

# *Democracy in Action*

## **Communities Make Decisions**

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# ABOUT STORYPATH

## THE STORYPATH STRATEGY

Storypath offers both a structure for organizing the social studies curriculum and an instructional strategy for teaching. The structure is a familiar one: the story. The strategy is grounded in a belief that children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning, and places students' own efforts to understand at the center of the educational enterprise. Together, the structure and the teaching strategy ensure that students feel strongly motivated and have meaningful and memorable learning experiences.

Originally developed in Scotland during the 1960s, Storypath draws support from decades of experience with teachers and students. The approach has its roots in these beliefs about children and learning:

- The world is complex and presents many layers of information. Children know a good deal about how the world works and have a reservoir of knowledge that is often untapped in the classroom.
- When children build on that knowledge through activities such as questioning and researching, new understandings are acquired. Because children construct their own knowledge and understanding of their world, their learning is more meaningful and memorable.
- Problem solving is a natural and powerful human endeavor. When children are engaged in problem-solving, they take ownership for their learning.
- The story form integrates content and skills from many disciplines and provides a context for children to gain a deeper, more complex understanding of major concepts.

## AN INQUIRY APPROACH

Questioning, by both teacher and students, is a key component of Storypath. Through the story structure and the discourse it creates, the teacher guides students in their search for meaning and understanding as they acquire new knowledge and skills. Your questions, and the discussions they engender, cause students to:

- ask their own questions and think critically about what they know;
- use their prior knowledge to make sense of new information;
- connect personally to important social studies concepts.

The story structure and inquiry guided by unit goals provide the framework for students to integrate skills and complex content through problems they encounter. As they do so, their understanding of important concepts is extended and key connections are made.

## THE STORY STRUCTURE

For thousands of years, stories have helped us create order and make connections between events. Storypath's narrative structure helps students understand concepts that they often find difficult to comprehend in the traditional social studies curriculum.

Each Storypath unit centers on a unique and engaging story that provides a concrete context for understanding the social science content. This story may be based on actual historical events, as developed in *Struggle for Independence*. Or the story might instead be based on typical community or business structures, as developed in *Families in Their Neighborhoods* or in *Understanding the Marketplace*. From all of these structures, students develop a meaningful context for developing understanding of the topic.

### Typical structure of a Storypath unit

#### CREATING THE SETTING

Students create the setting by completing a frieze or mural of the place.

#### CREATING THE CHARACTERS

Students create characters for the story whose roles they will play during subsequent episodes.

#### BUILDING CONTEXT

Students are involved in activities such as reading, writing, and research to stimulate them to think more deeply about the people and the place they have created.

#### CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Characters confront problems typical of those faced by people of that time and place.

#### CONCLUDING EVENT

Students plan and participate in an activity that brings closure to the story.

# PLANNING THE UNIT

## DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

### MAKE KEY DECISIONS

**Make Classroom Space for the Storypath.** You will want to have adequate wall space for students to make the frieze of the community as well as space to display the characters and the various projects students complete during the unit. Sometimes teachers are tempted to put the frieze and the characters in the hallway outside of the classroom. It is important, however, to display these items inside the classroom where students can easily refer to them throughout the Storypath.

**Organize Students.** It is suggested that students work in groups of three to five to create families for the story. The groups will work together throughout much of the unit as they tackle various problems as a family group.

**Arrange for Role-Plays.** In Episode 4, you or another adult will represent the shopping mall at the community meeting. If another adult plays the role, you will need to brief the person for the role providing specific information based on how the story has developed.

**Use the Student Portfolio to Gather Evidence of Student Learning.** The Student Portfolio provides evidence of student understanding of families and neighborhood communities. In the Portfolio students apply reading and writing skills to demonstrate learning. While much of the students' work is displayed to enrich the learning environment, you will want to add it to the Portfolio when the Storypath concludes as a record of their performance.

