

Better Grades — 22

Broad View Comes Before Details

By The Reading Laboratory
Written for NEA

In our last chapter we talked about history—how it moves and flows and how your studying must take this into account—how you develop a broad overview of history and then fit each smaller detail into the bigger movement.

Today we've lumped together sociology, political science or civics, and economics. Why do you think we did that? Can you see what they have in common, and how they differ from history? Stop for a minute and try to figure it out for yourself. And while you're at it, where should we place English literature—does it fit with today's groups?

Have you figured it all out? If you haven't, keep on reading. English literature, of course, fits in with history, rather than with sociology and the other ones we'll be talking about here. Unless you're taking advanced courses in literary criticism, your English (or American) literature course is actually a history of literature. You're not learning how to write poetry, or really, what makes great poetry, but you're learning who wrote what and when he wrote it.

The development of history (and the history of literature) is, in a sense, a horizontal one. It flows and progresses from one point to the next, from one century to the next. But the development of sociology, psychology, political science and of

economics is a vertical development. These subjects construct concepts and then develop those concepts. Some illustrations will help.

Sociology defines the concept of group. The definition is (with variations) "an agglomeration of persons with a common basis for action." From this general concept, one can work down (vertically) to regional groups, or people that live in the same geographic area, then to purposeful groups, or people who are working to achieve a common end (perhaps they're organizing a charity drive, or working in the same office, etc.) or to take a slightly different tack, you could define group awareness. Are you as conscious of your "membership" in a city as you are of your membership in a social club? And then you could move on to the concept of interaction between groups.

In the same way, psychology might define defense mechanisms as unconscious techniques for dealing with, or avoiding, stress in our lives. Again, from this general concept, you can work down to various types of defense mechanisms—obsessive-compulsive, phobias, withdrawal, etc.

Economics, after defining, for instance, the Law of Diminishing Returns will apply the general law to specific cases, e.g., will a progressive tax structure (one that hits the higher income brackets harder than the

lower brackets) discourage business investment?

What's the best way of handling these subjects? You've probably figured it out. When you overview the unit or the chapter, or even when you're listening to the lecture, you have to get the definition of the general concept that's being dealt with. Only after you've understood the general concept of "group," or "defense mechanism," or "government by compact," only then will you concern yourself with details and the particular applications of the concept. Don't get tied up in details until you know what you're talking about.

(Next: Biology, a bird of a different feather.)

Judge Set To Study Dam Issue

BOISE (UPI)—Federal Judge Chase A. Clark took under advisement today, pending further briefs, the question of whether a dambuilding dispute on the Snake River is a state or federal issue.

The matter involves an attempt by the Washington Public Power Supply System to remove to U.S. District Court an Idaho state court case challenging its request to build a hydroelectric dam on the river between Oregon and Idaho at the Mountain Sheep site.

G. N. Carter, Idaho's late reclamation engineer, had brought suit in Idaho court on grounds state law requires WPPSS to apply for a permit to appropriate and store waters of the state for power purposes.

Both WPPSS and the Pacific Northwest Power Company want to develop hydroelectric power on the Snake. They have filed conflicting applications with the Federal Power Commission.

Russians Seek Help From Italian Ants

ROME (UPI)—Soviet experts were likewise infested and so the big pine forests on the slopes of Sicily's volcano, Mount Etna.

Exploiting the work of the purchased Italian ants, assuming that they will acclimatize, survive and multiply, Soviet Russia expects to save millions of rubles, just like Italy saved millions of lire.

The ants belong to a red species labeled by entomologists as "formica rufa." Their specialty is to re-establish, quickly, harmlessly, and inexpensively the biological balance broken in some forests by leaf-eating insects.

The "formica rufa" is not a new discovery, but its "industrial" employ in Italy as an effective and costless insecticide dates back to only a few years ago when experts of the ministry of agriculture transplanted several colonies of them from the woods of the Lombard Alps to areas of the Tuscan Apennines. Here large forests were being threatened with extinction by leaf-eating worms.

The terrain was such in those areas that use of chemical insecticides, apart from the cost, was almost impossible. In a few years the "formica rufa," which, according to entomologists, is one of the most advanced insect societies known, multiplied and cleaned up the forests from the infesting worms and bugs.

The result of the experiment was so successful that the ministry of agriculture extended it to other areas. Sardina's forests

the worm and bug reclamation program is well underway. The ants are winning. Strangely enough, the "formica rufa" did not acclimatize on Mount Etna.

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