

Book Club & Worldly Reading Assignment One

Current Events:

Hopefully by now you'll be enjoying a classroom subscription to the publication, *Time for Kids*. During this unit, it is essential to include a specific news and current events time, and *Time for Kids* is a good choice for keeping everyone updated. Provide learners with a designated reading time just for *Time for Kids* (or similar primary sources) sometime during your unit studies. After everyone has read his or her magazine "cover to cover," engage in a whole class discussion either in or out of role about the news. This is a great time for real world opinion sharing, and understanding the complexities and challenges humankind faces today and defining challenges of the future.

This background knowledge will be important in grounding future UN meeting simulations in real scenarios. You may add additional writing assignments, worksheets provided by *Time for Kids*, or extensions, as you like. Reading assignments should not follow this unit's standard scoring rubric; rather assess your reading assignments according to the literacy and language objectives outlined by your school and/or state.

Book Club:

Consider using Jules Verne's unabridged classic, *Around the World in Eighty Days* as an at-home unit connection. Why this recommendation? To begin with, it is a beloved classic that is perfect for gifted children with rich descriptions, interesting and decipherable language, amazing characterization and a fast-paced plot that holds interest with mystery, suspense, adventure and comic relief. It has reader-friendly, short but masterfully engaging titles. But more than all this, it is an ideal match for the United Nations not because the novel has any inherent political or idealistic mission, but because it captures the "it's a small world" phenomena in a lighthearted albeit meaningful measure of our world in space and time. As the characters make their way through the novel, you will assign or let the learners select mini-research assignments that correspond with the places and events within the book. The assignments will be cycled as follows:

- Assign the reading and literary assignment near the end of a unit stage (starting at a time when learners will have a weekend to allow them to become immersed in the book)
- Meet in a "book club" format to discuss the text, and present and submit the assignments approximately a week later and/or nearing the end of the following stage. During meetings, be sure to read some passages together and aloud, with a dictionary handy to enable you to focus on "playing with words."

- At the end of the meeting, assign the next reading and literary assignment.

Assignment:

- This week, assign chapters 1-5 for reading.
- Also have the students prepare some sort of creative assignment designated to introduce learners to England. You might ask learners to create a standard Pub menu, write a newspaper article on the royal family, create a journal entry as a member of parliament, create a book list of favorite adolescent literature by English authors or develop a 3-dimensional model of the physical geography of the country. Learners could use the internet, library books, or encyclopedias to research what Saville Row is, and why it is a famous street, writing a poem or expository paragraph about it. Or instead, you may choose to have learners jot down a list of unfamiliar words or odd phrases, like “avaricious,” and “making his toilet.” They could then try and define or capture some insight into the words’ meanings.

Emphasize that your expectation is that learners stay at the same pace as the class, not reading ahead or falling behind. Explain that this is important due to the “book club” discussion groups. Ask learners to be prepared for a full-scale book discussion on these chapters in the coming week, near the end of the next stage of the unit. They should bring their assignments, questions and thoughts about the story to contribute richly to the discussion. (You may conduct whole class discussions or enlist parent or community members as facilitators to allow for smaller discussion groups.)