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ABSTRACT

Intended for middle school social studies classrooms, this publication features articles that spotlight diverse and innovative learning activities. This document includes the three issues of the "Middle Level Learning" supplement published in 1999 and the three that were published in 2000. Articles and classroom activities highlighted in this volume are: "'Did They Actually, Really Believe This?' Authentic Medical Documents as a Window on the Past" (Julie Riley); "Acting out History: From the Ice Age to the Modern Age" (Denee J. Mattoli and Frederick Drake); "Shipwreck: Using Literature and Student Imagination to Teach Geography" (Donna Kay Mau); "What Is a Hero? Students Explore Their Conceptions of the Heroic" (Joseph O'Brien and Steven H. White); "Serious Fun in Social Studies for Middle Schoolers" (Dan Rea); "'The War That Never Ended': Special Education Students Write History" (Diane Zigo); "Team Egypt! Integrating the Disciplines" (Amanda W. Greenwald); "Girls Can Be President: Generating Interest in Inclusive History" (Melinda Karnes); "Let Me Explain: Students as Colonial History Docents" (Linda L. Gesek); "Take a Break: A Token Economy in Fifth Grade" (John M. Hail); "The Character of Their Content" (Tedd Levy); and "Foreword: The Great Irish Famine" (Maureen Murphy, Alan Singer, Maureen McCann Miletta, and Judith Y. Singer). Each issue includes classroom activities, student worksheets, project ideas, and a list of related teacher and student resources. (AA)

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Middle Level Learning, 1999-2000

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“Did They Actually, Really Believe This?”

Authentic Medical Documents as a Window on the Past

Julie Riley

PRETEND that you have been time warped to the era of a medical document you will choose. Convince the doctor or specialist who wrote the document that he was not correct, or that he did not use the best way to treat a patient. Explain to him a better treatment or more accurate explanation using the information that you have learned in this course. Remember, the person you are convincing lives in the time of the document and does not know modern anatomical facts. How you will convince the author is up to you: a detailed picture, a written statement, a taped verbal explanation, other possibilities. The goal of the assignment: I would like you to effectively communicate what you have learned about one of the human body systems that we have studied by using your notes and prior resources.

I handed this challenge to my seventh grade students, along with photocopies of three historical medical documents: a set of directions about proper bloodletting techniques from the Revolutionary War era, another set of directions about tendon repair in a calf from the same period, and a phrenological head depicting “The Affectionate Female.” (If you are not sure just what phrenology is, read on.) My students were definitely intrigued, if a little intimidated, by what I was asking them to do. They needed time to titter and giggle about the documents.

“Miss Riley, did you make these up?” one student challenged me.

“Did they actually, really believe this?” asked another in disbelief.

I had them hooked. Now all they needed to do was choose a document and use their resources to convince the author.

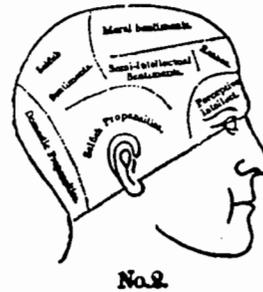
On the cover

“A ‘Page’ of Phrenology” from *Illuminated Magazine*.
Library of Congress

An Assignment Takes Off

This was one of those assignments that takes on a life of its own. My own first contact with historical medical documents occurred after a class conversation about something that appeared in the digestion chapter of our science text. In the early 1800s, William Beaumont studied a patient who had a bullet hole blown in his stomach, which then remained open. Beaumont learned a tremendous amount about the human digestive system by tying small pieces of food to a string, putting them into the hole, and removing them. These seventh graders were fascinated, and had many questions about what Beaumont had done. I explored the World Wide Web and discovered more information at the the website of the University of Toledo libraries. Especially intriguing was an actual drawing by Beaumont of that captivating hole.

We had an equally engaging conversation about Phinneas Gage when we studied the brain and nervous system. Gage was a railroad worker who lived in the mid-1800s



This illustration of an “Affectionate Female,” replacing romance with the reading of head bumps, appeared in L. N. Fowler’s *Phrenology and Physiology Applied to the Selection of Congenial Companions for Life* (1842).

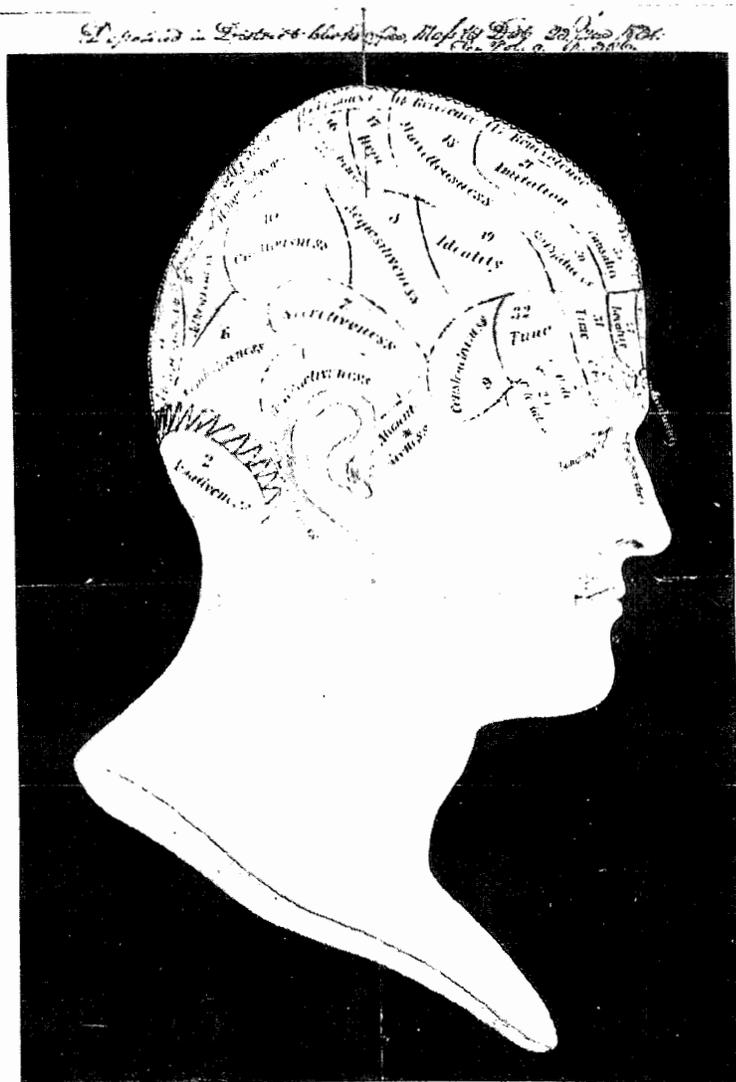
and had an accident in which a tamping iron became enlodged in his skull. Miraculously, he survived, but with one unfortunate effect: his personality changed from mild and agreeable to cantankerous and confrontational.

We were wrapping up our exploration of the nervous, musculoskeletal, digestive, and cardiovascular systems. Students had learned a lot, but could they *use* that information? I was truly interested in the “So what?” aspect of learning, that is, the application of ideas to the outside world. But it was my students’ overwhelming interest in strange historical happenings and the medical documents I uncovered that set this idea in motion.

Looking at da Vinci

I knew that asking my students to become anatomical historians was something they could not just do automatically. We began

New York Academy of Medicine Library Historical Collections



DR. SPURZHEIM.
Divisions of the Organs of Phrenology marked externally.

"Dr. Spurzheim. Divisions of the Organs of Phrenology marked externally," printed by Pendleton's Lithographic Company, 1834.

by looking at a different historical document altogether, a drawing of the digestive system by Leonardo da Vinci. I placed it on the overhead, along with a translation of Leonardo's description of his drawing. I asked students to consider the drawing and description carefully and to make observations about what they saw, with particular attention to the similarities and differences between what Leonardo described and what we knew about the digestive system.

An important aspect of our observations involved speculating about what

Leonardo meant by some of the terms he provided. In many cases, we found the language different, but the idea miraculously similar. (It is *amazing* how much Leonardo includes in his descriptions!) We wrote a letter to Leonardo as a class, incorporating our observations, and describing what we knew about the digestive system in plain language that we hoped he would understand.

There was only one more thing we needed to do before students went to work. This was to create a class rubric for what success on this assignment would look like.

My students were used to rubrics in their assignments, but those rubrics were created by *me*. This was the first time I challenged *them* to create their own rubric.

Among the features of the student rubric were: using scientific information accurately, making a convincing argument, and incorporating feedback from a reviewer. Three of the classes agreed that an exemplary piece of work would show some understanding of the time period during which the document was written. It began to dawn on me just how powerful this assignment could be. When students asked "Can we research the time period that our document came from?" was I going to say, "No, you can't!"? With a smile, I waved the green flag, and they were off.

Acting Like Historians

Students had caused me to see more clearly the importance of what I was asking them to do. They were to act as historians and to practice all the skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that David Kobrin illustrates so clearly in *Beyond the Textbook: Teaching History Using Documents and Primary Sources*.¹ I had asked them to:

- ▶ read and comprehend, using archaic vocabulary
- ▶ discover the main ideas of a picture and piece of writing
- ▶ understand the importance of context and perspective
- ▶ develop a sense of the importance of time and time passing
- ▶ write creatively and persuasively
- ▶ work collaboratively as a community of historians

In a different study, Barton found that students rarely examined historical evidence critically on their own; they needed practice and support in these skills in order to understand that history results from critical reviews of many sources.² The assignment my students were undertaking would help



S. S.

S. S. is a vagrant, and inmate of what is termed the Luna House, on Blackwell's Island. He is an Irishman; was formerly a prize-fighter; was sent to the State Prison for five years for assault and battery, with intent to kill, and since his liberation, a period of some six or eight years, has spent most of his time in the city and county prisons of New-York. Before his mind became deranged, he exhibited great energy of passion and purpose, but they were all of a low character, their sole bearing being to prove his own superiority as an animal. He was both vain and selfish.

The drawing shows a broad, low head, corresponding with such a character. The moral organs are exceedingly deficient, especially benevolence, and the intellect only moderately developed. The whole organization, indeed, indicates a total want of every thing like refined and elevated sentiment. If the higher capacities and endowments of humanity were ever found coupled with such a head as this, it would be a phenomenon as inexplicable as that of seeing without the eye, or hearing without the ear.

The subject of this portrait was an Irish vagrant imprisoned in the New York State penitentiary on Blackwell's Island. The engraving is from a series of daguerrotypes by the young Mathew Brady that appeared in the American edition of Marmaduke B. Sampson's *Rationale of Crime* introduced by prison reformer Eliza Farnham. The accompanying text described this man as "of a low character . . . both vain and selfish" possessing "a broad, low head corresponding with such a character" and in which "the moral organs are exceedingly deficient." But some contemporary newspaper reviews found Sampson's book deficient, describing it variously as "quackery . . . and humbug," "false in theory and mischievous in practice," and "about on a par with the catch-penny pamphlets on *Phrenology* by which scheming speculators on public credulity are constantly working to replenish their purses." (See

them to develop skills in examining historical evidence firsthand. It would also allow them to meaningfully fulfill the NCSS performance expectations for Standard

III **TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE**, and Standard VII **SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY**.³

So What Is Phrenology?

