



Lesson Plan
Letting Swift River Go
Written by Jane Yolen, Illustrated by Barbara Cooney
Foundations of Democracy and
We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution
Literacy Integration



Lesson Purpose: The lesson is designed to integrate the concepts of civic education across curriculum using Jane Yolen's book *Letting Swift River Go*.

Book Summary: Relates the story of the people of the Swift River towns that were flooded to form the Quabbin Reservoir to provide water for the city of Boston.

Essential Questions:

- Why did government officials think it was important to create the reservoir?
- What impact did the development of the reservoir have on the land and people of the Swift River Valley
- How did the citizens of the Swift River towns demonstrate civic virtue?

Activities

- **READING:** Before the lesson the teacher should read *Letting Swift River Go* by Jane Yolen several times to:
 - ✓ Become familiar with the text,
 - ✓ Choose vocabulary words to be examined,
 - ✓ Identify where you will stop and ask for predictions,
 - ✓ Determine background knowledge required to fully understand the story,
 - ✓ Develop questions for the read aloud, and
 - ✓ Anticipate student responses.

(Suggested vocabulary for word work: trade-off, reservoir, eiderdown, quench, sacred, caissons, watershed, natural resource, Grange Hall, centuries, harvested)
- **READING:** Conduct a picture walk through the book before the read aloud. Have students explore their prior knowledge by using a "STW: What do I See? What do I Think? What do I Wonder?" Like a KWL, this technique "encourages a more full visual experience which promotes critical thinking, encourages thoughtful prediction, and stimulates curiosity." (Thibault, Melissa. <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/669>) Optional activity: Examine the photographs below using the STW chart to build comprehension
- **READING:** Conduct an interactive read aloud of *Letting Swift River Go* by Jane Yolen and illustrated by Barbara Cooney. (Be sure to read the Author's Note at the beginning of the book) Follow-up could include a discussion on how the lives of the Swift Valley residents changed following the building of the reservoir.
- **INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS:** After the read aloud have students use the Library Media Center or computers to conduct research on the history of the Quabbin Reservoir, the towns affected by the building of the reservoir, why the Swift River Valley was chosen for the reservoir project, and what trade-offs were made by the people living in the towns. Use primary source photographs (see below) to engage in a discussion of how the images provide information about the time period. What is the area like today? (Friends of the Quabbin Reservoir <http://www.foquabbin.org/>)

- **SOCIAL STUDIES:** Working as a whole class present a lesson on “civic virtue” and “common good.” Both concepts are found in Unit I Lesson 3 of *We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution*. Discuss how the people living in the Swift River Valley communities demonstrated these important concepts of republican government. What is “eminent domain” and how is it relevant to the story? (Elrod, Linda Henry. "Eminent domain." *World Book Student*. World Book, 2009. Web. 17 Dec. 2009.) How did the 5th Amendment to the United States Constitution ensure that the residents of the Swift River Valley communities were protected?
- **SOCIAL STUDIES:** Working in small groups have the students reread the book and review their research to determine how the decision was made to build the reservoir in the Swift River Valley. Who was responsible for the decision? Were the people living in the area included in the decision making process? What did the people in the towns receive in compensation for giving up their homes? Using the *Foundations of Democracy* curriculum integrate the concepts of authority, responsibility, privacy, and justice. Example: Who had the authority to make a decision that affected so many citizens? What were some of the costs and benefits of taking on the responsibility to build the reservoir? Was the privacy of the residents in each community taken into consideration? Were the people in each community treated fairly?
- **MATH AND MAP SKILLS:** Integrate math and map study by printing off a physical map of Massachusetts and working individually or in groups have students use the map scale and a ruler to calculate the distance from the Quabbin Reservoir to Boston. Students can discuss how the water would get from the reservoir to Boston. Use this opportunity to reinforce other map skills, such as longitude and latitude, direction, different types of maps, border states. (<http://www.sitesatlas.com/Flash/USCan/static/MAFF-800.jpg>)
- **WRITING:** Present a lesson on persuasive letter writing. Students reread *Letting Swift River Go* and discuss opposing viewpoints related to the development of the Quabbin Reservoir. Students write a letter to the editor supporting the building of the reservoir or a letter to the editor opposing the building of the reservoir. Persuasive letter writing rubric: http://teacher.scholastic.com/LessonPlans/LtrWritg_Rubric.pdf
- **SCIENCE:** Present a lesson on natural resources using the encyclopedia article from World Book Online Student edition (Aaron, Henry J. "Natural resources." *World Book Student*. World Book, 2009. Web. 17 Dec. 2009.) What natural resource was available in the Swift River Valley that was needed in Boston? What other natural resources were collected as the land was prepared for the reservoir? How would these natural resources support the needs of people? What natural resources would not be available after the reservoir was created?
- **READING:** Conduct an author/illustrator study of Jane Yolen and Barbara Cooney. See the bibliography below for recommended titles or check your school library for additional books.

