



Welcome to **ATTACK!** a two-page occasional publication. Most of **ATTACK!** will be concerned with the holistic curriculum which, if acted on, is a fundamental way to undermine the present undemocratic education system. Don't be discouraged if opportunities to teach holistically are limited, do your best, be a guardian, and act as a witness to this culturally significant and inspiring way of teaching and learning. **ATTACK!** is a partner to <https://networkonnet.wordpress.com>

**Attack! 36 Some examples of activities for a 'feeling for' social studies unit emphasising the early and middle stages Part 1**

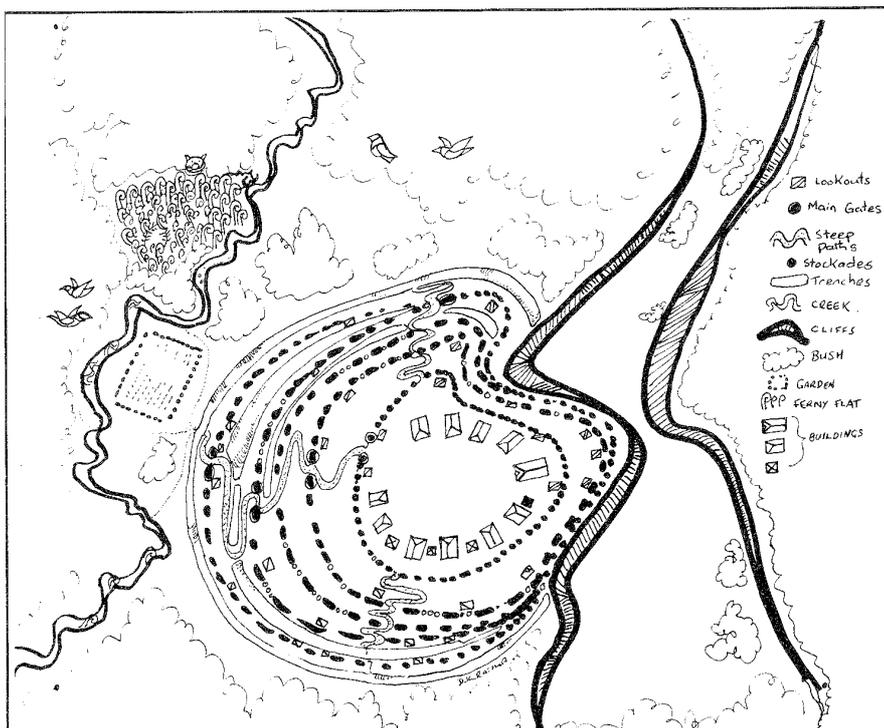
Some examples of activities for a 'feeling for' social studies unit emphasising the early and middle stages.

The following sequence of activities using pictures and text from a social studies resource demonstrates the subtlety of holistic social studies. The resource is *Toi Taketake: Belonging Here* issued to all schools for the New Zealand 1990 Commission in association with the ministry of education.

To set up children with inquiry questions (even though they might have developed them themselves) and suggest they proceed from there, is likely, at best, to be only partly insightful. The far more insightful, holistic way is for the teacher to take children into a topic with a series of open-ended activities that draws them in. These activities should have shape extending from an introduction, to gaining information, to using that information flexibly, to a conclusion. This process allows children to develop knowledge and insight, and to develop a 'feeling for' the people concerned. As long as the activities provided by the teacher are open ended – the children will be challenged to think deeply and be helped to avoid the typically shallow project approach. Because there is a pattern to 'feeling for' units it is quite conceivable they could be done by computer, but even if they could, the open, physically-active way children participate in what follows seems to me to be the most rewarding.

In the activities that follow, the children are provided with the opportunity to undertake activities at a pace that suits them, in a manner that suits them, individually or with others as suits them, all in a non-threatening environment. Also to be noted is that these kinds of activities are challenging for both able and less able children – their open-endedness allowing children of all abilities to find challenge at levels appropriate to them.

**The topic begins**



What does this map tell you about the lives of the people?

- The teacher has developed a cultural map; this one is fairly sophisticated, but they can be quite simple and get the children thinking just as satisfactorily.

The teacher says: What does this map tell you about the way of life of the people?

In pairs the children study the map and then for later discussion write their ideas on strips of paper.

- 'What can you tell me about the life of Maori in the early days of contact with Pakeha?' or 'What can you tell me about Maori who lived a long time ago?'

Children write on small pieces of paper or have their ideas recorded by the teacher. Their names or initials, as a matter of ownership, should always be placed by their thinking. From the beginning, the teacher should proceed on the basis of open-ended activities and the non-evaluative reception of responses. The activities are structured for 'incidental learning' to occur. This oxymoron lies at the heart of the approach and can be the most difficult part for some teachers to grasp and accept. Teachers will be surprised at how much information children will pick up incidentally in the course of the study. The approach is dependent on this for its success. The children, in being freed from the strictures of trying to work out the 'right' answer – that is the teacher's answer – will be encouraged to look widely into pictures, to roam in their thinking about questions.

- Pictures 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 17. 'What do these pictures tell you about the life of the people?'

The typical way for children to respond to such activities is for them to have access to a number of pictures around the room with a newsprint sheet under each picture. (Sometimes it can be useful for the pictures to have numbers attached.) Children write their responses on small sheets of paper, add their name, then paste the small sheets of paper on to the newsprint sheets. Following such activities, the children should be asked why they responded in the way they did. (I often leave the responses on display on the wall and leave it till next day before asking the children to explain and justify.)

- Pictures as above. 'What is in the foreground?'
- Pictures as above. 'What is in the background?'
- Picture 16. Wheat farming in the Waikato. Progressive disclosure. 'What is happening here?' Blu-tack a sheet of paper over part of the picture. Better done with children sitting on the mat. (This, though, can be done with a number of partially covered pictures displayed around the wall.)
- 'Give a caption for these pictures' Have a selection of pictures displayed around the wall.
- 'What do these pictures have in common?' Five sets of three pictures selected at random placed around the room.

This is a powerful activity. It is crucial that the children know the pictures have been selected at random, so there is no 'right' answer. Because of the openness of the activity (which is a crucial characteristic of the holistic), teachers will recognise that children of all abilities find it satisfying and appropriately challenging. High ability children will have the opportunity to exercise their flexibility of thinking, and lower ability and tentative children will be confident enough to contribute without fear of 'getting things wrong'.

