REMOTE ISLAND

A SIMULATED LEARNING SITUATION

Richard A. Schusler, Ph.D.
Kansas University, 1971

RATIONALE

Teaching map symbols to pupils in the classroom is usually considered one of the easiest lessons to "get across." Teachers usually have children come to the map at the front of the room to point out such things as rivers, oceans, states, capitols, mountains and valleys. These factual components of learning are readily memorized and, therefore, usually viewed with some enthusiasm by both the teacher and the pupils. They represent less abstractness in social studies than the study of a man's life, or the course of events in a war, battle or peace conference. In a sense, a pupil can "see" the facts.

Perhaps this is why most teachers do little more with the teaching of map skills than fill out dittoed worksheets or construct salt and flour maps. Too, it is often felt that there simply isn't time in the curricula to spend studying map symbols as a separate unit. Consequently, map symbols are taught by the teacher whenever he "feels" that the time is appropriate for a greater understanding of the lesson at hand. This, for the most part, represents an "addition" to a regular lesson.

Teaching map symbols in this manner does not necessarily insure a transfer to application learning. For this reason, REMOTE ISLAND attempts to use the symbols as they are learned in a simulated condi-

tion of problem solving. It is known that learning the application of knowledge at the same time that knowledge is presented allows the pupil to internalize the learning in usable form. Decision making, based upon the presented knowledge, enhances this mode of learning even more. The pupil is allowed to use the knowledge in his own way as he chooses a path through the decision making process.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SIMULATED EVENT

REMOTE ISLAND concerns a hypothetical island which the United States gained from Japan after World War II. It has remained virtually uninhabited since the time of its' discovery by the crew of a ship-wrecked sailing vessel. Pupils who take part in the simulation are asked first to learn the physical characteristics of the island and then to apply these learnings to a problem that confronts the people of the island. All pupils participate in the learning and problem solving by contributing different information concerning the island. Each child is assigned a role to play. The members of each simulation group decide, by consensus, what to do about the problems facing the island.

MATERIALS AND STEPS IN IMPLEMENTING THE SIMULATION

The simulation is implemented by dividing the class into groups of six persons each. A sociogram lends itself well to this grouping. Groups represent inhabitants of the island. A member of the group will have a data card telling some physical characteristics of the island. He will also have a role card telling him what person he is to represent on the island. Each member will also have a worksheet on which he records the data about the island in the form of physical

characteristics and questions to be answered, (see Appendix for these materials.)

The simulation starts with the group compiling factual knowledge about the island. This is accomplished by a member of the group showing and reading his card to the rest of the group (cards of this type represent railfall, temperature, locations of streams, etc.). As each member reads his card, the other members record this data on their outline maps on their worksheets. A crayola is used to duplicate the same colors presented on the data cards. Each member of the groups now has the same information.

The second part of the simulation has to do with placing three large cities, any number of small cities that the group desires, and appropriate roads and railroads on the map. Symbols to be used for these physical features are included in the worksheet. The group is encouraged to discuss where to place these additions and arrive at a consensus before placing them on the map. Discussing reasons for completing these placements are important to each member of the group and his understanding as the simulation progresses.

The third part of the game starts with the problem that is given in the worksheet. A wealthy man wants to smelt the iron ore which can be mined on the island. This event can cause many things to happen to the people located there. It can represent added income to the people of the island. A smelter can also represent other happenings to the island and the people that are not good. Smog can be generated, streams and the ocean, itself, can be polluted. Political corruption can set in, population can over-increase, and a way of life that is now leisurely can be upset. These spinoffs, or effects,