Interestingly, most students chose the picture of "The Affectionate Female" by F. N.

Fowler as the subject of their assignment. They were intrigued by what they considered the ridiculous nature of thinking that you could look at the shape of a woman's head and decide whether she would be a good choice for a wife. Students who researched the historical background of phrenology in the mid-1800s found that this "pseudo-science" was serious business and developed an enormous following, especially in the United States.

Phrenology is the practice of examining prominent places on a person's skull, and from the bumps, determining what mental faculties and character traits that person possesses. In phrenological studies, the head was divided into different areas believed to correspond to these different traits. For example, reason was located square center in the forehead, while "domestic propensities" were located at the back of the head—perhaps suggestive of what kind of value was placed on women's work. A phrenologist would "read" a person's head and recommend what the person could do to develop traits that were lacking naturally.⁴

While history texts rarely mention phrenology, it was a well-known and important practice in mid-19th century America. And while this pseudo-science may appear ridiculous viewed through modern eyes (and the eyes of contemporary scoffers as well), it is important to note that many modern scientists give phrenology credit for a change in societal thinking about the role of the brain in human behavior. Phrenology may have encouraged scientists to view the brain (rather than the heart) as the major locus of human behavior and to explore the notion that different parts of the brain are responsible for specific behaviors.⁵

A Window on the Victorians

There were many reasons why Victorian society proved fertile ground for phrenology. This was an era starved for scientific insight into the human mind. Phrenology offered a marriage of science and philosophy using anatomical knowledge—as its proponents understood it—to experimentally "prove" its teachings. "The dedicated phrenologist of the 19th century was confident that he possessed a truly scientific understanding of human nature."⁶ Even some physicians accepted phrenology as a new scientific explanation for how the

human mind worked to control functions of thought and personality.

Phrenology can also be seen as the Victorian era's version of "self-help." Although it proclaimed a person's fate to be determined by physical factors, it also held out the promise that people could improve character traits for which they did not possess the appropriate signs or "bumps." Although it presented itself as highly intellectual, phrenology in fact offered an easily understood philosophy expressed in ordinary language that posed no threat to traditional religious values. This self-help opportunity was in synch with Jacksonian America's vision of "self-made individuals."

Such an opportunistic vision could be turned to social purposes of more and less consequence. For example, phrenology was applied to the analysis of criminal behavior and used by prison reformers to argue for less reliance on the gallows. Eliza Farnham, matron of Sing Sing Prison in New York State, followed the English phrenologist Marmaduke Sampson in holding that crime "was the result of overdeveloped faculties of destructiveness or amativeness and underdeveloped faculties of reason or spirituality—all subject to correction."⁷

Phrenology was also employed to give racial stereotypes a "scientific" foundation supposed to "prove" that black and red people held traits that made them naturally subject to whites. *Phrenology: Proved, Illustrated, and Applied* by the Fowler brothers (who provided the phrenology document that students examined), brashly illustrates how the practice was used to justify discrimination and uphold white men's power. "Indians," the authors claimed, "show an extreme development of destructiveness, secretiveness, and cautiousness which would create a cruel, bloodthirsty, and revengeful disposition—a disposition common to the race."⁸ Similarly, the African race in America was alleged to show

"...smaller reasoning organs" making its members "...predisposed to lead a life of ease and idleness."⁹ These observations offered a well-defined agenda for the racist use of phrenology. The cause of women's rights, too, suffered assault from the "finding" that women lack the evidence of intelligence displayed by men.

These instances highlight the danger that ideas that a society mistakenly believes to be scientific can be used to promote social prejudice and discrimination.

Despite such unsavory uses, phrenology was warmly embraced by many segments of Victorian society. Women styled their hair to show off certain phrenological signs. Employers advertised for employees with given phrenological traits. Phrenological profiles are available for many famous people of the mid-1800s. Had students researched far enough, they would have found that yes, indeed, a phrenological expert visited Phineas Gage.¹⁰

Some Reflections

This assignment using historical medical documents brought together many aspects of what I hold most important about teaching. It challenged students to use their knowledge rather than just remembering facts. It propelled students—through the shock of what they discovered in connection with their primary documents—into a new level of understanding history. It pushed students to a new level of accountability as they worked to meet the expectations they had themselves created.

I didn't realize the power of this assignment until students grew deeply involved in the process and the historical conversation it engendered. I learned as much about teaching as the students learned about phrenology and bloodletting. In the end, it was the students who took this assignment to rich new places. 📖

Notes

1. David Kobrin, *Beyond the Textbook: Teaching History Using Documents and Primary Sources* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1996).
2. Keith C. Barton, "I Just Kinda Know": Elementary Students' Ideas about Historical Evidence," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 25, no. 4 (1997): 407-430.
3. National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Washington, D.C.: NCSS, 1994).
4. Minna Morse, "Facing a Bumpy History: The Much-Maligned Theory of Phrenology Gets a Tip of the Hat from Modern Neuroscience," *Smithsonian* 28, No. 7 (1997).
5. Tomas Hardy Leahey and G. Leahey, *Psychology's Occult Doubles: Psychology and the Problem of Pseudoscience* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1983).
6. David de Guistino, *Conquest of Mind: Phrenology and Victorian Social Thought* (Totowa, N.G.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975).
7. Madeleine B. Stern, "Mathew B. Brady and the Rationale of Crime: A Study in Daguerreotypes," *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal* 31, no. 3 (July 1974): 127-135.
8. O. S. & L. N. Fowler, *Phrenology: Proved, Illustrated, and Applied* (New York: W.H. Colyer, 1837).
9. *Ibid.*
10. Morse.

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- New York Academy of Medicine Library Historical Collections: <http://www.nyam.org/>
- University of Toledo Libraries:
<http://www.cl.utoledo.edu/>

Julie Riley has taught middle school math and science at The American Boychoir School in Princeton, N. J.; Heathwood Hall Episcopal School in Columbia, S. C.; and The Francis Parker Charter Essential School in Harvard, Mass. She currently teaches fourth grade at the Center for Inquiry in Columbia, S.C.

Taking Student Government Seriously

J.R. Bolen

Effective student governments are, as an NCSS position statement has pointed out, "laboratories in which students can learn and practice essential citizenship skills, respect for human dignity and the value of the democratic process."¹

If they are organized properly, student governments can also be an important supplement to the curriculum. At La Mesa Middle School, social studies teacher Rob Appenzeller and I (then a student teacher) asked ourselves what would happen if a student government were established on the model of the three-branch U.S. government itself. Wouldn't this be a stimulating way of introducing students to the roles and activities of the three branches of government?

Rob and I had an additional concern that prompted us to suggest a new kind of student government at La Mesa. Most high and middle school student governments are oligarchies in which an elected few have the

authority to spend money and make important decisions without having to report back to their peers who make up the student body. In the absence of checks and balances, there is no guarantee that these decisions are representative.

In an attempt to foster a new kind of student government, we organized an experiment at La Mesa that took place from 1996 to 1998, after which it was put on hiatus. This student government imitated the United States government in format, with Rob and myself acting as advisors, joined the second year by social studies teacher Mike Settani.

Structure

The branches of the government were:

1. *A Legislative Branch.* The Student Congress consisted of a Senate and House of Representatives. In line with the school's commitment to the principle of teaming, La Mesa Middle School has seven teams, separated by grade levels. In the elections to the Congress, these teams were

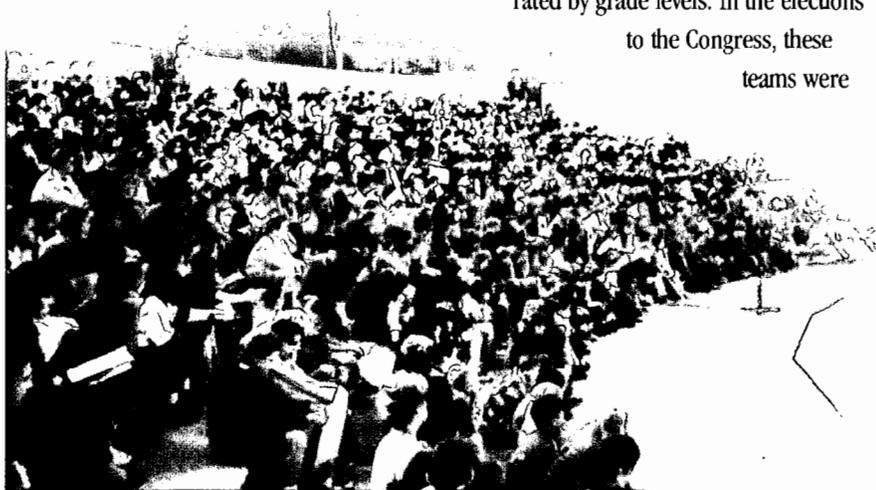
treated as the equivalent of states, and the members of each team elected two senators to represent them in the Team Senate. Each team was also separated into four to six advisories, which served as the equivalent of congressional districts and elected members to the House of Representatives.

In the student Congress, nine standing committees were also established—three in the Team Senate, five in the House, and a Rules Committee consisting of members from both Houses. The Rules Committee defined floor debate policy for each proposed bill. Respecting the limitations of time, bills were presented for approval to a joint session of both houses.

2. *A Judiciary Branch.* The Student Judiciary Panel consisted of four students and three staff members, one of whom had to be the school Principal or Vice-Principal. In one respect, the panel was unique because the four students could ultimately decide against the three staff members. The balancing factor was that challenges to laws before the panel could not be in direct conflict with the established Rules and Regulations of the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District, or California and Federal Constitutions and statutes.

In January 1997, a bill from the House Judiciary Committee for the creation of an Attorney General position received approval from the Student Congress. This position was assigned responsibility for the presentation of problems to the Student Judiciary Panel on behalf of the student body.

One case heard by the Judiciary Panel occurred when the President Pro Tem of the Team Senate was suspended for fighting and automatically placed on the Loss of Privilege (LOP) list. A student on the LOP list cannot participate in extracurricular activities, including the student government. The student government advisor acted on the authority accorded him by the Associated Student Body (ASB) Constitution



J.R. Bolen



ASB President (middle) of new government signing the first bill passed by the student congress.

J.R. Bolen

to remove a member from office for not fulfilling his or her duties. Upon removal, the Senator quickly filed a complaint with the Clerk of the Judiciary Panel. The panel, however, found in favor of the student government advisor, returning a verdict that he had acted within his constitutional rights. Five justices voted in the majority, with one dissenting, and the other absent.