Materials:

- Multiple copies of *Letting Swift River Go* by Jane Yolen.
- Classroom set of *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution*.
- Classroom set of the *Foundations of Democracy Authority, Responsibility, Privacy and Justice*.
- Classroom set of physical map of Massachusetts.
- Classroom set of rulers for map activity.
- Classroom set of STW activity.
- Computer access to the internet and World Book Online.

Evaluation:

- Sample persuasive letter writing rubric: http://teacher.scholastic.com/LessonPlans/LtrWritg_Rubric.pdf
- Research project rubric: <http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/rubrics/elemresearchrubric.html>

List of Resources

- Aaron, Henry J. "Natural resources." *World Book Student*. World Book, 2009. Web. 18 Dec. 2009.
- Elrod, Linda Henry. "Eminent domain." *World Book Student*. World Book, 2009. Web. 17 Dec. 2009
- Friends of Quabbin Reservoir. December 18, 2009. <<http://www.foquabbin.org>>.
- Massachusetts Physical Map. World Site Atlas. December 18, 2009. <<http://www.sitesatlas.com/Flash/USCan/static/MAFF.htm>>.
- Persuasive Letter Writing Rubric. Scholastic. December 18, 2009. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/LessonPlans/LtrWritg_Rubric.pdf>.
- Thibault, Melissa. "Reading Picture Books: Two Strategies for Helping Children Understand a Story Through Illustrations." Learn NC. December 18, 2009. <<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/669>>.
- Yolen, Jane. *Letting Swift River Go*. Boston : Little, Brown, c1992.

Bibliography of recommended titles by Jane Yolen and Barbara Cooney

- Yolen, Jane. Merlin and the Dragons. New York: Puffin Books, 1998, c1995.**
When young Arthur is troubled by dreams, Merlin tells him a story about a fatherless boy who himself dreamed about dragons and the defeat of the evil king Vortigern.
Reading Level: 5.4 Interest Level: 3-6
- Yolen, Jane. Owl Moon. New York: Philomel Books, c1987**
On a winter's night under a full moon, a father and daughter trek into the woods to see the Great Horned Owl. Reading Level: 2.9 Interest Level: K-3
- Yolen, Jane. Raising Yonder's Barn. Boston : Little, Brown, c1998**
Eight-year-old Matthew tells what happens when fire destroys the barn on his family's farm and all the Amish neighbors come to rebuild it in one day. Reading Level: 5.2 Interest Level: K-3
- Yolen, Jane. Water Music: Poems for Children. Honesdale, Pa.: Wordsong/ Boyds Mills Press, 2004, c1995**
Original poems are based on water in its various forms. Reading Level: 4.6 Interest Level: 3-6
- Cooney, Barbara. Eleanor. New York: Viking, 1996.**
Presents the life of Eleanor Roosevelt, who married a president of the United States and became a great humanitarian. Reading Level: 4.2 Interest Level: K-3
- Cooney, Barbara. Island Boy. New York: Viking, 1988.**
Matthais grows from a little boy to a grandfather on a small island off the coast of New England. Reading Level: 4.1 Interest Level: K-3
- Cooney, Barbara. Miss Rumphius. New York: Puffin Books, 1985, c1982.**
As a child Great-aunt Alice Rumphius resolved that when she grew up she would go to faraway places, live by the sea in her old age, and do something to make the world more beautiful--and she does all those things, the last being the most difficult of all. Reading Level: 2.9 Interest Level: K-3

Supplemental fiction and nonfiction books that may be of interest when teaching this lesson.

