

ARTS AND CRAFTS IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING

by Leonard S. Kenworthy

Creative teachers have long realized that some reluctant pupils can be enticed to enjoy social studies through arts and crafts. Such teachers have also been aware that social studies can be greatly enriched for all students by projects involving the first-hand experiences that arts and crafts can provide.

In this essay 23 books will be considered briefly, as volumes which ought to be purchased by school librarians and/or media centers, by curriculum centers, by social studies teachers, and by parents. They cover a wide range of topics—from American colonial crafts to building a moon settlement, from making African masks to doing Indonesian batik—as well as a wide range of age groups. And all of them have been published in the 1970s. Taken as a group, they represent an outstanding library of practical and imaginative materials on the arts and crafts in social studies teaching and learning.

General Volumes on U.S. Arts and Crafts

Four books deal with a diversity of topics and a broad sweep of important periods in United States history.

This sweep of periods and approaches is superbly presented by Jean and Cle Kinney in their volume **How to Make 19 Kinds of American Folk Art from Masks to TV Commercials** (Atheneum, 1974, 121 pp., \$7.95). Part One is on "Learning from Americans Who Did Not Sign Their Work." Part Two forms the bulk of the book, "19 Kinds of American Folk Art—From Masks to TV Commercials," with descriptions of such varied activities as masks, sandpaintings, fancy ropework, glassmaking, games, and TV ads. Included are instructions for reproducing such crafts, along with many good photographs and some sketches. Part Three is on "How to Take from the Past to Make Something New."

A second volume is also by Jean and Cle Kinney and is entitled **23 Varieties of Ethnic Art and How to Make Each One** (Atheneum, 1976, 118 pp., \$8.95). As the title suggests, this book is devoted largely to the skills which various ethnic or national groups have brought to America and how their descendants have continued to use those talents. Included are sections on Dutch tiles,

the engraving of Jewish seals, Italian mosaics, German furniture making, Czech glass decorating, and Moroccan leather work. There is also material on the jewelry work of the Southwest Indians and the art of the Eskimos. Black and white photographs and some pen and ink sketches add greatly to this exciting account.

A much longer work is Florence H. Pettit's **How to Make Whirligigs and Whimmy Diddles and Other American Folkcraft Objects** (Crowell, 1972, 349 pp., \$13.95). The text of this comprehensive volume is a little more difficult than those just cited and can be used best with junior and senior high school students. But its contents are as interesting as its title; they include quilt-making, braiding corn-shuck mats, carving whimmy diddles or whirligigs, and candlemaking, as well as other folk objects. There is a unique section on the use of tools, a valuable two-page list of museums to visit, and even a list of companies which handle the supplies needed for the projects.

James Razzi's **Star-Spangled Fun: Things to Make, Do and See from American History** (Parents Magazine Press, 1976, 61 pp., \$5.50) contains a lively assortment of activities for studying different periods of American history. The suggestions range from making wampum to constructing a moon buggy, from building a log cabin out of a light-bulb carton to constructing a peanut puppet, and from making a log-rolling game to fashioning a Paul Revere candleholder.

Colonial Arts and Crafts Projects

The story of the skill and inventiveness of early American settlers is told briefly and well in Lois Lazarus' **With These Hands They Built a Nation: The Story of Colonial Arts and Crafts** (Messner, 1971, 112 pp., \$4.64). Although intended for pupils in grades 4-7, it could serve as an introduction for older students and adults. It is well illustrated and deals primarily with "Building a Home," "The Working Family," and "Craftsmen." There are no suggestions, however, for making the products mentioned.

Two volumes deal almost exclusively with ways of reproducing the arts and crafts of the colonial period in America. The more comprehensive of these is Cheryl G.

Hopple's **The Heritage Sampler: A Book of Colonial Arts and Crafts** (Dial, 1975, 132 pp., \$6.95). And what a wealth of instructions it contains, especially on preparing foods like cornbread and johnnycakes, apple fritters, and Irish soda bread. But there are suggestions as well on drying fruits and vegetables, making candles, braiding rugs, fashioning several types of dolls, preparing herbs, and making paper cuttings. The material is written for good readers, but the suggestions can be simplified by teachers and parents for use with younger children.