3. *An Executive Branch.* This branch was made up of two parts. The first was the Executive Board, consisting of the President and other officers, which was elected by popular vote once a year at ASB Conventions. The second part was the Student Council, made up of the Executive Board, appointed Commissioners (cabinet members), and elected Team Leaders (governors). The Student Council was the old oligarchical student government, accorded a new role under the new system.

Although the executive branch had lost a lot of power under the new system, its members were supportive of the change. The Student Council met weekly before school. Its primary functions were to support legislative acts and oversee student activities. The latter included bimonthly spirit assemblies and a biweekly news pro-

gram explaining what was going on in the Student Congress and informing students of current events. On Fridays, six televisions in the lunch area replayed the news programs, which consisted of humorous skits, trendy music, and unique narration to capture the attention of the student body.

Activities

In the discussion and passage of proposed legislation, students regularly showed a strong commitment to the responsibilities of government. One of the first bills passed by the Student Congress was the 1996-97 Budget, which was hotly debated on the floor and passed with a couple of amendments. In their discussions of financial allocations, members of the Congress continued to show a consistent sense of responsibility and vigilance. In one case, for example, a bill allocating funds to support a field trip was rejected in the final vote after the chairperson of the Finance/Budget Committee pointed out that it did not meet the established requirements for budgetary support by the student government.

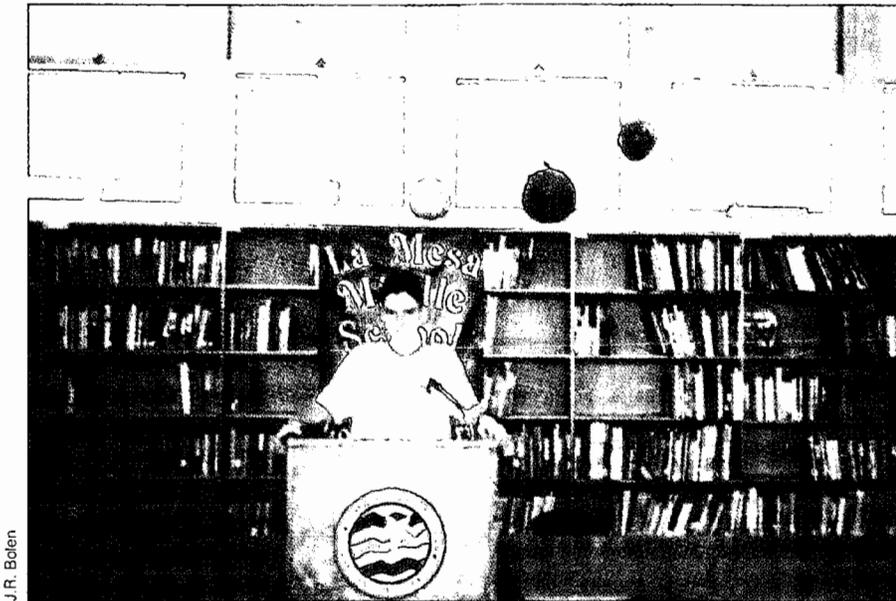
The students were also determined to make sure that representatives took their duties seriously and were responsive to their

constituents. One early act required all representatives to report back to their advisories (districts) and obtain input on how to vote on upcoming bills. Another measure, the Mandatory Attendance Act, required all representatives to attend meetings and allowed them only two unexcused absences, after which the representative would automatically be removed from the position.

One of the most interesting accomplishments of the student government was the School Safety Act, which established a right for students to come to school without being mentally or physically abused on their birthdays or at any other time. During the debate on the bill, student representatives presented complaints from their constituents about being punched or verbally harassed on their birthday. Violation of the School Safety Act would result in charges filed by the Attorney General, and the culprit being reported to the Vice-Principal for disciplinary action, and possibly presented before the Student Judiciary Panel. While it is difficult to ascertain the exact effects of the School Safety Act (no charges were ever brought by the Attorney General), the public airing of the problem was a major step forward.

One incident that truly brought a smile to my face occurred on a day after Standing Committee meetings. A student approached me and inquired whether, if a student supported another person's bill, he or she could then have the other person vote for his or her bill. I looked at the student and smiled, replying, "Yes, of course you can, that is called lobbying." To teach the concept of lobbying through a textbook is one approach, but to have a student learn by doing makes the concept unforgettable.

The experience of participation in government led many students to become more assertive about what they considered to be their rights. One day in the first year, a student was sent home for coming to school



J.R. Bolen

Speaker of the House (2nd elected speaker)

with hair dyed green. The following day, almost a hundred students rallied in her support, declaring the decision a violation of individual rights. The student was allowed to return to school. Whether or not the situation was correctly resolved, the important fact was that students recognized their right to peacefully assemble in front of the school.

Where the rights of students to decide their own life-style begin and end can be a divisive issue. One such dispute caused a major backlash from teachers and helped to force the student government into hiatus. This was a proposition in the second year of the government to allow gum chewing in the classroom, in the face of a school policy against it. When the staff reacted overwhelmingly against the idea, the students thoughtfully created an addendum calling for a schoolwide clean-up of all gum before gum chewing would be allowed in classrooms. Extensive arguments were made by students for and against the proposal in the school and on the student government website. But the student government lost support from the staff and began to falter, eventually being placed in hiatus.

The student government's problems

were compounded by a change in the time period allocated for meetings. Originally, the meetings took place during the advisory period, a thirty-minute time-slot every morning that is primarily used to enhance the reading and writing skills of the students. Although representatives missed the advisory, I believe that they sharpened their skills through preparation and involvement in debates, as well as by creating and presenting legislation.

In the second year of the new student government, the administration decided that a school-wide focus on reading was needed to improve reading skills. A major schedule change eliminated the advisory period, inserting in its place a Sustained Silent Reading period in the middle of the day. This period rotated around three lunch periods, one for sixth grade, one for seventh grade, and one for eighth grade. The student government no longer had any universally shared period in which to hold congressional meetings. The administration believed that the Student Congress was successful enough to survive a switch to holding meetings before school along with the Executive Branch. However, due to the busing of several students, the pool of available

students was depleted, resulting in lower participation.

Reflections

As experience showed, the success of a student government of this kind requires the support of the administration, the staff, and the students; a universal meeting period; and the enthusiasm and dedication of advisors (three at La Mesa). Mutual agreement is needed on the scope of the government to deal with issues involving the behavior and life-styles of students.

A powerful reason for taking the idea of a school government seriously is its potential to enhance the social studies curriculum. Rob and I found that the student government was an especially useful experience in the eighth grade, when students learned about U.S. history and the Constitution using the *We the People* textbook created by the Center for Civic Education. The enthusiasm of La Mesa students for the experiment left no doubt in our minds that a thriving, soundly based student government can lead students down a road to increased civic understanding that they would not otherwise travel. ☐

Note

1. National Council for the Social Studies, "NCSS Guidelines and Principles for Student Government" (NCSS position statement), *Social Education* 60, no 5 (September 1996): 307. Available on NCSS Online: <http://www.ncss.org/standards>

J.R. Bolen now teaches at Lakota Junior High School, 1415 SW 314th Street, Federal Way, WA 98023 (voicemail: 253-945-4838). He is interested in comparing experiences with other social studies teachers who are advisors to student governments by mail, telephone, or e-mail to JR-Bolen@fwsd.wednet.edu Information on the La Mesa Middle School experiment can also be obtained from Rob Appenzeller or Mike Settanni at La Mesa Middle School, 4200 Parks Avenue, La Mesa, CA 91941.

Acting Out History from the Ice Age to the Modern Age

**Denee J. Mattioli and
Frederick Drake**

What needs to happen in a classroom to make students like history? Seventh grade teacher Michael Welch appears to know a secret: how to get young adolescents—so often self-conscious in front of their peers—to throw off their inhibitions and get into acting out the past. It may be in the role of a Japanese child emperor, a horse being traded by Moroccans, or sirens calling to Ulysses. And, it may be that this teacher's secret of success is getting onto the floor and into the spirit of things along with his students.

A common criticism of history teaching in our schools is not that the subject matter is beyond students' comprehension, but that it may be difficult to understand when presented solely as it is in textbooks—with names, dates, timelines, and endless streams of information.¹ While textbooks have been criticized for having achieved a uniform dullness, we must acknowledge that a textbook's purpose is to present information. Most do that.

One way to overcome the sameness of this form of presentation is through the incorporation of the humanities: literature, dance, music, drama, and the visual arts. Such content is not only valuable in itself, but can serve as another vehicle to help students learn to question, think analytically, solve problems, and make decisions—all skills required for students to construct their own knowledge.²

In seeking examples of how to integrate the humanities into regular class

work, we spent a month observing Welch's seventh grade world history class. Our goal was to identify the conditions and practices that lead to high achieving students who regularly rank social studies as their favorite subject.

Our fear was that we would find a charismatic teacher to whom students were drawn, and that it alone would explain the reason for the strong responses of class members. We did find that. But we also found well-known, proven methods of teaching that were held together with some exciting—yes, even inspiring—"glue."

Classroom Atmosphere

Mr. Welch's classroom appears different from most seventh grade social studies classrooms. Probably the most obvious difference is the arrangement of the desks in clusters around three sides of the room, leaving wide open floor space. This arrangement gives the room a casual appearance. More importantly, it allows students to move freely to act out the lesson and to form discussion groups.

Often, music (usually related to the lesson) is playing softly as students enter the classroom. The room is always an object-rich environment where students can see tangible connections to the far-off times and places they are studying. The room is further inviting because of its smells. The teacher often uses oils that give the room a subtle but pleasant aroma.

To encourage students to get into the lesson's drama, the teacher helps them move beyond any discomfort about their bodies by getting down on the floor and



Ronald V. Morris

Students mourn the loss of community members

involving himself in the processes he expects of them. Finally, students are encouraged to talk and express their feelings about what is happening in class.

To the casual observer, this classroom may appear very unstructured. On closer observation, it becomes clear that it is highly organized, and that planning a unit of this type takes a great deal more time than a traditional lesson. However, there is much less time spent in correcting paperwork.

The requirements of the teacher are:

1. Develop an inviting and comfortable atmosphere.
2. Provide objects (or pictures of objects) that allow students to develop skills of analysis and interpretation.
3. Make long range plans in order to link lessons and provide the context for students to make connections.
4. Use questions that lead students to continue questioning and to make predictions.

5. Be confident enough to provide opportunities for students to make decisions, solve problems, and carry out discussions
6. Think, plan, and present history as action requiring student participation.

The Day's Lesson

The Use of Objectives

Each day begins with five to seven minutes of review of the previous day's lesson, followed by two or three minutes used for stating the objectives of this day's class. These objectives are stated as questions in language students can understand, and represent the crucial center of any lesson. The objectives are listed on posters, arranged in an order that follows the flow of the lesson, and attached to classroom walls. The brief review and the overview of objectives are well planned and flow so that students can understand the connection between lessons.