- Barraclough, Sue. Earth's Resources. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2008.**
An investigation of Earth's resources, explaining what they are, looking at the use of air and water, soil, trees, fuels, and rocks and minerals, and discussing the importance of saving resources.
Reading Level: 3.4 Interest Level: K-3 333.7 BAR

Brinckloe, Julia. Fireflies. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1986, c1985.

A young boy is proud of having caught a jar full of fireflies, which seems to him like owning a piece of moonlight, but as the light begins to dim he realizes he must set the insects free or they will die. Reading Level: 2.5 Interest Level: K-3 E BRI

Cast, C. Vance. Where Does Water Come From? Hauppauge, NY: Barron's, c1992.

Answers the title question with a number of answers, such as rain, reservoirs, aquifers, and wells. Reading Level: 4.5 Interest Level: 3-6 551.48 CAS

Koller, Jackie French. Someday. New York: Orchard Books, 2002.

In 1938, fourteen-year-old Celie must cope with leaving her Enfield, Massachusetts, home and her life-long friend, Chubby, as the day approaches when the Swift River Valley will be flooded to create a reservoir for Boston. Reading Level: 7.5 FIC KOL

Leavitt, Amie Jane. The Bill of Rights in Translation: What It Really Means. Mankato, Minn.: Capstone Press, c2009.

Presents the Bill of Rights in both its original version and in a translated version using everyday language; and describes the events that led to the creation of the document and its significance through history. Reading Level: 5.9 Interest Level: 3-6 342.7308 LEA

Provinsen, Alice and Martin. Shaker Lane. New York, N.Y., U.S.A. : Viking Kestrel, 1987.

When the town decides to build a reservoir on their land, the residents of Shaker Lane decides to move away than fight to keep their homes. Reading Level: 3.9 Interest Level: K-3 E PRO

Sauvain, Paul. Rivers and Valleys. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1996, c1995

Text and illustrations, with questions and activities, provide information about rivers and such related topics as valleys, waterfalls, dams, and floods. Reading Level: 5.5 Interest Level: 3-6 551.48 SAU

Stone, Lynn. Dams. Vero Beach, Fla.: Rourke, c2002.

Describes different types of dams, how and why they are built, and their effects on the environment. Includes a list of important dams around the world. Reading Level: 5.4 Interest Level: 5-8 627 STO

Wick, Walter. A Drop of Water: A Book of Science and Wonder. New York : Scholastic, 1997.

Describes the origins, characteristics, and uses of water. Reading Level: 5.5 Interest Level: 3-6

Standards:

International Reading Association / National Council of Teachers of English

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Note: Add your state or local English language arts standards and benchmarks here.

National Council for the Social Studies

- II. Time, Continuity, and Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves over time.
- III. People, Places, and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.
- V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.
- VI. Power, Authority, and Governance: Social studies programs should include experience that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance.
- VIII. Science, Technology, and Society: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of relationships among science, technology, and society.
- X. Civic Ideals and Practices: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principals, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

Note: Add your state or local social studies standards and benchmarks here.

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STW Chart

Name _____ Date _____

Book Title: _____

What Do I See?	What Do I Think?	What DO I Wonder?

“Leaving the Valley”
www.foguabbib.org



Three Views of Enfield, Swift River Valley

www.foquabbib.org



1927
The town of Enfield



1939
The former site of Enfield,
cleared prior to flooding



1987
The Enfield site lies 90 feet
below the surface of the
Quabbin Reservoir