Janet and Alex D'Amato's **Colonial Crafts for You to Make** (Messner, 1975, 64 pp., \$6.29) was written for the middle and upper grades and contains very specific instructions, together with drawings, on cooking, spinning and dyeing and weaving, patchwork and quilting, rugs, recreation and toys, clothing, and arts and decorative crafts. [Ed. Note: See full review in CR, Vol. 15, No. 2, p. 107.]

The ingenuity of the early American colonists and the lessons they learned from the Indians about growing and preparing food is well depicted in Lucille Recht Finer's **The Colonial Cookbook** (Hastings, 1976, 128 pp., \$7.95). After an introductory portion on the new land of America, there are sections on soups, meats, poultry, seafood, vegetables, puddings, breads, sauces and relishes, and sweets and drinks, with recipes for each item mentioned. Although written for upper elementary grade students, the recipes can be used by younger boys and girls.

Even more specialized is Jeremy Comins' **Totems, Decoys and Covered Wagons: Cardboard Constructions from Early American Life** (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1976, 127 pp., \$5.95). The number of items in this volume is limited but each one is well planned and large enough for use rather than small models. For example, students can make a totem pole taller than they are, a large storage box, and a barn which can be used as a clubhouse. And all these items can be made from relatively inexpensive cardboard. Also included are instructions for making rocking horses, trestle tables, carts, decoys, and other items. Excellent pictures of the finished products add much.

Other Unusual Crafts in U.S. History

A fascinating volume full of suggestions for teachers or students on making history come to life is David Weitzman's **My Backyard History Book** (Little, Brown, 1975, 128 pp., \$6.95). Teachers of almost any grade level should find new and provocative ideas in it. There are over 100 different suggestions, each spelled out in a page or two, with brief and sometimes humorous sketches to illustrate them.

Here are a few of the novel ideas Weitzman presents: a family travel map, gravestone rubbings, Friday night

interviews with your grandparents (possibly tape-recorded), the history of Main Street in your community, and a family history by way of old pictures or clippings.

Laura Ross has done a magnificent job of showing how masks can be made and used in dramatizing stories from American history, in **Mask-Making with Pantomime and Stories from American History** (Morrow, 1975, 112 pp., \$5.95). She tells how to make masks from paper bags, buckram, construction paper, and papier-mache. Then she presents ways of using these masks in conjunction with the dramatization of stories about Pocahontas and John Smith, the Boston Tea Party, Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, and Admiral Peary's trip to the North Pole.

Crafts and Toys from Around the World

Boys and girls, young people, teachers, and parents should revel in Florence Temko's **Folk Crafts for World Friendship** (Doubleday, 1976, 143 pp., \$4.00). This paperback, published in cooperation with the U.S. Committee for UNICEF, is most attractive in design and printing, with many photographs and sketches, and considerable color in the designs and page borders.

This outstanding volume is divided into sections on celebrations, masks and costumes, toys, decorations, and games, with examples drawn in each section from three to nine nations.

Somewhat similar, although concentrating on toys, is Joan Joseph's **Folk Toys Around the World and How to Make Them** (Parents Magazine Press, 1972, 96 pp., \$3.50). Most of the toys mentioned can be made with inexpensive materials or with scraps; specific instructions are provided for each toy, with drawings of the parts and/or the finished products. There is also a valuable section on where to get materials for making the 18 different toys, which include the construction of a tumbling man from Austria, a twirling yo-yo from the West Indies, a Chinese flip ball, Japanese Daruma dolls, and an Indonesian shadow puppet.

Arden J. Newsome takes a slightly different approach in her volume on **Crafts and Toys from Around the World** (Messner, 1972, 95 pp., \$6.64). In text and sketches, she shows how 35 toys, games, decorations, and holiday gifts ideas can be constructed—specialties which immigrants from all over the world have brought to America. They include such unusual projects as pressed flower transparencies from France, glove puppets from Italy, tiles from the Netherlands, paper chains from Poland, and Easter eggs from Czechoslovakia. Sources of materials for constructing these crafts are given in the back of the book.

Another type of treat is in store for boys and girls of almost any age, as they try their skill in preparing the foods from different parts of the world outlined in the book by Terry Touff Cooper and Marilyn Ratner,

Many Hands Cooking: An International Cookbook for Girls and Boys (Crowell, 1974, 50 pp., \$4.95)—a paperback prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Committee on UNICEF.