**Create a Learning Community.** An open and supportive atmosphere is essential for students to engage in the discourse that is basic to the learning process of the Storypath approach. Students should understand the value of reflective discussions and the importance of collaborative work to deepen their understanding of complex ideas. Consequently, students should be expected to listen carefully and respond thoughtfully and respectfully to one another's ideas.

### CUSTOMIZE THE UNIT

**Adapt the Unit.** There will likely be times in this unit when you will want to modify the curriculum to suit the needs of your own class and follow the logical progression of the story. In Episode 1, you may want to adapt the description of the community to more closely match that of your students. You or your students may have other ideas for developing community identity in Episode 3. Additionally, at various points during the unit, activities are suggested to assist you in adapting this unit to meet your unique needs.

Frequently, students will provide an unanticipated twist to the Storypath, or important learning opportunities will arise. The Storypath allows for the accommodation of those special circumstances.

**Use Current Events.** At times during the *Democracy in Action* unit, students will role-play characters to understand a particular viewpoint. At other times, students will reflect on the events of this unit out of role so that the situations can be examined and understood from the student's own perspectives. These are good opportunities to connect students' experiences to current events in the news. Frequently, similar problems revolving around land use and allocation of resources are in the local news, and discussing these problems extends students' understanding to real communities and ultimately makes the Storypath experience more powerful.

**Connect to Other Storypaths.** *Community Studies: The Radio Station* Storypath is designed to have students learn about their own community by creating radio programs and would serve as an effective complement to this unit.

## INVOLVE OTHERS

**Involve Families.** Students frequently discuss their Storypath experiences at home. They are usually eager to talk about the families and community they have created. Invite family members in to the classroom to participate in discussions about their community. In Episode 7, students celebrate the community they've created. This is an ideal time to involve families in the classroom. Students can write invitations to the celebration, and families can participate in the events.

**Involve Community Leaders.** At the conclusion of the unit, you may want to invite a member of your city or county council or another community leader to visit your classroom and share personal experiences similar to the ones experienced by your own students. Students can prepare interview questions and will discover that the problems they faced in their Storypath are shared by others in their own community.

**Involve Your Community.** A walk through your community could serve as an important extension to the Storypath. Students could interview community members about their views of the community and how their community solves problems. Those activities should be carefully timed, however, and are best conducted at the conclusion of the unit. This allows students to knowledgeably compare and contrast the two experiences and makes for a more powerful learning experience.

# EPISODE

## CREATING THE SETTING THE COMMUNITY

### INTRODUCING THE COMMUNITY

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Students discuss the features found in a particular community.

**Materials** Teaching Master 1, *Description of a Community*, TH\* p. 44  
Content Slide Set 1

**Grouping** Whole class

**Schedule** Approximately 30 minutes

### CREATING THE COMMUNITY

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Students create a frieze of a community.

**Materials** Portfolio 1, *Frieze Guide*, p. 4  
For the frieze:

- a large bulletin board or wallspace, approximately 6' wide and 4' high, covered on the bottom half with green butcher paper and on the top half with white or blue butcher paper
- various colors of construction and tissue paper
- colored markers, crayons, glue, paste, masking tape, scissors
- other art materials such as fabric, yarn, cotton balls, lace, and ribbon

**Grouping** Groups will work on different sections of the frieze.

**Schedule** 1–2 hours. The time can be divided over several days, but students will probably want to complete the frieze in one session.

### CONCLUDING EPISODE 1

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Students reflect on their experiences, create word banks, and write sense poems.

