

Social Science

Social and Political Life – II

Textbook for Class VII



विद्यया ऽ मृतमश्नुते



एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

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Introductory note for teachers

There is a substantial difference between Civics and Social and Political Life, not only in terms of the topics covered but also in the pedagogic approaches required in each subject area. Keeping these in mind, this Introduction attempts to clarify certain aspects of Social and Political Life.

What is Social and Political Life?

Social and Political Life (SPL) is a new subject area in middle school social science that has replaced the earlier subject of Civics. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 strongly argues that Civics should be discontinued and its focus on government institutions and functioning should be tempered in the new subject that replaces it. SPL, as its name suggests, focuses on topics related to social, political and economic life in contemporary India.

What pedagogical approach does SPL use?

SPL's use of 'real-life' situations is a marked departure from Civics. SPL uses these real situations to teach concepts because it recognises that children learn best through concrete experiences. It uses material that draws upon the experiential understanding of familial and social issues that middle school children bring to the classroom. SPL further develops the learner's abilities to critically understand and analyse these issues in keeping with the tenets of the Indian Constitution.

This pedagogical approach tends to avoid the use of definitions to sum up a concept. Instead, it uses case studies and narratives to explain concepts. The concepts embedded within the narratives are made clear through the in-text and end-text questions. The aim is to have the learner understand the concept through their own experiences and write about it in their own words.

This often means that there is seldom one 'correct' answer to the questions posed. However



Case studies and narratives used in SPL are a mix of rural and urban examples.

there is a wrong answer. Teachers should try to gauge whether an answer to a question adequately reflects the learner's understanding of the concept being discussed.

Given that children learn best through understanding and applying concepts to local realities, can a 'national' textbook adequately reflect the many 'locals' that make up the nation?

SPL functions by the pedagogic principle that children learn best through an experiential understanding of concepts. This poses a contradiction when the effort is to write a 'national' textbook, because a national text can neither sufficiently represent all the various aspects of the various locals, nor fix the sociocultural background of the child for whom the book is intended. Therefore, the case studies and narratives used in SPL are a mix of rural and urban examples in which the assumed learner is not easily discernible.



The SPL text specifically names communities, for example, Dalit, Muslim, poor, etc. SPL counts on the teacher to transact the material with a firm commitment to respecting the dignity of all students.

In addition to the important job of transacting the text, what crucial role does SPL expect teachers to play in the classroom?

SPL counts on the teacher to play a very significant role in the classroom for the following reasons. First, the SPL text specifically names communities (for example: Dalit, Muslim, poor etc.) in its discussion of various issues and this may lead to some discomfort in a classroom that has a student population from different sociocultural and (perhaps) economic backgrounds. We expect the teacher to play a crucial role in transacting this material with a sensitivity and firm commitment to respecting the dignity of all students in the classroom and the school. Second, given the limited ability of this 'national' text to engage the local we also envision the teacher playing a major role in adding local examples to the discussion of concepts, provided these remain true to the logic and understanding of each concept as intended by the book's authors.

How does the SPL help the learner assimilate the values enshrined in the Constitution?

At first glance it might appear to some that unlike Civics, SPL's focus on 'real' examples contradicts the tenets of the Constitution. Such a focus, however, is a technique utilised in SPL in response to a critique of Civics textbooks that always only

discussed the ideal and seldom deliberated upon the reality that was very different. Since the learner is already aware of such realities, to avoid discussing them would make the learning of social and political concepts didactic and disconnected. Instead, SPL uses this embedded awareness to make the learner understand and accept not only the legitimacy but also the urgency of the values enshrined in the Constitution. Additionally, this approach allows the learner to understand the role of people's struggles in the realisation of these values.

What are the issues included in the Class VII textbook?

The theme for the Class VII grade book is the crucial role that equality plays in Indian democracy. This theme also serves as one of the Units in addition to which the book has four more Units. These include Health and State Government; Gender; Media; and Markets. Units 2, 3 and 5 consist of two consecutive chapters, except in the case of the first Unit.

What elements does the Class VII book utilise to explain selected issues?

◆ **Storyboards:** One component of the feedback regarding Class VI book (*Social and Political Life-I*) was that teachers needed more assistance in understanding where fictional narratives began and ended and in identifying the central concepts within these. With this in mind, this year's book introduces storyboards to clearly indicate which segments have been fictionalised, and to draw



the learner into the narrative through the use of visuals that are often more expressive than lines of text. Specific concepts raised through the storyboards are analysed in the accompanying text.

◆ **Unit Pages:** Each Unit begins with a Unit Page for teachers to help highlight the main points raised in the chapters.

◆ **Note on Evaluation:** As with the Class VI text, this book does not contain definitions or a synthesis of concepts. While we recognise that this makes it difficult for teachers to evaluate what the child has learnt, our attempt is also to try and shift some of the understanding amongst teachers on what children are expected to learn and how such learning should be evaluated. This book contains a short note on evaluation procedures that we hope will assist teachers in their efforts to move students away from rote learning.

◆ **Glossary:** The inclusion of a Glossary with each chapter is intended to offer the learner greater clarity on the language used in the text. The words of the Glossary are NOT limited to concepts, and it should not be viewed as something to be memorised with the expectation that such rote learning will contribute to conceptual understanding.

◆ **In-text and End-text Questions:** As with the Class VI text, this year's book includes in-text and end-text questions, making use of visual material and experiential analysis. In-text questions found within the text can be used to assess the extent to which content has been assimilated. End-text questions usually cover the main concepts raised by the chapter and ask learners to explain these in their own words.



Glossary

Weekly market: These markets are not daily markets but are to be found at a particular place on one or maybe two days of the week. These markets most often sell everything that a household needs ranging from vegetables to clothes to utensils.

Mall: This is an enclosed shopping space. This is usually a large building with many floors that has shops, restaurants and, at times, even a cinema theatre. These shops most often sell branded products.

Wholesale: This refers to buying and selling in large quantities. Most products, including vegetables, fruits and flowers have special wholesale markets.

Chain of markets: A series of markets that are connected like links in a chain because products pass from one market to another.

EXERCISES

- In a democracy why is universal adult franchise important?
- Re-read the box on Article 15 and state two ways in which this Article addresses inequality?
- What do you understand by the term "all persons are equal before the law"? Why do you think it is important in a democracy?
- According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, persons with disabilities have equal rights, and that the government should make possible their full participation in society. The government has to provide free education and integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schools. This law also states that all public places including buildings, schools, etc., should be accessible and provided with ramps.

Look at the photograph and think about the boy who is being carried down the stairs. Do you think the above law is being implemented in his case? What needs to be done to make the building more accessible for him? How would his being carried down the stairs affect his dignity as well as his safety?