

# ***Explorations in Social Studies***

**Independent Extension Projects  
for Gifted and High Ability Students  
for Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom**

Intermediate Grades (3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>)

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# Table of Contents

1. Letter to the Teacher .....	5
2. Student Materials .....	7
• Your Science Exploration: Student Directions .....	7
• Exploration Expectations .....	8
• Exploration Work Log .....	9
• Exploration Research Log .....	10
• Exploration Evaluation Rubric .....	11

## SECTION I:

3. Geography Explorations .....	13
• Outreach! Reaching Out to People in Other Regions .....	15
• We Are on Our Way: Create a Geography Game .....	17
• Pack Your Bags: Using Maps and Math to Plan a Trip .....	19
• Human Connections: Reading the Novel A Long Walk to Water .....	21
• Making Meaning with Maps: Geography and the Arts .....	23
• Teepee, Longhouse, or Pueblo: How Native Americans Adapted to Their Environment .....	25
• Geology and Geography: How Does Earth Science Affect Geography? .....	27
• Where in the World...? Cartography and the Art of Map Making .....	29
• America's National Parks: A Geographic Journey .....	31
• Outlandia: Using Geography to Define a State .....	33

## SECTION II:

4. Civics Explorations .....	35
• Hup, Two, Three, Four, Ready...Halt! The U.S. Military and Its Branches .....	37
• All The Way To The Supreme Court! Class Action: A Novel Study .....	39

## Table of Contents Continued...

• Who Represents You? Learning About Your Government Representatives...	41
• There Oughta Be A Law: Thinking About Rules and Laws .....	43
• Stars, Stripes, Statues, and Slogans: Using Symbols to Express Concepts and Ideals .....	45
• If I Were In Charge...Civic Life .....	47
• Order In The Court: The Supreme Court and Its Justices .....	49
• It's My Right! Thinking About the Bill of Rights.....	51
• Diversity In America: The Minority Experience Through Novels.....	53
• We The People: Our Rights and Responsibilities.....	55

### SECTION III:

5. History Explorations .....	57
• One Person = One Vote: History of Voting Rights in America .....	59
• "Dear America..." Historical Fiction Diaries and Journals.....	61
• You're My Hero: Heroes in History .....	63
• "The Rise and Fall..." Ancient Civilizations in History.....	65
• What A Great Idea! Inventions That Changed History.....	67
• "I Have A Dream..." The Civil Rights Movement in America .....	69
• "When in The Course of Human Events" An American Revolution Novel Study .....	71
• "We Are A Nation of Immigrants" Stories of Coming to America.....	73
• Cold Cases: History Mysteries.....	75
• Voices That Shaped America: The Lives and Speeches of Famous Americans .....	77
• Individuals Who Made a Difference: Biographies from the Americas .....	79

### SECTION IV:

6. Economics Explorations .....	81
• Buy This! Buy That! Buy! Buy! Buy! Advertising and Kids .....	83
• You Can Bank on It: The Dollars and Sense of Banking .....	85
• Money Doesn't Grow on Trees: Jobs and Income.....	87
• Lemonade for Sale! The Lemonade War: A Novel Study.....	89
• Look Who Followed Me Home! The Economics of Owning a Pet.....	91
• You Can't Always Get What You Want: Scarcity, Choice, and Opportunity Cost .....	93
• "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?" The Great Depression in America (1929-1939) .....	95
• Spending, Saving, and Sharing: Allowances and Money Management .....	97
• Money Matters: Economics in Action .....	99
• Oikonomiā: Trade in Ancient Economies.....	101

# Introduction to Explorations in Social Studies

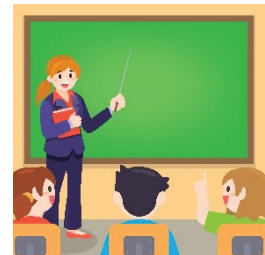
Dear Teachers,

As former classroom and gifted education resource teachers, we know how challenging it can be to meet the varied needs of your students. In today's one-size-fits-all world, we congratulate you on your efforts to seek out and use materials to offer increased rigor to your students.

*Explorations in Social Studies* is designed for gifted and high ability students who would benefit from greater challenge in the classroom. While most of your class is involved with regular classroom instruction on grade-level standards, *Explorations in Social Studies* provides the opportunity for some students to work *independently* on advanced, interdisciplinary investigations into the topics addressed by the standards written by several national organizations including the National Council for the Social Studies, Council for Economic Education, the Center for Civic Education and National Council for Geographic Education.