Review takes place with a partner or in small groups of three or four, so that every student can respond to every question. Seventh graders are generally very social beings, and the teacher capitalizes on this by inviting them to talk. The discussion is raised to a higher level by asking students not only what they think about an issue, but how they would justify their opinion. For example: Was the introduction of iron into Japanese culture an advantage or a disadvantage? Why? After students discuss this within their groups, one student in each group is called upon to summarize their response. This may be followed up with another question.

Setting the Scene

During the next few minutes of class, students in small groups rotate to stations. Typically, there are three stations with eight students (two groups of four) at each station. The stations include photographs, art reproductions, sculpture, poetry, pottery,

lines from literature, or some other kind of artifact accompanied by questions for students to discuss as a group. These well-planned questions may require photo interpretation, analysis of an artifact, or interpretation of a written piece. This often results in students developing questions of their own and making predictions as to what will happen during the lesson to come.

Acting Out the Lesson

The largest amount of the class period is used to act out the history lesson—something that engenders enthusiasm on the part of teacher and students alike. The teacher delivers a well-planned lecture in a storytelling format, acting simultaneously as the director of a drama. Students play the roles of people, animals, and objects, acting out the events the teacher is narrating. The teacher stops regularly to ask students what their characters are thinking about or what they think might happen next. For example, if the objective is to understand a slave revolt, a student playing a slave may be asked, "How do you like being treated like dirt? What do you want to do to your master?"

The use of space depends on the lesson being taught. If it is about the war between Sparta and Athens, for example, the space will be divided in two. Space can also be used vertically. When examining the social structure of ancient Egypt, the teacher asks Pharaoh to stand on a desk, nobles and priests to sit on desks, and peasants to sit on the floor.

Gestures and Mnemonic Devices

Acting out the lesson entails use of mnemonic devices, hand actions, and gestures used to help students remember names, terms, and vocabulary. Signs are used to identify not only important figures (the main characters in the drama) but nameless, ordinary people like the merchants of Athens or the women of Sparta.

Each student should have a sign, since this helps the student to feel recognized and a part of the lesson, as well as making visible the history of common people. The signs may also include simple drawings that symbolize the role of a character, such as a crown for a monarch or a cross for a clergyman.

This use of classroom drama certainly demonstrates Seymour Papert's thesis that when learning something abstract or remote, children should be able to put their whole bodies through some kind of experience before moving to paper and pencil or computer and monitor applications.³ As each objective is addressed during the acting out of the lesson, it is checked off the posted list.

Lesson Summary

The last five minutes of the class period are spent in summarizing the day's lesson. Literature or poetry is often used, and there is usually an attempt to tie what has been learned to the lives of the students. During this summary, the students return to their desks. The teacher focuses the discussion on questions that require students to state opinions, make judgments, and evaluate the actions and consequences learned in the lesson. Again, students talk over their responses with a partner or in their small group.

Ending a Unit

World History Timeline

At the end of each unit, students identify the major events within it, and create a segment to be added to a world history timeline that grows as the year progresses. This serves as a constant review for students and is a graphic representation of the chronology of these studies.

Forms of Review

The end of unit review is based on the same objectives used to guide students throughout

the unit. For some of the units, students develop their own artifact displays, and the classroom becomes a museum of exhibits where students demonstrate what they have learned.

Assessment

The unit tests cover the difficult concepts world history presents. They are not “easy” tests. They consist of multiple choice and short essay questions, and require students to synthesize and reorganize information. Students are often asked to compare and contrast one civilization or group of people with another. They are often asked Why? questions that require them to apply what

they have learned. The students in this heterogeneous classroom tend to do well regardless of their measured academic ability. Most students perform at an A or B level. ❧

Notes

1. National Society for the Study of Education, *Textbooks and Schooling in the United States* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
2. National Center for History in the Schools, *National Standards for World History: Exploring Paths to the Present* (Los Angeles: University of California, LA, 1994); John Goodlad, *Arts and the Schools* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1980); John Goodlad, *Educational Renewal: Better Teachers, Better Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Pub., 1994).
3. Seymour Papert, *Mindstorms: Children, Computers, and Powerful Ideas* (New York:

Basic Books, 1980); Seymour Papert, *The Children's Machine: Rethinking School in the Age of the Computer* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

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A Prehistoric People Unit

A pine scent wafts through the air, creating a positive mood and suggesting the natural environment of the Ice Age. As the students enter the classroom, they hear music from the long-preserved culture of Australian aborigines, which evokes ancient times.

The students sit in groups of four and build an answer in their minds to the questions: What do you think the natural environment was like in the Ice Age, about 30,000 B.C.? What do you think the people then were like?

Twenty-two unit objectives are introduced. For example, students are to find answers to the questions: What two things was the economy of these people based on? What kind of social group did these prehistoric people live in? Why that size of group?

Students begin to act the roles of people of the time. They learn about the climate (“Shiver! Make your teeth chatter!”) and plant life. Some students portray animals of the time—ibexes, mammoths, and saber-toothed tigers. (Teachers may need to point out that dinosaurs lived so long before the Ice Age that no human being ever saw a living dinosaur.)

Questions about how Ice Age people made a living are used to introduce the concepts of an economy and technology. Three stations in the classroom have prehistoric tools: an ax and stone spear; a simple basket made of twigs; and a stone grinding set. Students decide what the tools are made of and what purpose they served, and then act out hunting and gathering roles.

The study of social groups starts with the family, as students

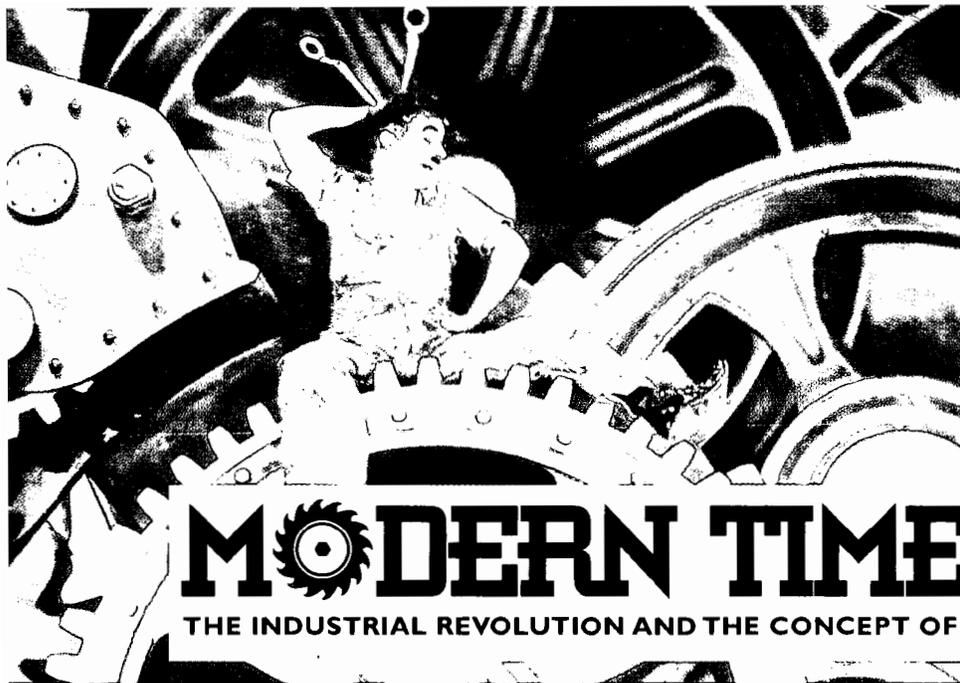
build an understanding of the roles that had to be performed by different family members to guarantee survival. They examine different gender roles and the way children were brought up. Students come to realize that each family on its own was unable to ensure its survival. Families had to combine with others into bands, which needed a ruler (a “government”) to make decisions affecting the welfare of all.

The students also consider the kind of religion that people practiced in prehistoric days, and the answers that prehistoric people may have believed they had to the great questions of life. As groups visit stations with examples of prehistoric art, they are able to see what features of life Ice Age peoples thought were worth recording and to consider why.

At the start of the unit, students write down their preliminary ideas about prehistoric people. Later, they are required to write an essay on the subject that shows an understanding of eleven concepts: climate, plants, animals, making a living, technology, social groups, government, education, gender roles, religion, and art.

To show students how to do it, Michael Welch writes a model essay incorporating his thoughts about his seventh-grade class, using each of these concepts.

Other assignments include the performance of scenes from a novel about prehistoric people, and a choice between creating a song about the prehistoric way of life and making a mini-museum of Prehistoric People.



MODERN TIMES

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND THE CONCEPT OF TIME

Frans H. Doppen

Joseph Khazzaka has suggested that the flashback approach is one way of making the teaching of world history more effective and relevant to today's students.¹ The flashback approach can help make an historical event such as the Industrial Revolution more real to students by encouraging them to think about how their own lives have been affected by the process of industrialization.

The typical world history textbook covers the Industrial Revolution in a factual manner by discussing its beginnings in 18th century Great Britain and its spread throughout Western Europe, the United States, and Japan during the 19th century.² However, presenting the Industrial Revolution as a series of historical inventions and occurrences denies the reality that it is an ongoing process that continues to shape contemporary society. Students need to become not only more knowledgeable, but also more reflective, about how the Industrial Revolution has shaped the modern world in which they live.

Jeremy Rifkin has described time as the primary conflict in human history. He asserts that every culture has its own unique

set of temporal fingerprints and that to know people is to know the time values they live by.³ He also believes that children who have been immersed in the time world of the computer are often unable to readjust to the world of clock culture. This is especially apparent when it comes to learning how to reflect. In the computer world, "reflection is often as close as the flick of a keystroke."⁴ Reflection, however, is a slow and time consuming process.

The Industrial Revolution forever changed humankind's perception of time. Time became such a scarce commodity in industrial society that busyness became a new way of life. For example, European visitors to the United States have long been fascinated with its frantic pace of life. As early as the 1830s, an English observer noted that the average New Yorker "always walks as if he had a good dinner before him, and a bailiff behind him," while another visitor described American eating habits as "gobble, gulp, and go."⁵ These observations could well have been made in our contemporary world.

What follows are several approaches to increasing student understanding of how the Industrial Revolution changed our concept of time and what the lasting effects of these changes are on modern life.

Looking at Daily Life

An excellent way to begin exploring how the Industrial Revolution has changed our concept of time is with an examination of daily life. Middle school students are often eager to share their experiences with others. Open discussion with questions that focus attention on what the daily lives of your students really look like. For example,

- When did you get up this morning?
- How did you get to school?
- When did you have to leave home to get to school on time?
- At what time does this class period begin and end?
- Is your whole school day divided into periods of this length?
- Where will you go when school lets out? Who will be there? What will you do? How long will you stay?
- When and with whom will you eat dinner?
- When will you likely go to bed?

Many of the responses will include exact, often digital, references to time. They may indicate a hectic life-style in which families no longer have one daily meal where all members sit down at the dinner table together. Students may also become aware of many similarities in life-style that exist among them.

