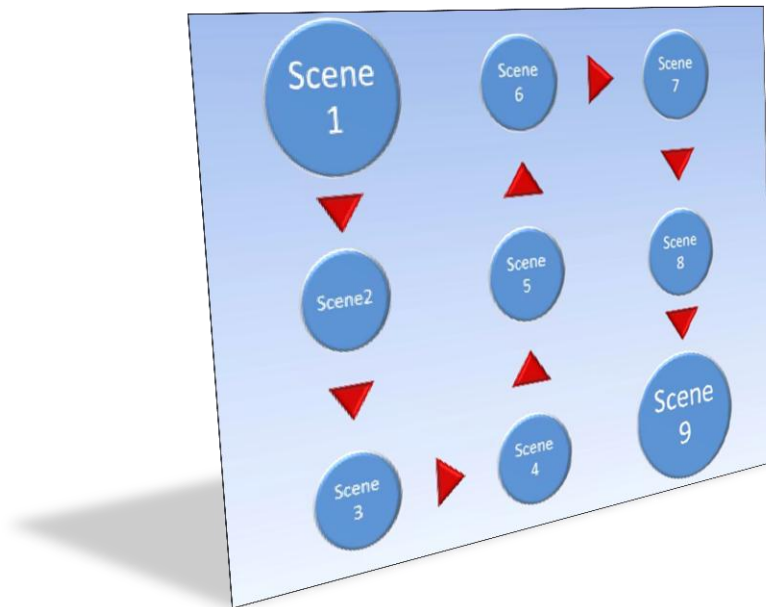


Social Studies Flowchart Notes

An effective note-taking technique
that will actually get your students
excited about taking notes!



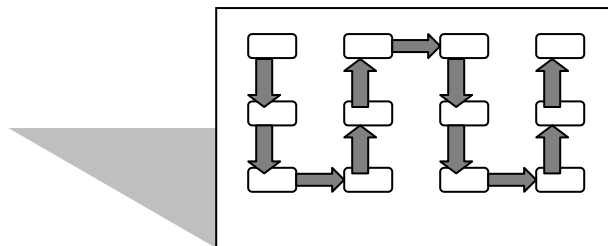
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What are flowcharts?

Authors often times map out what they are going to write before they actually begin writing. By writing a series of short blurbs, connected by arrows to show a progression, this gives the author a visual representation of where the story will go. Having this “picture” of what will go first, second, and so on, makes the task of writing easier. The flowchart technique of note-taking follows the same logic: if while reading a story, students have a visual representation of what happened first, second, and so on, it will make the story easier to remember.

When should I use flowcharts, and how do I create them?

Flowcharts work best when used with a lesson that tells a story (e.g. James W. Marshall discovering gold at Sutter’s Mill, California’s Bear Flag Rebellion, Christopher Columbus discovering the New World, the events leading up to the American Revolution). In preparation, begin by reading the lesson. As you read, break the story into key parts, writing a short sentence summarizing each part. Then draw simple illustrations to accompany your sentences – pictures that will help students remember what the sentences say. Using a blank white sheet of paper (with landscape orientation), start in the upper left-hand corner with your first sentence and illustration, and then draw a downward arrow. Put your second key sentence and picture underneath the arrow, and repeat this process, wrapping the key parts and arrows around the page until the story is done.



How do I present a flowchart to the class?

Tape a large piece of white butcher paper to the whiteboard. It’s better to have too big a piece than too small (I’ve found that a piece roughly the length of one whiteboard works well). With colored markers at the ready, as well as your pre-drawn flowchart, begin reading the lesson with your students. As you come to key moments in the story, stop reading and write your summary sentence on the butcher paper (you can refer to your flowchart to remind you when you need to stop, or Pre-mark your TE with a Post-It). Students can copy what you write onto their own paper (I recommend that students keep a Social Studies notebook, so all of their notes stay in one place). Students can create their flowcharts in one of two ways. The first choice is to orient their paper in a landscape fashion and create a flowchart