You may already have decided which students will benefit from *Explorations in Social Studies* based on your knowledge of your students. If you have not, here are some suggestions:

1. Find or design a suitable pre-assessment when you begin a new unit of study. Knowing which students already understand the big ideas of the unit will help you to identify students who need more rigor in their studies. Don't expect perfection, but do look for outliers.
2. Remember that some students may not demonstrate understanding on a pre-assessment because they are unfamiliar with the topic. However they may learn the new material rapidly and need a challenging alternative to keep them engaged.
3. Don't rule students out because of behavior problems. Remember that some of those behaviors may be the result of a lack of engagement with grade-level materials.



We recommend the following in order to make the most effective use of these materials:

1. In all activities students are asked to do some reading and research. Set up an area that supports students' efforts to work independently. This area should have writing and drawing paper, access to a computer or print reference materials, dictionary &



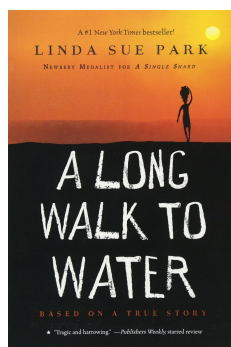
thesaurus resources (digital or print), calculator, ruler, scissors, glue, markers, pens, pencils, etc. If you are able to gather some general resources on the Exploration topic in advance, just to get them started, that would be helpful.

2. *Explorations in Social Studies* is designed to be **replacement** learning activities for students who need more rigor. But, they can also be offered as extension and enrichment alternatives. Students working on *Explorations in Social Studies* can do so without disrupting the class. For example, if you are reviewing material some students have mastered, they can be working on an Exploration. Research shows that extensions that build on classroom learning or address a student's passion area have the greatest impact.
3. The "Steps to Success" indicate stopping points where students are directed to check with you before continuing. Use this time to help them refine their research to get to the level of depth and complexity that you expect. Do not hesitate to have them dig more deeply.

We have intentionally used somewhat sophisticated vocabulary because so many published materials have been oversimplified. However, feel free to adapt these materials to make them accessible, particularly for your second language learners.







## Human Connections

### Reading the Novel *A Long Walk to Water*

#### Focus!

For this Exploration you will read the award-winning novel, *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park. In 1985, Salva is forced to flee his war-torn village in the Sudan. He becomes a “lost boy” refugee, walking across Africa on foot. In 2008, an African girl Nya walks hours everyday to fetch water for her family. In this Exploration, you will learn about the ties that connect people to each other.

#### Important Questions

These questions will guide your Exploration...

- ❓ *Why does the author use both non-fiction (Salva’s story) and realistic fiction (Nya’s story) in the book? How does this help the reader to understand both characters?*
- ❓ *Salva’s story takes place in 1985, while Nya’s story is set in 2008. How does the story show the connections of people over time?*
- ❓ *What role does water play in the book? How does water connect people?*
- ❓ *How does Salva’s story help you understand refugees and immigrants who come to America?*
- ❓ *What is the significance of the last two pages of the book? What does Nya learn? What is the final message of the book?*

#### Project Options

Choose one of the following projects to share your Exploration...

_____	On the website started by Salva, <a href="http://www.waterforsouthsudan.org">www.waterforsouthsudan.org</a> , individuals can participate in a variety of ways to raise money to bring water to the people of Africa. With appropriate adult permission, start your own fundraiser and send the money you raise to his organization.
_____	Research more about the Lost Boys of Sudan. If you can, locate and watch all or part of the movies <a href="#">The Lost Boys of Sudan</a> or <a href="#">God Grew Tired of Us</a> . Using information you learn, write a realistic fiction story that tells the story of one “lost boy” and his journey to America.

*More Project Options on next page...*

_____	South Sudan declared its independence from Sudan in 2011, after a civil war. The new country is very poor and faces many challenges. Make a map of South Sudan that shows its topography. Locate some information written for kids about current issues in South Sudan. Be sure to investigate the water situation in the country today. Write a summary of what you find.
_____	Design your own project and get approval from your teacher.

