundaries of African countries, the major rivers and mountain ranges, and climactic zones. They reviewed these using a Mix-N-Match game with outline maps of 15 of the countries on one side that Ms. Bibb had prepared using MacGlobe and the matching names on another 15 cards. When pairs matched, they also tried to share other information that they knew about the country.

Two weeks later, after studying the music and politics of Southern Africa using especially the videos *Graceland* (1987) and *Rhythm of Resistance* (1979), Bibb used Mix-N-Match again. This time on one set of cards were photos or illustrations of instruments like the mbira or thumb piano, of the Zimbabwe ruins, of a gumboot (for the gumboot dance of the townships), and of people like Nelson Mandela and Miriam Makeba, as well as key vocabulary words like bantustan and the song title N’Kosi Sikeleli. The matching cards had explanations of the pictures and the words.

Students moved on to make their own thumb pianos and songs that expressed a political-social message. Student teams also made up questions and answers for review that they wrote on filing cards, one question on one card and the answer on another. This formed a Mix-N-Match practice test.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Mix-N-Match Materials

<p>A</p> 	<p>E</p> 
<p>B</p> 	<p>F</p> 
<p>C</p> 	<p>G</p> 
<p>D</p> 	<p>H</p> 

NARRATIVE OF A LESSON USING TEAM DISCUSSION

Analyzing Arguments on Women's Role

Themes

- Time, continuity, and change

Skills

- Reading comprehension
- Interpreting information
- Analyzing information
- Evaluating information

Values

- Equality
- Political rights and freedoms

Critical thinking is an important outcome for Sam Assad's school. In his senior history class his main approach towards this elusive goal is to analyze primary source arguments with an organizer called Marker that he discovered at a cooperative learning workshop.

To illustrate the steps in Marker, Mr. Assad likes to use examples like the following journal entry on "wishes" from his daughter who is in grade two at Ecole Anne Hébert. (Translated from French.)

"I want candies for me. For elephants, some water. Rabbits, carrots... For the giraffes to be happy. I want the sea to be not polluted with garbage. The other countries of the world I want to have a bit of money for their families because some of them are poor."

Using Marker, Assad suggests an analysis like the following:

M: the main idea would be that animals and people should have what they need or want and that the sea should not be polluted;

A: some assumptions that his daughter makes are (1) that the sea is polluted and (2) that if countries have more money that it would go to poor families;

R: the the form of reasoning might be (1) examples of needs and desires of animals and people; and (2) application of a moral principle - we should give money to other countries because this would help the poor, what might be called a principle of "doing unto others as we would have them do unto us."

K: key questions might be how can we make the giraffes happy or how could we best be sure that poor people in other countries receive help and what kind of help would be the best;

E: there is no evidence given;

R: there is considerable information that supports the author's claims, for example, we know that rabbits eat carrots, that there is pollution in our seas and that people are poor.

When Mr. Assad turns student teams loose with Marker and material closer to their course content, he likes to use Team Discussion so that there is a free exchange of ideas. Depending on the class, however, Sam adds a few more ingredients to his lesson mix to encourage participation and listening.

First, he insists on the roles that are described on the Marker worksheet. Second, he asks that each student take notes with common answers that all agree to and can explain. Third, he stresses, monitors and compliments good listening. Fourth, about five minutes before the time to report to the whole class, he asks students to switch to Numbered Heads Together:

"Even if you are not finished, we have limited time left so I want you to use Numbered Heads Together and check that everyone is ready to report to the class."

In processing he has students as individuals answer the questions below. Sam feels that the individual answers give him more honest feedback about how well the groups are working than group answers. He can then take steps to adjust his lessons or grouping based on the feedback.

1. On a scale of 1 (low)–10 (high) how well did your team members listen to you in your group discussion?
2. On a scale of 1 (low)–10 (high) how well did you listen to others?
3. How do you feel about the work that you just finished?
4. How might you improve next time?

An example of the kind of arguments that students analyze in Assad's class are two opposing viewpoints on suffrage for women on the following pages.

Notes

EXAMPLE**MARKER**

(Adapted from O'Reilly, K. and Splaine, J. (1987) *Critical Viewing*. Pacific Grove: California in Rhoades, J. and McCabe, P. (1992). *Outcome Based Learning: A Teacher's Guide to Restructuring the Classroom*. Sacramento: ITA Publications.)

Directions: Divide the following roles among team members, then read the passage and complete the questions on this page.

1. **Reader/Checker:** Begin by reading the passage to your team, then as you work, check that all team members agree with what is written and can explain it.
2. **Recorder:** Write down the team's answers then read what you have recorded to your team to check for accuracy.
3. **Encourager:** Ask students who are reluctant to speak if they have any ideas. Try to motivate the team if it gets bogged down.
4. **Gatekeeper:** If one student is talking too much, ask him or her politely to give someone else a turn.

All team members should listen to each other and be ready to report the team answers.

M = What is the main point? Look for key words to identify the different parts of an argument.

A = What assumptions does the author make? What values and value judgements are apparent?

R = What type of reasoning does the author use? comparison? sampling? cause and effect?

K = What are some key questions about this topic? How well does the author answer them?

E = What evidence does the author offer to support the argument(s)? Does the author use factual evidence without identifying the source? If the author has evidence, evaluate it (e.g. is it primary evidence or secondary; is the source of the evidence reliable or possibly biased?)

R = What is Relevant information about this topic that you already know? Does that information agree with what the author claims? Do the author's claims seem to make sense based on your own experience?