

CLASS ACT, MIDDLE SCHOOL continued from page 9

pens, scissors, glue, and possibly magazines which can be cut up.

PROCEDURE

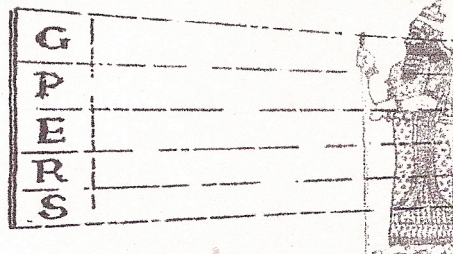
1. Divide the class into five groups; if your class is super-large, use ten groups. Assign a concept to each group.
2. Discuss the concepts.
3. Tell each group to develop a collage or poster illustrating what they know about their concept. Leave enough room to add ideas after the poster is done, or add more paper if needed.
4. Throughout the year, add additional information about that concept, so that they will have a working knowledge of those terms.

For example, the group on Political systems might begin with "government, leaders, democracy" and appropriate pictures to illustrate those ideas. As the year progresses, they might add examples of political concepts such as "pharaoh, priest-king, legitimacy, empire, authority," etc. The economics group might begin with "making a living, jobs, natural resources," and go on to "distribution of wealth; land, labor, capital; technology, tools, canals," etc.

Students should come to realize that some aspects/examples fit into more than one category. *For instance, a group might argue that writing is part of Social structure, while others might say it was an integral part of Economic growth. Is feudalism political, economic, or social, or all three? What about the role of the church? This leads them into critical thinking and analysis. Students should come to realize that some aspects/examples fit into more than one category. It should also help them to understand that life isn't made up of clearly defined categories - that things can overlap, and no one answer can always be The Only Answer.*

By the end of the year, each concept should be surrounded by dozens of excellent examples that illustrate varying degrees of understanding and sophistication. But when students are asked to describe the geographic, political, economic, religious, and/or social causes of a major event and the effect of that event on the "GPERS" of a group or society or civilization, they might be able to make a thoughtful analysis based on a host of factors, rather than a one-dimensional, simplistic essay.

To make room for other student work, it might be necessary to take down the GPERS posters;



bring them out from time to time to add new learnings. Renewed interest and awareness might be generated whenever the posters are brought out for additional work.

SOURCE: This idea came from a visit to the 6th-grade classroom of Heidi Verdugo and her student teacher, Consuelo Mason, in Rolling Hills Middle School, Watsonville, CA. ####