Speed Trap

A good next step is to introduce students to the concept of a "speed trap." Walljasper asserts that many people in modern industrial society find it hard to slow down despite a constant stream of new inventions designed to perform tasks faster and presumably save time. As he puts it:

It wasn't supposed to turn out this way. As a kid in the 1960s, I remember hearing that one of the biggest challenges of the future would be what to do with all our time. Amazing inventions were

going to free up great stretches of our days for what really matters: friends, family, fun. But just the opposite has happened. We've witnessed a proliferation of dazzling time-saving innovations—jet travel, personal computers, Fed Ex, cell phones, microwaves, drive-through restaurants, home shopping networks, the World Wide Web—and yet the pace of life has been cranked up to a level that would have been unimaginable three decades ago.⁶

Without reading Walljasper's list, students might be asked to name inventions (or elaborations on inventions) in their own lifetime that may be said to create a speed trap. They could move backward in time by asking the same question first of

their parents, then of their grandparents (or some other member of this generation).

From Sun Time to Factory Time

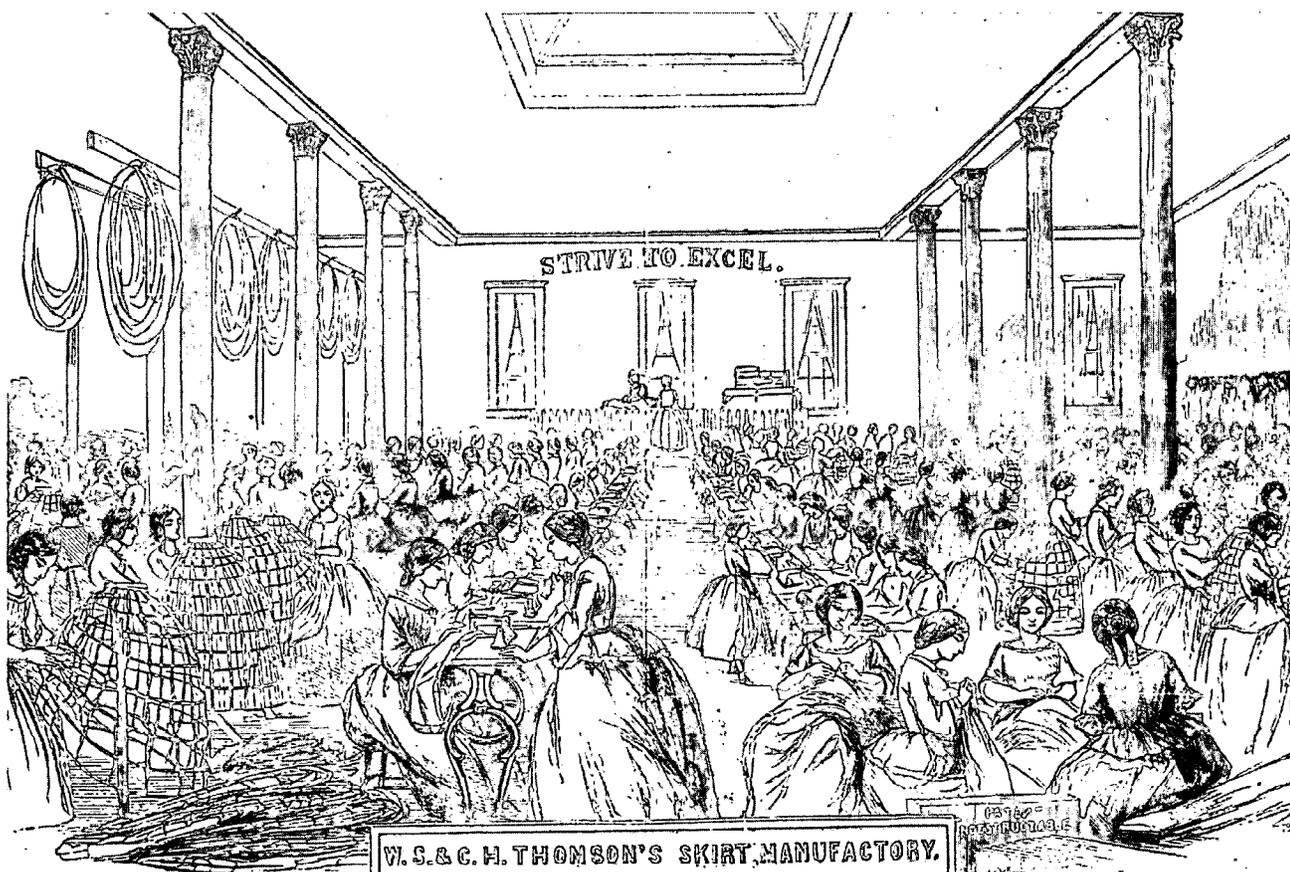
By now, students should have developed more ability to reflect on how they are products of the world in which they live, as are their parents, and preceding generations back to the age of the Industrial Revolution. They can consider some of the profound changes entailed in the conversion from an agricultural to an industrial nation as the factory clock replaced sun and season in determining what constituted a day of work.

According to Daniel Boorstin: So long as mankind lived by raising crops and herding animals there was not much need for measuring small units of time. The

seasons were all important—to know when to expect the rain, the snow, the sun, the cold. Why bother with hours and minutes?

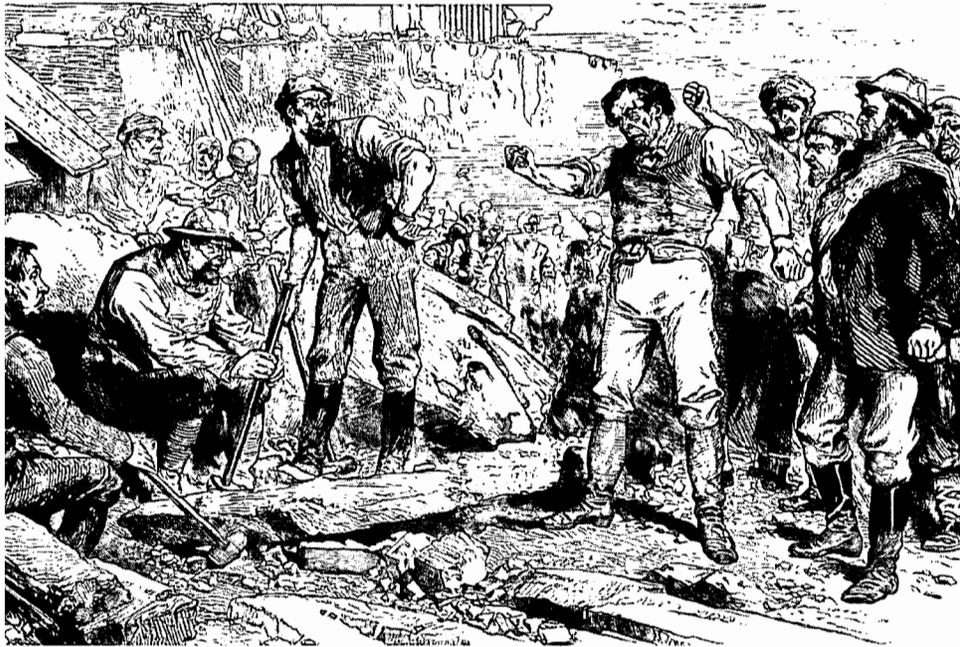
Daylight was the only important time, the only time when men could work. To measure useful time, then, was to measure the hours of sun.⁷

"Punctuality" was a new word that entered the popular vocabulary in the late 18th century, and it was associated particularly with being on time for work. Factory life required workers to adopt a new time orientation, one arbitrated almost exclusively by the ownership class until late in the Industrial Revolution. True, workers who loathed factory time could vote with their feet, sometimes threatening the ability of factory owners to secure a labor force.



"Strive to Excel" was the motto of this hoop skirt manufactory shown in a wood engraving from *Harper's Weekly* on February 19, 1859. According to an article in Oliver Jensen's *The Revolt of American Women*, some 500 labor-saving devices were in use at the factory, where women's wages averaged \$4 per week. But one woman was recorded as earning \$16 per week based on experience and "industry." What do students guess to be the chief component(s) of "industry?"

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This drawing from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* on June 8, 1872, bears the caption: "New York City—The Eight-Hour Movement—A Group of Workingmen on a Strike in one of the Up-town Wards." How do students think this demand relates to changes that occurred during the Industrial Revolution?

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More commonly, workers were exhorted by various means to adjust to the new industrial rhythm. As Rifkin reports about 19th century England:

....getting workers to work at the appointed clock hours was a recurring problem. In Lancaster as in other industrial cities, a steam whistle would blow at five in the morning to wrest people from their sleep. If that proved insufficient, employers would hire "knockers up," men who went from flat to flat "rapping on bedroom windows with long poles." Sometimes the knockers even pulled on strings "dangling from a window and attached to a worker's toe."⁸

This passage should not only amuse students, but help them realize why workers resisted change. In fact, middle school students may more readily appreciate the difficulties of living by the clock than do others. Their own internal clocks may be making it harder for adolescents to "punch in" at school early in the morning

than it is for either younger children or adults.

The Industrial Revolution and Society

Phyllis Deane has developed a framework of the Industrial Revolution as six intertwined revolutions: agricultural, demographic, commercial, transportation, iron and textile, and mentality.⁹ Her model can help students to see the Industrial Revolution as a holistic process that had an impact on nearly all aspects of society. The revolution in mentality can be examined in terms of some of the new ideologies that emerged as a result of the Industrial Revolution.

For example, Engels laid blame for the degraded condition of the working class in mid-19th century England on the ownership class. He wrote:

So long as they are making money it is a matter of complete indifference to the English middle class if their workers eat or starve. They regard hard cash as a universal

measuring rod. Anything that yields no financial gain is dismissed as "stupid", "impractical", or "idealistic".¹⁰

Engels likewise depicted the bourgeoisie itself as so "degraded by selfishness and moral depravity as to be quite incapable of salvation." For example, he used the following extract from an article in the *Manchester Guardian* in which a middle class woman complains about the presence of the poor on city streets:

For sometime past numerous beggars are to be seen on the streets of our town. They attempt—often in a truly brazen and offensive manner—to arouse the pity of the public by their ragged clothes, their wretched appearance, their disgusting wounds and sores, and by showing the stumps of amputated limbs. I should have thought that those of us who not only pay our poor rates but also subscribe generously to charitable appeals have done enough to claim the right to be shielded from such disgusting and revolting sights.¹¹

Students could examine the basic tenets of communist theory in comparison with the liberal doctrine of laissez faire capitalism and discuss how each is rooted in the Industrial Revolution. They could also relate their historical understandings to a 20th century commentary on the failures of capitalism, Charlie Chaplin's silent film *Modern Times*.