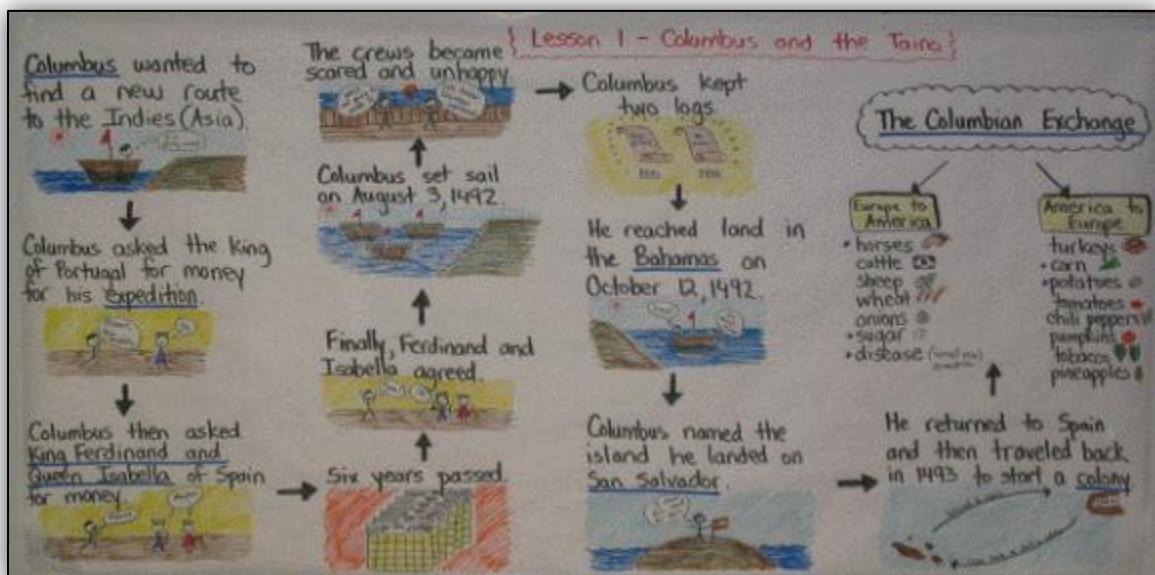
like the diagram on the previous page. Another option would be to position their paper in a portrait fashion and, beginning at the top of the page, create the flowchart in downward direction.

After you've written your sentence, ask students what kind of picture you could draw to help remember the sentence. Allow several students to share ideas for a picture. I tell my students that they may draw whatever picture they think will help them remember the sentence the best. You can use the picture you've already drawn on your flowchart as a suggestion in case your students have trouble coming up with something. Then give students a few minutes to draw and color their pictures, while you draw a picture on the butcher paper. After a few minutes, I typically ask students to put their pencils and coloring utensils down so we can move on. I assure them, however, that they will have more time later to add detail to their drawings (I usually open each class period with a few minutes devoted to coloring in their pictures).

One final thing – as you move through your flowchart, I recommend that each time a summary sentence contains one of the lesson's vocabulary terms (usually bolded or in a different color), you underline the word on your flowchart. I underline all of the key vocabulary in blue so students can easily see which terms they will be responsible for on the test.

What does a completed flowchart look like?

Below are some images from a completed flowchart on the story of Christopher Columbus and his voyage to the New World. For more examples of completed flowcharts, visit: http://www.mrcoley.com/flowcharts_examples.htm.



Columbus wanted to find a new route to the Indies (Asia).