Here are recipes from 39 nations, typical foods from many cultures, including citrus pops from Puerto Rico, guava toast from Brazil, groundnut (peanut) soup from Nigeria, chocolate torte from Germany, lamb kebabs from Turkey, and egg flower soup from China. There are suggestions for international menus, and the book is printed in color to make it appealing visually as well as gastronomically.

Specialized World Crafts Books

There are also a few recent publications dealing in more depth with specific peoples or regions of the world and their crafts. Two of these are by Jeremy Comins. One is **Eskimo Crafts and Their Cultural Backgrounds** (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1975, 125 pp., \$5.95); the other is **Latin American Crafts and Their Cultural Backgrounds** (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1974, 127 pp., \$5.50).

The range of learning possibilities in reproducing the Eskimo crafts is especially striking. Comins describes dolls of several types, engravings, masks, leather applique, models of kayaks and dog sleds, stencil prints, sculpture, and line embroidery. How ingenious our Eskimo neighbors have been in developing their craft skills. In the one on Latin American crafts, Comins deals with ancient and modern creations, including metal masks and relief, designs in wood, raised-line designs, line embroidery, and small wood projects.

For African crafts, teachers, librarians, and students can profitably turn to Janet and Alex D'Amato's **African Crafts for You to Make** (Messner, 1969, 67 pp., \$6.29; fifth printing in 1975). It offers brief accounts of various types of clothing, houses, masks, pendants, drums, harps, and other objects produced in various parts of Africa, together with specific suggestions on how to make them. Two maps, a reading list, some general instructions, and some comments on the materials to be used add to the practical nature of this fine volume.

Even less well-known to most teachers are the closely-related arts of tie-dyeing and batik, ancient and modern crafts of the Indians of South America and artists in Indonesia, India, China, Japan, and Africa. Astrith Deyrup enhances our knowledge of these crafts in **Tie Dyeing and Batik** (Doubleday, 1974, 63 pp., \$4.95).

The first section is on tie-dyeing and the second section on batik which even young children can successfully undertake and carry through to completion. The instructions are simply and carefully described, with sketches to make them more vivid. One wishes that the author had included some photographs of the finished

products and a little more on the background of these beautiful designs.

A Miscellany of Other Crafts Books

While it does not fit into the various categories already outlined, a unique and extremely helpful book is Margaret Weeks Adair and Elizabeth Patapoff's **Folk Puppet Plays for the Social Studies** (John Day, 1972, 120 pp., \$9.95). The authors outline early in the book the steps in story dramatization and the true reasons for puppets. Then, at the end they elaborate on different ways to dramatize stories, and give production pointers on stage, lights, scenery and puppet making.

Most of this outstanding book, however, is devoted to 16 folk puppet plays based on tales and legends from around the world. These range from a West African folk story to American Indian legends, from myths of the far north and China to a folk tale of Japan. With each story there are study notes and production notes.

Very different but also highly useful is a reprint of a booklet published in the 1940s, by Kurt Wiese, called **You Can Write Chinese** (Viking-Penguin Books, 1973 reprint, 64 pp., 95 cents). In bold black and red sketches Wiese illustrates a very simple text showing how an American boy learns to "write" simple Chinese pictographs. This classic can be used with children of almost any age in art and social studies classes, with a deeper understanding of Chinese writing and culture as a result.

Another absorbing and unique volume is Forrest Wilson's **Build Your Own Moon Settlement** (Pantheon, 1973, 40 pp., \$2.95). Although this paperback is intended primarily for students in grades 6-12, some younger students will be able to cope with it simply because of their special interest in the moon. Some of the pages are printed so that they can be torn out to construct the moon settlement.

Although not written especially for social studies teaching, Harvey Weiss' **How to Make Your Own Books** (Crowell, 1974, 71 pp., \$7.95), is packed with ideas and practical suggestions for making personal, one-of-a-kind books by students. Topics suggested by the author include travel journals, diaries, photo and stamp albums, scrapbooks, books of rubbings, and other possibilities. Part One deals with the specifics of how such books can be made and Part Two with the various types of books pupils can produce.

The use of all of these books should do much to enliven the study of the social sciences and to involve students more fully in the subject.

Leonard S. Kenworthy, Ed.D., is a Professor Emeritus of Social Science Education, formerly associated with Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. His two latest books for students are Camels and Their Cousins (Harvey House) and Soybeans: The Wonder Beans (Messner).