Modern Times

Modern Times features Charles Chaplin's last appearance as the Little Tramp, here desperately trying to survive during the Great Depression.¹² *Modern Times* is a satire of the corporate world of the early 20th century when it first came under the influence of Taylor's ideas of scientific

management.¹³ The film is slyly subtitled “A story of industry, of individual enterprise, humanity crusading in the pursuit of happiness”—words that flash across the screen as workers flock sheeplike into a factory.

In examining this film with students, I use an activity sheet with focused questions aimed at helping them to appreciate its social commentaries. Some sample questions are:

- What does Charlie have to do before he is allowed to go to the factory bathroom? (Punch his time card.)
- What is the purpose of the Billows Feeding Machine? (To enable workers to remain on the assembly line while eating lunch, i.e., “time is money.”)
- What other efforts to increase the speed of production are demonstrated in the movie? What effect do they have on Charlie?
- Charlie picks up a flag that falls from a truck during a labor protest. What does it represent? What does it appear to mean to Charlie? (It’s a communist flag. Although its meaning seems unclear to Charlie, it suggests that some factory workers seeking to improve their working conditions were open to new political ideas, such as communism.)
- Does or doesn’t this movie have a happy ending?

Among other things students might reflect on is the very title of *Modern Times*, a reminder that people living during the Great Depression were just as convinced they were living in modern times as are students today. In what ways do students see their own time as “modern?” What similarities and differences do students see between their own time and the era of the Depression?

Walljasper’s Timeline

Dramatizing Walljasper’s timeline of increases in speed since the Industrial



This 1876 lithograph of the Bellaire Manufacturing Company, located in the Upper Ohio River Valley, is a good illustration of Deane’s framework of the Industrial Revolution as six intertwined revolutions. How many of these revolutions do students observe in progress in this picture?

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Revolution is a good follow-up to viewing *Modern Times*. It includes many humorous comments on time-saving inventions and human reactions to increased speed. Students can have fun working in groups to create skits dramatizing milestones along this timeline—perhaps using the antics of the Little Tramp as a model. Some examples of timeline entries follow:

- Late 1700s: Improvements in upholstery technology in France allow stagecoaches to pick up speed; an increase in road deaths is one immediate result.
- 1876: Wind-up alarm clocks are introduced by Seth Thomas. Punctuality takes a big stride forward now that there’s no longer any excuse for being late for work.
- 1883: Life in the U.S. is still slow-paced enough that each town sets its own time. New Orleans, for instance, is 23 minutes behind Baton Rouge. Under pressure from the railroads, the federal government creates time zones, and

soon all watches are synchronized.

- 1890s: The golden age of the bicycle. Some warn that these new vehicles, which move at a pace four times faster than walking, will bring about an epidemic of “bicycle face”—that is, permanent disfigurement caused by pedaling into the wind at high speeds.
- 1913: Henry Ford introduces the assembly line, cutting the time it takes to produce a car from 14 person-hours to just 2.
- 1953: Carl Swanson introduces the first TV dinner: turkey, gravy, cornbread, peas, and sweet potatoes.
- 1980s: The nanosecond, a measure of time lasting one-billionth of a second, is invented.¹⁴

Reflections on Time

Providing students with background information or having them research the history of time can enhance their understanding of how the organization of time is an arbitrary

solution resulting from different historical experiences. According to Daniel Boorstin, there are few greater revolutions in human experience than the movement from the seasonal or "temporary" hour to the equal hour. Here was man's declaration of independence from the sun, new proof of his mastery over himself and his surroundings. Only later would it be revealed that he had accomplished this mastery by putting himself under the dominion of a machine with imperious demands all its own.¹⁵

Ask students to write an essay reflecting on Boorstin's statement, with particular attention to the concept of time and/or the relationship between man and machine created by the Industrial Revolution. Students may offer their own view of whether modern technology (the continuing Industrial Revolution) is making their own lives better or worse. Their essays should reflect student learning during this unit as well as offering students the opportunity to develop their own personal interpretations of an essential historical process. ■

Notes

1. Joseph Khazzaka, "Comparing Two Approaches to Teaching World History," *Social Education* 61 (April/May 1997): 210-214.
2. T. Walter Wallbank, Arnold Schrier, Donna Maier, and Patricia Gutiérrez-Smith, *History and Life* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1993).
3. Jeremy Rifkin, *Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1987), 1.
4. *Ibid.*, 25.
5. Ray Walljasper, "The Speed Trap. Why It's So Hard to Slow Down—and Why We Can't Wait," *Utne Reader* 80 (March/April 1997): 40-47.
6. *Ibid.*, 41-42.
7. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers: A History of Man's Search to Know His World and Himself* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 26.
8. Rifkin, 90-91.
9. Phyllis Deane, *The First Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
10. W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner, eds., *Engels: The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University

A Great Wrong!

SEE HOW ONE YEAR OF FACTORY LIFE AGES LITTLE GIRLS




Little Ola, eight years old when she went to work in a Georgia cotton mill. The sun shining in her face causes a slight frown, but she has rosy cheeks and a childlike expression.

This is another picture of little Ola one year after she began work in the cotton mill. Her childhood has gone forever. How much was it worth to the mill, to society, to her?

Our National Disgrace

Two million children in this country are at work, while other children play or go to school. Two million children sacrificed to greed! Here is the record. Read it.

10,000 Boys from 9 to 13 years old work in the Coal Breakers.

7,500 Children work in Glass Factories. Hundreds of them work ALL NIGHT.

60,000 little Children toil in Southern Cotton Mills. Little girls 8 years old work through a TWELVE-HOUR NIGHT.

Little Messenger Boys are ruined by NIGHT calls at Houses of Vice.

"The truth is, these child victims are working for us. They are working for me. They are working for you."—HON. CHARLES P. NEILL, United States Commissioner of Labor.

DETACH, SIGN AND RETURN

MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT

I take pleasure in contributing \$..... to the work of the National Child Labor Committee. Please enroll me as

- An Associate Member.
- A Sustaining Member.
- A Guarantor.

Name

Address

Make all checks or orders payable to the National Child Labor Committee, 187 Fourth Avenue, New York City, [1906]

National Child Labor Committee
187 Fourth Ave., New York City. Century Building, Atlanta, Ga.

OFFICERS:

Felix Adler, <i>Chairman</i>	Samuel McCune Lindsay, <i>Secretary</i>
Homer Folks, <i>Vice-Chairman</i>	A. J. McKelway, <i>Assistant</i>
V. Evert Macy, <i>Treasurer</i>	Owen R. Lovejoy, <i>Secretaries</i>

Detach the coupon now—before you turn this page—and become at least an associate member. Your \$2 may save a little boy or girl from industrial slavery.

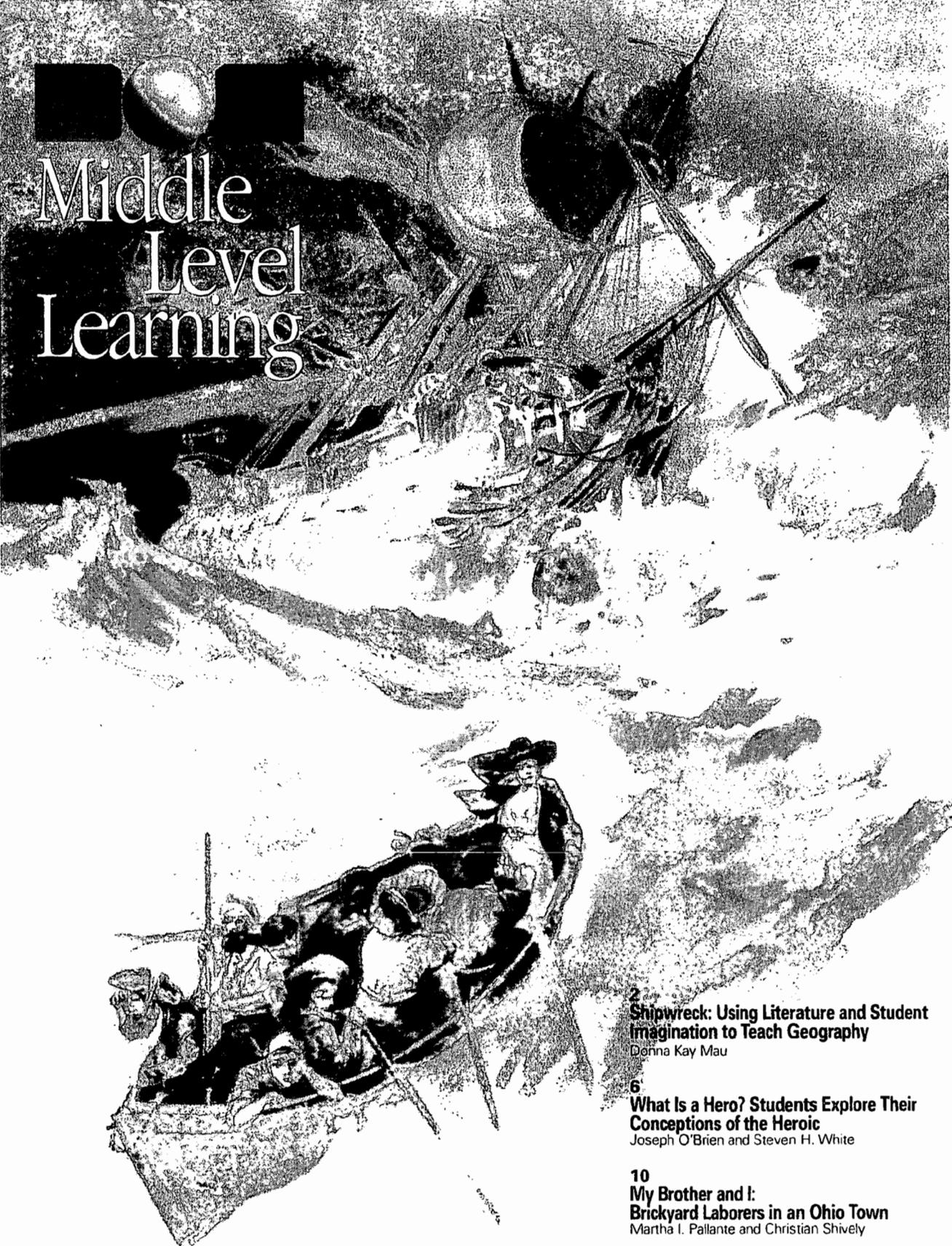
"A Great Wrong!" screams the headline in this 1905 advertisement placed by the National Child Labor Committee. How is this wrong described in the accompanying text? What aspect of Deane's framework of six revolutions does this ad most clearly illustrate?

10. Press, (1968), 313.
11. *Ibid.*, 314.
12. *Modern Times* (Beverly Hills, CA: FoxVideo Inc., 1992). (87 Min., B&W, 1936).
13. Frederick W. Taylor, *Shop Management* (New York: Harper & Row, 1911); see also Ralph B. Kimbrough and Michael Y. Nunnery, *Educational Administration: An Introduction* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 259-260.
14. Walljasper, 42-47.
15. Boorstin, 39.