## Steps to Success

**To complete this Exploration, you will need to do the following...**

_____	1. Before you read, locate South Sudan on a map of Africa. Find some information about South Sudan written for kids. Look at some photographs of the people who live in South Sudan. Write down some interesting facts and things you notice.
_____	2. Read <i>A Long Walk to Water</i> by Linda Sue Park. As you read, keep careful track of the journeys that Salva and Nya take. Write down the names of places and information about the place. You can follow Salva's African journey on the hand drawn map at the front of the book.  <i>Check in with your teacher at this point. Teacher Initials _____</i>
_____	3. Using the map at the front of the book as a guide, create three maps of your own. ____ Salva's Journey in Africa ____ Salva's Journey to America ____ Nya's Journey
_____	4. Learn about Salva's organization, "Water for South Sudan" by visiting his website, <a href="http://www.waterforsouthsudan.org">www.waterforsouthsudan.org</a> . Explore the site and learn more about providing clean drinking water to Africa.
_____	5. Think carefully about the Important Questions and write your responses to at least three of them in the journal that holds your research. Your thinking about these questions should be evident in your final project.  <i>Check in with your teacher at this point. Teacher Initials _____</i>
_____	6. Choose the project you would like to complete. Before you begin putting your project together, read the Evaluation Rubric carefully so that you will understand the expectations for success.
_____	7. Create your project. Your project should show your best writing, thinking and presentation skills.  <i>Turn in your project and find out what your teacher wants you to do next.</i>



# Stars, Stripes, Statues, and Slogans

## Using Symbols to Express Concepts and Ideals

### Focus!

Symbols are objects that represent the values, traditions, and ideas that make our country unique. This Exploration will focus on the symbols that help explain the ideals of the United States.

### Important Questions

These questions will guide your Exploration...

- ? Why do people use symbols to express concepts and ideals?
- ? Do symbols mean different things to different people? Why? Give some examples.
- ? Can a symbol express a deeper, more profound idea than words? Why?
- ? Why are patriotic symbols so powerful? Why do symbols seem to touch people's emotions?
- ? What questions do you have about symbols in general? What else do you want to know?

### Project Options

Choose one of the following projects to share your Exploration...

_____	Walk around your school and create a list all the symbols you see. Look at the posters, signs, posted student work, slogans, mascots, bulletin boards, national and state symbols and more. What can you learn about the ideals and culture of your school from the symbols that you see? Write a letter to your principal that explains the symbols and what the school environment "tells" others about your school.
_____	When choosing our national symbols, Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1784: <b><i>"The Bald Eagle is a bird of bad moral character. He does not get his living honestly. In truth the Turkey is in comparison a much more respectable bird as a true original Native of America."</i></b> Research more about Benjamin Franklin's idea, as well as why the Bald Eagle was chosen as a symbol for our new country. Write a letter to Mr. Franklin, explaining if you agree with him or others.
_____	Study a \$1, \$5 and \$10 bill, as well as some coins. Make a list of all the symbols that represent America on the money. Research the symbols and their meanings. Make a poster that shows what you learned.
_____	Choose two patriotic songs (like "The Star Spangled Banner" or "America, the Beautiful") and listen to them. Write down your ideas for some of the symbols in the song. Memorize the first two verses of each and perform the songs for an audience. Then, explain the symbols of America



	that are in the songs. Tell why people use symbols to represent ideas.
_____	People have used symbols of our country to protest things they believe need change. For instance, American flags have been burned to protest war, sports figures have knelt during the national anthem to protest racial injustice, and groups have gathered at the Lincoln Memorial to protest political and social issues. Research both sides of a protest that involves a national symbol. Write a well thought out "letter to the editor" stating your opinion about the protest and the use of the symbol.
_____	Design your own project and get approval from your teacher.

## **Steps to Success**

**To complete this Exploration, you will need to do the following...**

_____	<p>1. Do the following activities to learn about symbols.</p> <p>___ Brainstorm a list of 10 or more symbols that represent ideas (like dove=peace, scales=justice, heart=love.) Choose <b>five</b> and research their origins and meanings. Write down what you find in your journal.</p> <p>___ Brainstorm a list of 25 or more symbols of the United States. Consider images, anthems and songs, pledges, slogans, flags, landmarks, statues, monuments and even food. Choose <b>ten</b> and research their history and symbolic meanings. Write down what you find in your journal and keep track of your sources on a Research Log.</p> <p>___ Locate information on the symbols of your state. Choose <b>five</b> symbols and research their history and symbolic meanings. Write down what you find in your journal and keep track of your sources on a Research Log.</p>
_____	<p>2. After thinking and learning about symbols, write a statement that tells why you believe people use symbols.</p> <p><i>Check in with your teacher at this point. Teacher Initials _____</i></p>
_____	<p>3. Think carefully about the Important Questions and write your responses to at least three of them in the journal that holds your research. Your thinking about these questions should be evident in your final project.</p> <p><i>Check in with your teacher at this point. Teacher Initials _____</i></p>
_____	<p>4. Choose your project. Before you begin putting your project together, read the Evaluation Rubric carefully so that you will understand the expectations for success.</p>
_____	<p>5. Create your project. Your project should show your best writing, thinking and presentation skills.</p> <p><i>Turn in your project and find out what your teacher wants you to do next.</i></p>