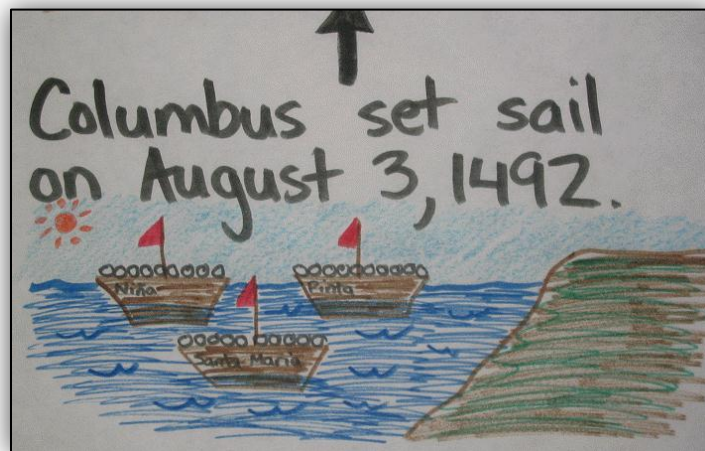


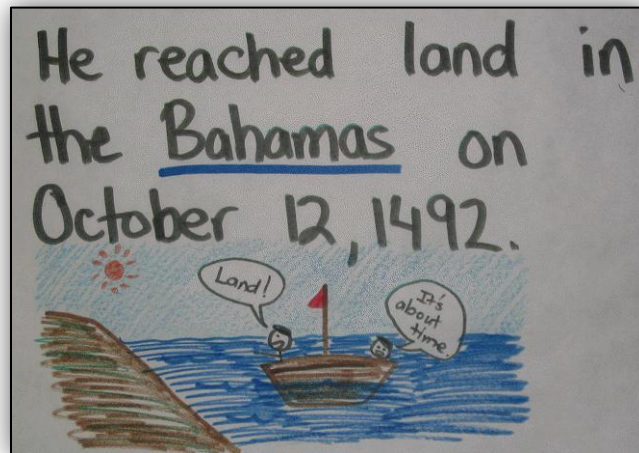
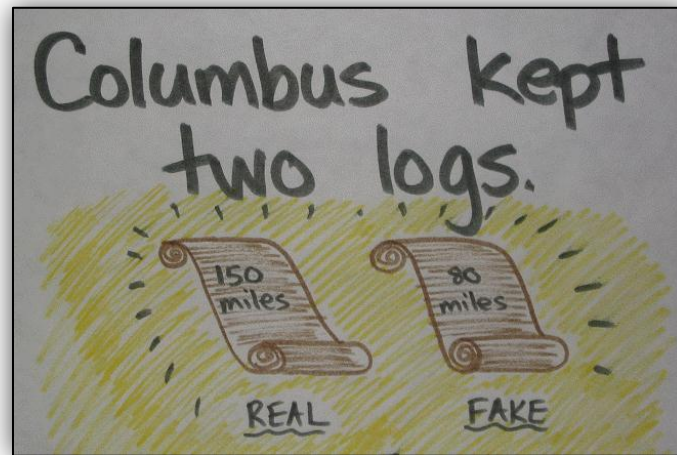
Columbus asked the king of Portugal for money for his expedition.



Columbus then asked King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain for money.



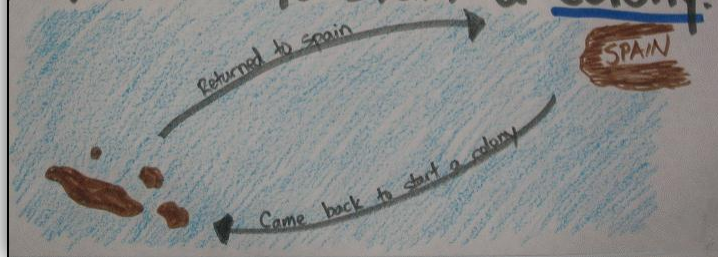




Columbus named the island he landed on San Salvador.



He returned to Spain and then traveled back in 1493 to start a colony.



The Columbian Exchange

Europe to America

- * horses
- cattle
- sheep
- wheat
- onions
- * sugar
- * disease (small pox)

America to Europe

- turkeys
- * corn
- * potatoes
- tomatoes
- chili peppers
- pumpkins
- tobacco
- pineapples