Acknowledgment
Helping students learn to reflect on the impact of the Industrial Revolution was a major goal of a world history unit developed by the author, who wishes to extend his gratitude to Dr. Elizabeth A. Yeager, College of Education, University of Florida, for her constructive criticism of this article.

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Middle Level Learning

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**Shipwreck: Using Literature and Student
Imagination to Teach Geography**
Donna Kay Mau

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**What Is a Hero? Students Explore Their
Conceptions of the Heroic**
Joseph O'Brien and Steven H. White

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**My Brother and I:
Brickyard Laborers in an Ohio Town**
Martha I. Pallante and Christian Shively

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**Fostering a Critical and Caring Classroom
Culture**
Pamela B. Joseph and Mark A. Windschitl

SHIPWRECK

USING LITERATURE AND STUDENT IMAGINATION TO TEACH GEOGRAPHY

Donna Kay Mau

YOU are a former mariner who took to sea again in hopes of increasing your fortune. Now a powerful storm has left you the sole survivor of the voyage and cast you up on a deserted island. You are no longer the eager but inexperienced youth who first ran away from home in search of adventure. Your new situation calls on all your knowledge and powers of invention to help you survive in an unknown environment.

Sound like the makings of a good yarn? In fact, Daniel Defoe's tale of *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York Mariner as Related by Himself* entranced generations of readers. This included the young who—then lacking anything known as a “children's book”—took it up along with *Gulliver's Travels* and *A Pilgrim's Progress* as a story meant for them.

First published in 1719, *Robinson Crusoe* is an account of the real shipwreck

of one Alexander Selkirk, embellished by the author's imagination and provision of many more details. It is historical fiction or—some might argue—science fiction. It joined the ranks of many earlier tales of shipwreck and provided the model for countless more to follow.

The adventures of Robinson Crusoe can provide a lesson in geography that integrates literature and prompts creativity by asking students to use their own imaginations to respond to the harrowing situation of one shipwrecked sailor. I use it to reinforce a unit on the five themes of geography, with particular attention to the themes of location, place, and human-environmental interaction.¹

The lesson is a three-part activity that students perform in groups and individually. In part one, students use cues of absolute and relative location to fill in the names of real places on three of Crusoe's voyages in an imaginary ship log. In part two, students read excerpts from Crusoe's journal and use them to create a map of the island and to evaluate the resources and technology available to him. In part three, students write papers based on their knowledge of Crusoe's situation.

The Lesson

Purpose

Students will use map skills, knowledge of the resources available, and their own powers of invention to follow the adventures of



Robinson Crusoe on three ocean voyages and during his encounter with an unknown island.

Objectives

- ▶ to use map skills to discover places on Crusoe's voyages based on absolute and relative location
- ▶ to use mapmaking skills to chart Crusoe's island
- ▶ to identify characteristics of place on Crusoe's island
- ▶ to analyze what Crusoe needed to survive on the island given the resources provided by the environment
- ▶ to evaluate how Crusoe's survival was affected by his attitude, experience, and the tools available to him
- ▶ to invent other possible responses to Crusoe's situation

Set-up

Students will work in cooperative groups of three members each. Each group will have a captain, steward, and cartographer (these roles should be alternated for each day of the simulation). The captain gives directions and is in overall charge of the group's effort. The cartographer supervises the use of maps and the effort to locate places and chart the island. The steward records places on the ship's log and notes useful information about the island.

In part one, the task of each group is to use the ship's log to plot their voyage and to

discover the places indicated by the absolute or relative locations given. (Alternatively, the teacher could prepare the log so that students begin with places and discover their absolute locations.) Each group will present its findings to the class for comparison.

In part two, the task of each group is to use the journal excerpts to:

- ▶ prepare a map of the island using the information given. The map must include the cardinal directions and a map scale, but the choice of visual presentation is up to the group
- ▶ fill out the Survival List on Crusoe's needs and the tools and resources that were available to him. Students could rank the resources and technology in terms of importance. Each group will again share its findings with the whole class.

In part three, students will write individual papers about survival on the island. These papers could take the form of: (1) a newspaper report on how Crusoe survived based on the information in his journal, (2) a new entry in the journal that sums up what Crusoe thinks was most important to his survival, or (3) an original response to the situation in which the student invents his or her own plan for survival on the island. These papers should provide the basis for a final class discussion.

Materials

- ▶ atlas
- ▶ outline map of the Western Hemisphere

with lines of latitude and longitude

- ▶ worksheet: Ship Log created from *Robinson Crusoe*
- ▶ worksheet: Excerpts from the Journal of Robinson Crusoe
- ▶ worksheet: Survival List
- ▶ materials for preparing a map of the island

Evaluation

This project can be evaluated at each step by the teacher and students. Students can compare and contrast their Ship Logs, maps of the island, and worksheets on island survival. The teacher should evaluate these group efforts as well as the final papers written by students.

Acknowledgment

The illustrations in this article are from an edition of *Robinson Crusoe* published in Boston by DeWolfe & Fiske Company (no date).

Donna Kay Mau is a social studies teacher and geography coordinator at Lincoln Hall Middle School in Lincolnwood, Illinois.

Answer Key for Shipwrecked Quiz (back cover)

1. *The Odyssey*; Homer; first storm caused by Zeus' thunderbolt after Odysseus' men ate sacred cattle, second storm caused by Poseidon who sent a wall of rain to scuttle the raft
2. Sinbad the Sailor; *The Arabian Nights Entertainment* or *The Thousand and One Nights*; a roc
3. *The Tempest*; William Shakespeare; Caliban
4. *Swiss Family Robinson*; Johann David Wyss; "Falconhurst" because it was a treehouse
5. *The Mysterious Island*; Jules Verne; Captain Nemo from *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*

S U R V I V A L L I S T

Your job is to use the excerpts from Robinson Crusoe's journal to:

- ▶ list what human needs had to be fulfilled for Crusoe to survive on the island.
- ▶ list the resources provided by the island's environment that helped Crusoe to survive. These may be ranked in order of importance.
- ▶ list the tools from the ship or handmade that helped Crusoe to survive. These may be ranked in order of importance. (Note: the retrieval of pen, ink, and paper from the ship can be assumed from the existence of this narrative.)

NEEDS

RESOURCES

TOOLS

SHIP LOG

Your job is to plot the following three voyages of Robinson Crusoe by making use of absolute and relative location. Absolute location refers to where a place is located on the grid created by lines of latitude and longitude. Relative location refers to the location of a place in relation to other places. As you plot the voyages, use an atlas to discover the place names left blank but referred to in Robinson Crusoe. Note: the latitude and longitude given are in terms of whole degrees and not exact. Also, some of the places referred to as "countries" did not exist as such in Crusoe's time.

VOYAGE I (CA 1652)

Robinson Crusoe, messmate

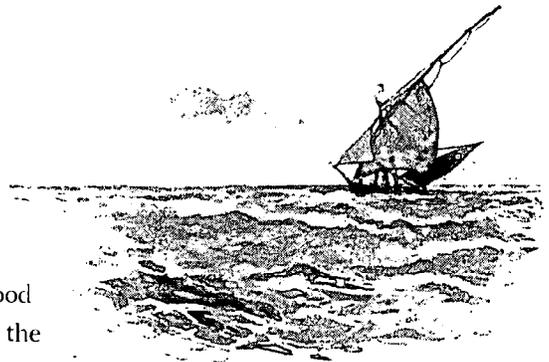
The ship left the port of _____ (51°N , 0°) on the _____ River in the country of _____. It sailed SE to the country of _____ (10°N , 14°W) located on the continent of _____. Loaded with trading goods, the ship made the return voyage to its point of departure, where the goods were sold for a great profit.

VOYAGE 2 (CA 1653-1655)

Robinson Crusoe, trader

Sailing again toward the continent formerly visited, the ship was seized by pirates and Robinson Crusoe carried off as a slave to the seaport of _____ (34°N , 8°W) in the country of _____.

Crusoe and a companion made their escape in a small sailing ship and headed SE along the continent's shores, putting in at various places for food and fresh water despite fear of hostile inhabitants. Crusoe hoped to reach the mouth of the _____ River (15°N , 17°W) in the country of _____, where he thought to find European rescuers. As their small boat was approaching the _____ Islands (28°N , 16°W), they were rescued by a Portuguese ship bound for South America. Sailing SW on a voyage of 22 or more days, the ship arrived in the seaport of _____ (13°S , 39°W) in the country of _____. Crusoe stayed there and began life as a planter.



VOYAGE 3 (EMBARKED SEPTEMBER 1, 1659)

Robinson Crusoe, planter and trader

Undertaking to bring back slaves for wealthy planters in his country of settlement, Crusoe was aboard a ship bound NE by N from his home port, heading across the _____ Ocean for the west coast of Africa. But a hurricane developed and blew the ship far off course in a westerly direction. The captain calculated their new position as lying between the mouths of two great rivers—the _____ River (0° , 50°W) and the _____ River (10°N , 61°W)—off the coast of the country of _____. The ship, now leaky and in bad need of repairs, could either return to port or make for the English occupied island of _____ (13°N , 59°W) in the _____ Sea. But another storm caused it to strike a reef and go down. Robinson Crusoe was the only survivor of the shipwreck, and spent almost thirty years on a tiny unmarked island.

Log Answer Sheet: Voyage 1: London, Thames, England, Guinea, Africa. Voyage 2: Salé, Morocco, Gambia, Senegal, Cape Verde, Salvador, Brazil. Voyage 3: Atlantic, Amazon, Orinoco, Guyana, Barbados, Caribbean

EXCERPTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF ROBINSON CRUSOE

(From *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. Students can locate these passages in any unabridged version of the novel.)

September 30, 1659.—I, poor miserable Robinson Crusoe, being shipwrecked, during a dreadful storm, in the offing, came on shore on this dismal, unfortunate island, which I called "The Island of Despair"; all the rest of the ship's company being drowned, and myself almost dead.

All the rest of the day I spent in afflicting myself at the dismal circumstances I was brought to: viz, I had neither food, house, clothes, weapon, nor place to fly to; and, in despair of any relief, saw nothing but death before me...

October 1.—In the morning I saw, to my great surprise, the ship had floated with the high tide, and was driven on shore again, much nearer the island...

From the 1st of October to the 24th.—All these days entirely spent in several voyages to get all I could out of the ship, which I brought on shore, every tide of flood, upon rafts.

Nov. 1.—I set up my tent under a rock, and lay there for the first night; making it as large as I could, with stakes driven into swing my hammock upon...

Nov. 5.—This day I went abroad with my gun and my dog, and killed a wild cat...Every creature I killed, I took off the skins and preserved them.

