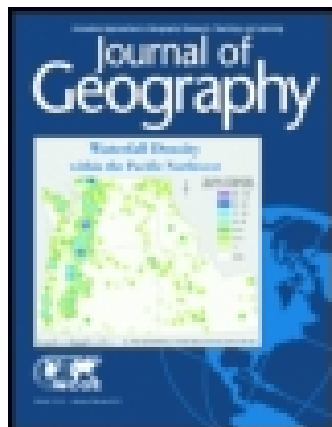


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Utilizing Current News in Geography Teaching

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making. This is shown in recent work done in one of the zones of the armies by the Royal Engineers, where there has been much checking and correcting of military maps taken over from one of our Allies. Finally, it is advisable to include some panorama drawing. This, either from nature or from maps, is most valuable in teaching appreciation of land forms, and it is to be regretted that more of it is not attempted in ordinary school work.

But military map reading, when all is said and done, is not a complete course of geography, nor even a complete course of map study. We can possibly make use of some parts of it to improve our ordinary map work, but, to quote the closing remark of Colonel Sir Thomas Holdich in his Presidential Address to Section E of the British Association in 1903: "The methods of further improvement are simple: better teachers and better examining, and for both it is probable that we must look more directly to civil sources than the tentative efforts of the military schools."

UTILIZING CURRENT NEWS IN GEOGRAPHY TEACHING

Teachers are often urged to utilize current news and periodical literature as a point of departure in their work of instruction; the idea being that in this way some vitality and sprightliness can be infused into the dull routine of classroom recitations based on a single text. But any such wholesale and indiscriminating attempt to utilize news and magazine items in geography teaching can only result, like the use of purposeless collections of railroad folders, hotel advertisements, picture post cards, and similar miscellanies, in a general cluttering up of the classroom work, mentally and physically; and it may create so much of a diversion from the necessary systematic study as to become a positive detriment instead of a help.

PROPER METHOD OF SELECTION

On the other hand, news items do occasionally appear that may be used to make lessons pertinent and practical. As a guide in locating and choosing these, this general criterion will apply: the item must be of such nature that it stimulates the teacher's

interest in the subject—in this case geography—by supplementing such information as the teacher already possesses, or by enlarging his or her understanding of a given topic. Then it should be of such general interest that it can readily be brought to the attention and understanding of the pupils.

A "CONCRETE" EXAMPLE

The paragraphs reproduced below (from the *New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1918, p. 12, Col. 6), are a remarkably good example of this sort of item because the subject is of such wide interest and its content of such significance, in linking up the geography of the text with the geography of the working world, that all teachers should be stimulated on reading it.

The American steamship *Faith*, the largest concrete vessel in the world, launched on March 14 on the Pacific Coast as an experiment in this method of construction, arrived yesterday with a cargo of sugar and docked at South Fourth Street, Williamsburg.

On May 22 the *Faith* left San Francisco for Seattle with a cargo of salt and copper ore. She discharged this cargo and took on lumber at Seattle and Portland for South American ports. She touched en route at San Francisco on July 17, and then proceeded to Mexico, Peru, and Chile.

The *Faith* took on a cargo of nitrate and was the first concrete ship to pass through the Panama Canal. She discharged the nitrate at New Orleans, then went to Cuba, and took on a cargo of sugar, which she brought here, consigned to the American Sugar Refining Company.

On the trip to Seattle the *Faith* ran into a seventy-mile gale and head seas, but, according to Mate Mathson, proved very steady. She made the trip from Cuba to New York in six days and ran into another seventy-mile gale south of Hatteras, which she weathered admirably.

The primary interest herein attaches to the first performances of the new type of vessel, the "stone" ship, whose construction has been so widely advertised that probably every intelligent upper-grade student knows something of the experiment. From this it is an easy step to a tracing on the maps of her voyaging, and thence directly to a pupil-and-class determination of the particular ports at which she stopped on each cruise, for these places are not named in every instance. Then one notes that she had a full cargo of one, or at most two, commodities from each port, and that she did not sail in ballast over any part of the course. In these facts are contained the complete economics of the

modern, bulk transport, ocean commerce by tramp steamers as distinguished from line vessels. If one may venture a pun, the *Faith's* voyages supply a perfect concrete example of the manner in which the world's goods are moved over the ocean highway—a matter on which most students have but hazy ideas. Next, as to the cargoes: why are they available in shipload quantities at one point and why wanted in such bulk at another? A large part of the geography of each of the several regions concerned could be made very real on this basis alone. Moreover, these facts could be taught rapidly, the information would stick, and the application to other regions and other products could be readily shown as study progressed; to say nothing of the probability that the student himself would in later practical life be apt to remember them and, from what had been learned in this way of the conditions of world commerce, would perhaps make practical conclusions applying to his own business. Finally, the storms the *Faith* encountered, where they occurred and why; the time required to make the trips as an index to the speed of ocean transport; the actual use of the Panama Canal as a functioning highway—all these matters afford further topics for discussion and comprehension; not for learning, by rote, mere geographical words and facts; but for acquiring a true understanding of the world we live in.

Admittedly this is an unusual item in interest and adaptability. Not many so good occur, and perhaps the best of all will be encountered by chance. It would be unwise to make systematic search for appropriate items. But when occasionally you come across something that arrests your attention in spite of yourself, carry that thing with you into the classroom: you will be able to make good use of it in your teaching.

O. D. VON ENGELN