**Materials** Portfolio 2, *Writing: Sense Poem*, p. 5  
For the word banks: thick markers and 3" x 5" index cards  
Pocket folders or sturdy paper to make folders (one per student)

**Grouping** Whole class to reflect on the experience; individually to contribute words to the word bank and write sense poems

**Schedule** 1 hour, including time for writing the sense poems.

#### EPISODE OBJECTIVES



- **Culture/Social Interaction** *Determine in what ways the natural environment of a community might affect the people who live there.*
- **Social Skills** *Plan and make decisions while creating a frieze with group members.*
- **Social Skills** *Determine an appropriate course of action to complete the frieze.*
- **Critical Thinking** *Organize ideas from class discussion to create the frieze.*
- **Literacy** *Listen to a description of a community.*
- **Literacy** *Write a sense poem using a word bank.*

\*TH = Teacher's Handbook

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## CHARACTER BIOGRAPHY

1. Character's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Physical features: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Personality traits: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Leisure activities: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Interesting anecdote: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Roles your character fills in the community: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Assessment:** The biography is appropriate to the family and community created. It includes an anecdote that is imaginative and believable. The figure of the character matches the biography. At least two logical community roles are identified.



## How do businesses contribute to a community?

Businesses are an important part of most communities. Some businesses provide goods, such as a grocery store, some provide services, such as a dry cleaner, and some provide both. Some businesses meet needs that everyone has, so these businesses exist in almost every community. For example, people need to eat and to put gas in their cars, so most communities have food stores and gas stations.

What is the difference between a “good” and a “service”? What are some businesses that provide goods? What are some businesses that provide services? (*scanning*)

