

Curriculum Connections

by Kathryn Starke

Imagine the geography unit for all second and third graders begins on Monday. The first topic will be the seven continents; time to find a library that still has at least seven books left, one for each continent. As always, they have all been checked out except for a duplicate copies about Africa and Asia. That will cover about 20% of the social studies objectives. This scene occurs every year in elementary school libraries around the world. Kathryn Starke, an elementary school literacy specialist, children's author, and educational publisher, created a solution to this problem when she taught second grade.

"I wanted to find an entertaining way for my students to understand and appreciate all of the continents on earth. I recalled a story that my friend had told me a few years back about how she grew up traveling around the world." Starke states.

She added details and description to her friend's story then wrote and published *Amy's Travels*, a multicultural children's book that teaches the culture, geography, and diversity of the world through the eyes of a young girl. *Amy's Travels* is the first children's picture book to teach all seven continents. Since this educational resource is often used in classrooms, it is complete with K-5 social studies lesson plan ideas and a free downloadable comprehension guide from Starke's company website, www.creativemindspublications.com.

School libraries throughout the nation have purchased sets of *Amy's Travels* for their students and teachers since the educational material is both engaging and entertaining. *Amy's Travels* can currently be found on five continents. In addition to the lessons and activities provided by the author, teachers around the nation have found innovative ways to utilize *Amy's Travels* with additional curriculum standards. For example, a fifth grade teacher in Richmond, Virginia, needed to teach a global mini-economy unit. She had the students read *Amy's Travels* then select a continent of interest to each of them. After reading, the children were assigned to a group based on their continent choice, in which they were directed to develop and create a product that would be valuable to the specific location. The teacher used a website called "Book Builders" to add technology and writing to the project.

There is also an *Amy's Travels* project listed on www.education.skype.com connecting classrooms across the globe through global awareness literature. Teachers can find another classroom to link up with and begin the technology component of conversation, dialogue, and learning about other cultures with thier own stories. The author also visits schools around the world bringing *Amy's Travels* to life. She understands that global awareness is a 21st Century Standard of Learning that needs to be implemented and executed in all elementary schools.

In addition, Kathryn Starke has recently published *Turtle Without a Home*, which meets the 21st Century Standard of Environmental Literacy. The authors, both elementary school educators, teaches young children about turtle conservation, habitats, and protecting the environment. This educational tool is complete with a vocabulary and book guide for science instruction. Starke believes *Turtle Without a Home* will also become a popular children's trade book to enhance classroom curriculum.

Kathryn Starke earned her BS degree in elementary education and her MS degree in Literacy and Culture from Longwood University. She is an elementary school literacy specialist, children's author, and the founder/CEO of Creative Minds Publications and Creative Minds Consulting, global educational companies based in Richmond, Virginia. Visit www.creativemindspublications.com for more information.