

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

PREFACE

This overview employs ten themes developed by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) to create meaningful learning experiences in social studies for students at every grade level. As one way to make material meaningful, NCSS recommends firsthand experiences told by someone of a different culture to help students gain perspective on their own culture.

Facing the Lion, Growing up Maasai on the African Savannah is more than a compelling story; it is a powerful examination of a distinct culture and offers teachers and students numerous ways to explore cultural differences and similarities.

According to the National Standards for Social Studies Teachers¹, published by the NCSS, “there are ten themes that serve as organizing strands for the social studies curriculum at every school level and they are....

- I Culture
- II Time, Continuity, and Change
- III People, Places, and Environments
- IV Individual Development and Identity
- V Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- VI Power, Authority, and Governance
- VII Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- VIII Science, Technology, and Society
- IX Global Connections
- X Civic Ideals and Practices

Detailed below are the ways a curriculum including a study of **Facing the Lion** can be used to address seven of the NCSS themes.

THEME CONNECTIONS

I Culture

NCSS Theme Goal: *“In a democratic and culturally diverse society, students need to comprehend multiple perspectives that emerge from within their own culture and from the vantage points of the diverse cultural groups.... These understandings allow them to make sense of actions, ideas, and products of others as well as to relate to and interact with people within their diverse society and throughout the world.”*

Understanding different cultures is the key to helping students to become citizens of the world. In **Facing the Lion**, there are many opportunities to explore cultural diversity and to make sense of the actions of other cultures. When Lekuton is chosen to go to school he encounters the modern Westernized culture of an American missionary school.

Students will relate to his struggle to balance the two cultures and apply lessons learned in each of his worlds to his life.

III People, Places, and Environments

Facing the Lion: A Bridge to Kenya

Interdisciplinary Middle School Curriculum and Service Learning Program

NCSS Theme Goal: *“The study of people, places, and human-environment interactions leads learners to create their spatial views and geographic perspectives of the world.”* Teachers *“can provide learning experiences which encourage increasingly abstract thought as learners use data and apply skills in analyzing human behavior in relation to its physical and cultural environments.”*

In **Facing the Lion**, one quickly learns how the physical environment shaped the nomadic culture that Lekuton describes. The book lends itself naturally to comparing and contrasting one’s own behavior in relation to the physical and cultural environments to that of the Maasai.

IV Individual Development and Identity

NCSS Theme Goal: *“For teachers to guide learners in the study of ideas associated with individual human development and “have learners compare and evaluate the impact of stereotyping, conformity, acts of altruism, discrimination, and other behaviors on individuals and groups.”* Teachers can assist learners to *“appreciate the commonalities and differences that exist among humans in different and the same cultures, age groups, and social contexts.”*

In **Facing the Lion**, a chapter entitled “Initiation” relates well to this concept. It provides the opportunity to discuss maturation and how it is marked in different cultures and in one’s own culture. There are many other opportunities to explore commonalities and differences among young people.

V Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

NCSS Theme Goal: *“Understanding the historical development of structures of power, authority, and governance and their evolving functions in contemporary American society, as well as in other parts of the world, is essential for the development of civic competence.”* The development of civic competence is crucial in becoming a principled global citizen.

In **Facing the Lion**, the relationship between the village people and the elders in the community provides an excellent beginning to compare authority in American society to authority in the Maasai culture and how each experience shaped the members of each group.

VII Production, Distribution, and Consumption

NCSS Theme Goal: To *“understand that unequal distribution of resources necessitates systems of exchange, including trade, ... [and that] economic decisions are global in scope and require systematic study of [our] interdependent world economy.”* Teachers should *“provide opportunities for learners to assess how values and beliefs influence private and public economic decisions in different societies.”*

Facing the Lion lends itself to a culminating Service Learning Project that allows students to contribute to the economic well being of the Maasai after they have learned about the economic values and beliefs of the Maasai and how these affect their economic decisions.

XI Global Connections

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NCSS Theme Goal: *“Global interdependence requires that learners understand the increasingly important and diverse global connections among the cultures and societies of the world.”* Teachers should *“have learners illustrate how individual behaviors and decisions connect with global systems.”*

Again, **Facing the Lion** provides a wealth of examples to which a student can relate but also presents these commonalities through experiences that might be uncommon for most children from American culture.

X Civic Ideals and Practices

NCSS Theme Goal: *“What is the role of the citizen in a community, in a nation, and in the world community? How can I make a positive difference?”*

After reading **Facing the Lion**, learners will be ready to ask these questions of themselves. Through participation in a Service Learning Project to benefit “Cows for Kids”, which was established in partnership with Lekuton, students will have the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of the people whose culture they have come to better understand.