CLASS ACTS

CLASS ACT, MIDDLE SCHOOL
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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, democ-
rracy” 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, technol-
gy, 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;

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. 

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.

SUNBURST December 2003