



Home geography for primary grades

Harold W Fairbanks

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Excerpt from Home Geography for Primary Grades

Too much has been expected of young children in the study of geography. Many of the so-called primary geographies are really not primary. They present a multitude of facts the most of which are beyond the power of the child to comprehend or retain.

Childhood is a period of active memory, but this is no reason why we should attempt to cram the mind with details of geography. Facts themselves are of no value. It is only in their relations that they become significant.

For the child of ten years it is not sufficient that facts be presented in their relations, but that these relations be such as will arouse interest through connection with the child's own experiences.

To expect a child in the fourth grade to draw a map of the state in which it lives, locate the principal rivers, valleys, mountains, bays, cities, and name and locate the counties, is wrong. Parrot-like memorizing of such facts, at that age, can result only in harm. The facts mean nothing and create a distaste for the work.

We must start from home, from the environment of the child. We must build upon what has already become a part of its life. Definitions and disconnected facts cannot be assimilated.

In the home surroundings we can get the materials which, if properly used, may be made the basis for the superstructure in geography. The mind expands as the experiences increase. What the child has seen and felt itself must be the basis for an increase of knowledge.

The home is a little world. Here in miniature are the features of the great world outside. The forms of land and water, the animals and plants, the occupations and industries of men are represented.

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