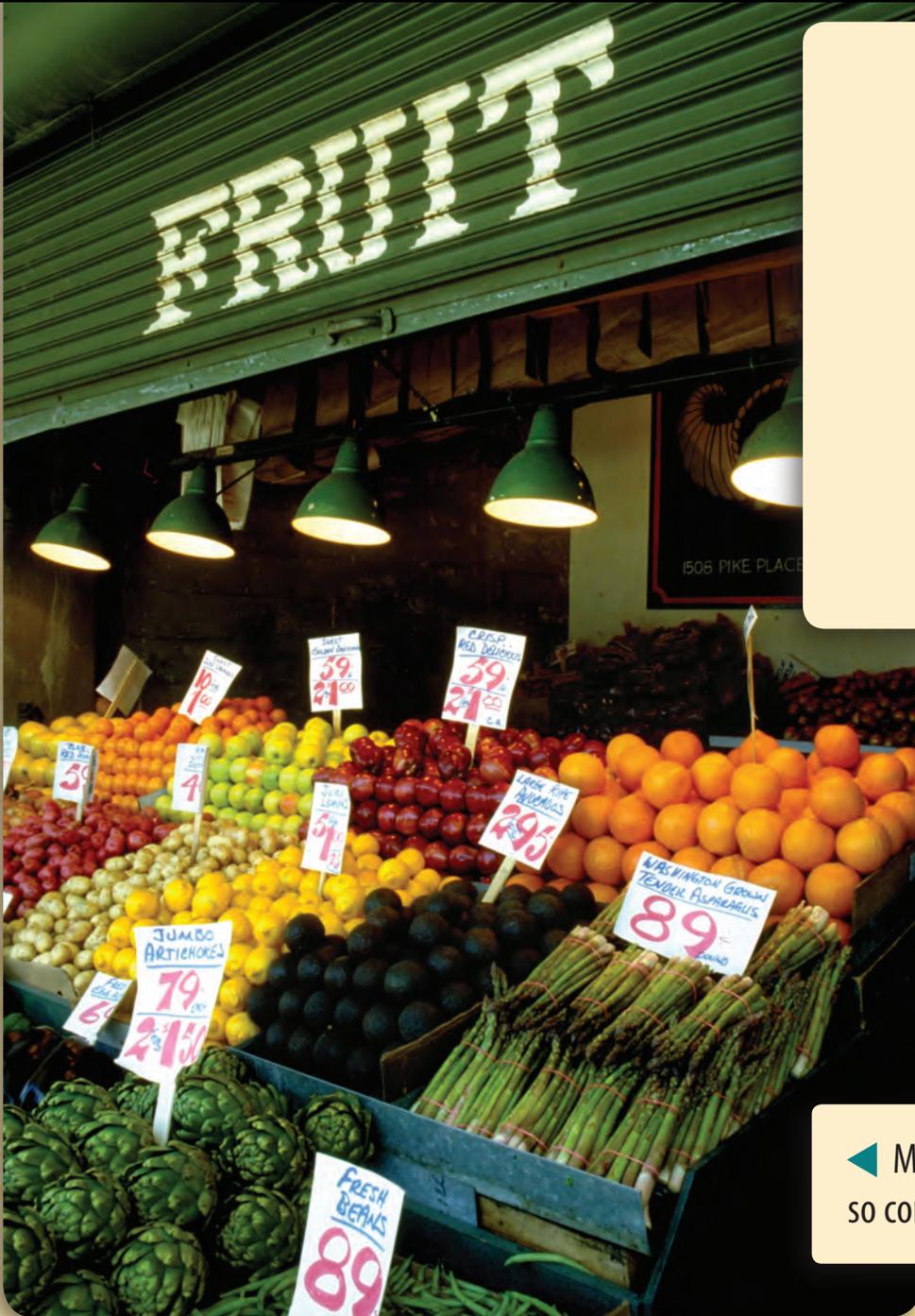


All communities have some small family-owned businesses like this one. Family-owned businesses offer a more personal touch to customers in a community. ▼

Other businesses are connected to a community's location or natural resources. For example, a farm community has businesses that meet the needs of farmers. Some businesses become part of the town's history or traditions because they stay in business for a long time. In these ways, businesses are connected to a community's features and identity.

**How are different communities' businesses the same? How are they different?** *(comparing and contrasting)*





Businesses and communities need each other. Businesses need people to work for them and to buy their goods and services. People in communities need businesses for employment and for things that they want or need to buy.

◀ Most people need to shop for food, so communities have grocery stores.



DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## FRIEZE GUIDE

Work with your group to plan and make businesses, homes, and other features for your community.

### 1. Plan the buildings and other features you will make.

Make a list. Look at the list you brainstormed as a class to get ideas. Your group should make at least one business and one home.

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### 2. Share your ideas with the group.

Work together to select the best ideas. Circle the ideas on your list that you will use.

### 3. Assign jobs. List what you will do.

### 4. Assess your work.

Put a check next to the things you did.

- I offered ideas about the frieze.
- I listened to other people's ideas.
- I made positive comments to my group members.
- I was willing to change my ideas to help the group.
- I helped someone else if I had time.

I liked working with my group because \_\_\_\_\_

I could be a better group member by \_\_\_\_\_



## WRITING: SENSE POEM

Write a sense poem to describe the community on your frieze. Complete each of the lines below with at least one describing word (adjective) and a word that names a thing (noun). You can use words from the word bank or any other words you can think of that will give your readers a clear picture of the community.

I see \_\_\_\_\_

I hear \_\_\_\_\_

I touch \_\_\_\_\_

I smell \_\_\_\_\_

I feel \_\_\_\_\_

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite your poem, using only the words you wrote on the lines. Use your best handwriting and check for correct spelling.

Your finished poem might look something like this:

Glorious fall colors  
Bubbling, rippling water  
Dry, crispy leaves  
Tart, spicy cider  
A crisp, new chill

**Assessment:** The poem follows the given format and reflects a sense of the community. The poem uses adjectives and nouns to create a logical sequence about each sense; colorful and interesting adjectives describe the nouns. There is evidence of care in construction and correct spelling is used.



DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## FAMILY GROUP WORK

### 1. Discuss the kind of family you will create.

Decide on your family's last name. \_\_\_\_\_

List the name, age, and occupation of each family member.

Write where your family members were born. If they were not born in this community, what caused them to move?

\_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Give your family a "personality."

What leisure activities do you enjoy together?

\_\_\_\_\_

What personality traits do the family members have in common?

\_\_\_\_\_