Nov. 17.—This day I began to dig behind my tent into the rock, to make room for my further conveniency. Note.—Three things I wanted exceedingly for this work: viz, a pick-axe, a shovel, and a wheel-barrow, or basket. As for the pick-axe, I made use of the iron crows, which were proper enough, though heavy...

Nov. 18.—The next day, in searching the woods, I found a tree of that wood, or like it, which in the Brazils they call the iron-tree, for its exceeding hardness...I worked it effectually by little and little into the form of a shovel or spade...

Jan. 13.—In the next place, I was at a great loss for candles...the only remedy I had was, that when I had

killed a goat I saved the tallow, and with a little dish made of clay, which I baked in the sun, to which I added a wick of some oakum, I made me a lamp...

In the middle of all my labours it happened that...I found a little bag...which had been filled with corn for the feeding of poultry...I saw nothing in the bag but husks and dust; and being willing to have the bag for some other use...I shook the husks of corn out of it on one side of my fortification...about a month later, or thereabouts, I saw some few stalks of something green shooting upon the ground...after a longer time, I saw about ten or twelve ears come out...I carefully saved the ears of this corn, you may be sure...

April 22.—I had three large axes, and abundance of hatchets (for we carried the hatchets for traffic with the Indians); but with much chopping and cutting knotty hard wood, they were all full of notches, and dull; and though I had a grindstone, I could not turn it and grind my tools too. This cost me as much thought as a statesman would have bestowed upon a grand point of politics, or a judge upon the life and death of a man. At length, I contrived a wheel with a string, to turn it with my foot, that I might have both my hands at liberty... This machine cost me a full week's work to bring it to perfection.



July 4.—It was the 15th of July that I began to take a more particular survey of the island itself. I went up the creek first, where, as I hinted, I brought my rafts onshore. I found, after I came about two miles up, that the tide did not flow any higher; and that it was no more than a little brook of running water, and very fresh and good...On the banks of this brook, I found many pleasant savannahs or meadows, plain, smooth, and covered with grass; and on the rising parts of them, next to the higher grounds, where the water, as it might be supposed, never overflowed, I found a great deal of tobacco, green, and growing to a great and very strong stalk; there were divers other plants, which I had no notion of or understanding about, and might, perhaps, have virtues of their own, which I could not find out. I searched for the cassava root, which the Indians, in all that climate, make their bread of, but I could find none. I saw large plants of aloes, but did not understand them. I saw several sugar canes, but wild, and for want of cultivation, imperfect.



The next day, the 16th, I went up the same way again; and after going something further than I had gone the day before, I found the brook and the savannas began to cease, and the country become more woody than before. In this part I found different fruits, and particularly I found melons upon the ground, in great abundance, and grapes upon the trees: the vines had spread indeed over the trees, and the clusters of grapes were just now in their prime, very ripe and rich. This was a surprising discovery, and I was exceedingly glad of them;

but I was warned by experience to eat sparingly of them, remembering that, when I was ashore in Barbary, the eating of grapes killed several of our Englishmen, who were slaves there, by throwing them into fluxes and fevers. But I found an excellent use for these grapes; and that was, to cure or dry them in the sun, and keep them as dried grapes or raisins are kept...

...the next morning proceeded upon my discovery, travelling nearly four miles, as I might judge by the length of the valley, keeping still due north, with a ridge of hills on the south and north side of me. At the end of this march, I came to an opening, where the country seemed to descend to the west; and a little spring of fresh water, which issued out of the side of the hill by me, ran the other way, that is, due east; and the country appeared so fresh, so green, so flourishing, everything being in constant verdure or flourish of spring, that it looked like a planted garden.

I descended a little on the side of that delicious vale, surveying it with a secret kind of pleasure, though mixed with my own other afflicting thoughts, to think this was all my own; that I was king and lord of all this country indefeasibly, and had the right of possession; and, if I could convey it, I might have it in inheritance as completely as any lord of a manor in England.

I saw here abundance of cocoa trees, orange and lemon, and citron-trees; but all wild, and few bearing any fruit, at least not then. However, the green limes that I gathered were not only pleasant to eat, but very wholesome; and I mixed their juice afterwards with water, which made it very wholesome, and very cool and refreshing.

Sept. 30.—I was now come to the unhappy anniversary of my landing. I cast up the notches on my post, and found I had been on shore three hundred and sixty-five days. I kept this day as a solemn fast, setting it apart for religious exercise, prostrating myself on the ground with the most serious humiliation, confessing my sins to God, acknowledging his righteous judgment upon me, and praying to him to have mercy on me through Jesus Christ; and having not tasted the least refreshment for twelve hours, even till the going down of the sun, I then ate a biscuit-cake and a bunch of grapes, and went to bed, finishing the day as I began it.

WHAT IS A HERO?

Students Explore their Conceptions of the Heroic

Joseph O'Brien and Steven H. White

What is a hero? Who are your heroes? We asked these questions of students in kindergarten through high school. Elementary students focused on action—most often the act of saving someone—in describing a hero. Middle school students more often defined a hero as someone to “look up to”—either because this person did “something special” or possessed some characteristic they admired. High school students offered more complex responses, tending to define a hero in terms of more than one attribute. But when it came to naming heroes, more students in every age range identified people who were personally known to them—parents, other family members, or friends—than anyone else.

We believe that encouraging students to explore the idea of a hero enables them to better understand their own thoughts and beliefs about the world around them. Asking middle school students to study heroes can be an especially rewarding experience for several reasons.

First, heroes and their accompanying myths or legends are part of the material from which young people's dreams are made. Playing out hero themes is one way in which children come to understand their society, their role in it, and their potential to affect it positively.

Second, the study of heroes lends itself to the integration of social studies and other disciplines, especially the language arts. A teacher might build a study of heroes on the reading of biographies, with students choosing historical or contemporary figures whom they identify as heroes to research. This study also combines well with the visual arts, as students consider how the representations of heroes in different times and places reflect the values of a society.

Third, the study of heroes can be student-centered, with the direction it takes depending at least in part on students' conceptions of what makes a hero and who is heroic. The teacher can build upon these understandings and use them as a bridge to the curriculum throughout the year.

Fourth, the study of heroes can be ongoing and inquiry-based, with students applying their initial conceptions of a hero to different historical circumstances. This not only enables them to develop more complex thinking skills, but to trace the evolution of their own thinking at different stages in their development.

A Study Unit on Heroes

Based on these premises, we developed a unit on heroes for the middle school level that contains the following features:

Thematic Base: The core concept of

the unit involves the definition of a hero. While our unit centers on the identification of personal heroes, teachers are encouraged to select the theme best suited to their students and curriculum. For example, students might be asked to identify heroes in American history.

Integration with Literature:

Literature can add much depth and richness to the study of heroes. Students might read biographies of historical or contemporary figures, such as Clinton Cox's *The Forgotten Heroes: The Story of the Buffalo Soldiers* or Patricia Giff's *Mother Teresa: Sister to the Poor*. Or they might examine fictional heroes, such as the mythical figure of Theseus in Mary Renault's *The King Must Die* or one or more of the characters in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Student-centered: In this unit, the ideas about what makes a hero come from the students. Because an unwritten goal of the unit is to enable each student to identify with one or more people as heroes, the students' thinking must drive the unit, with the teacher accompanying the class as a guide.

Ongoing and Inquiry-based. While a teacher may opt to use our suggestions as a self-contained unit, we believe the more effective approach is to thread the unit throughout a semester or the entire year. This would enable students to apply their

conceptions of a hero broadly, and to compare their thinking not only with that of their classmates, but with their own former views of what constitutes the heroic.

Our unit follows five steps, which are described as follows with accompanying activities:

Step 1: Establish a working definition of a hero. Individual students express their own ideas about what constitutes a hero and name who their heroes are on a class survey. This definition is comparable to a hypothesis which students continually "test." Student responses to each question should be used to guide a discussion of heroes.

Activity: Class Survey

1. What is a hero?
2. What would you have to do to become a hero?
3. Who is one of your heroes?
4. Why is that person or character a hero to you?

Use the students' responses to guide a discussion of each question.

Step 2: Investigate the working definition of a hero. In this step, students might:

1. Read a biography and decide whether its subject is a hero
2. Read a work of fiction and decide whether or not it contains a hero
3. Research what others say about heroes

Students use their working definitions as a guide in exploring the possibilities of what makes a hero. The key here is to provide students with rich yet concrete examples of potentially heroic people and/or acts that cause them to question their initial definition. Some websites that offer biographical sketches of heroes appear at the end of this unit.

Activity: Hero Scavenger Hunt

Directions: You have just discussed each other's initial thoughts about a hero. Now, explore what makes a person a hero

through reading a story or a biography.

Decide whether a character/actual person you are reading about possesses any characteristics of a hero. List these characteristics with examples of how they are demonstrated in the reading.

Step 3: Refine the working definition of a hero. This step is divided into two parts. In Part 1, students use the lists they prepared to brainstorm about the group's understanding of a hero. While the class need not develop its own definition, the large group discussion enables individual students to recognize and learn from the thinking of other students. In Part 2, students refine their own definitions of a hero by analyzing the heroic characteristics named by the class. As an outgrowth of these activities, students might create a resume or ad for a hero.

Activity: Brainstorming About Heroes

Part 1. Questions for Brainstorming

Characteristics of a Hero

- ▶ What are the characteristics of a hero?
- ▶ Who are some historical or contemporary figures that embody these characteristics?
- ▶ What fictional characters can you think of who embody these characteristics?

Defining a Hero

- ▶ What distinguishes a hero from an everyday person?
- ▶ Can a person possess hero characteristics and not perform a heroic deed?
- ▶ If so, is this person a hero? Why or why not?

Exploring the Definition of a Hero

- ▶ Is it easier to "recognize" people in the past or people today as heroes?
- ▶ Once a person attains hero status, is it possible to stop being a hero?
- ▶ Are heroes important to you? Why or why not?

Part 2. Do You Agree?

Listed below are some characteristics and actions of a hero identified during the class brainstorming session. (Note: for the purposes of demonstrating this activity, we have provided a sample list.) Read the list and indicate whether you think the characteristic or action named is (1) Essential, (2) Secondary, or (3) Not Necessary for a person to be considered a hero.

- (1) Essential—possessing this characteristic or performing this action makes this person a hero
- (2) Secondary—while this is an important characteristic or action, other qualities or deeds are necessary to become a hero
- (3) Not Important—this characteristic or action is unlikely to distinguish a person as a hero

___ Serve country or community

___ Save someone

___ Possess strength

___ Perform a magnificent feat

___ Possess special abilities

___ Inspire people

___ Act kindly

___ Make someone else's life better

___ Make sacrifices for other people

___ Overcome obstacles

Step 4: Present a working definition of a hero. Students working in small groups develop a collage to illustrate their understanding of a hero, then review the collages of other groups and refine their own definition.

Activity: A Hero Is...

Part 1. Developing a Collage

1. As a group, write a definition of a hero and tape it to the back of a poster board.
2. Individually, look through magazines for words and pictures that match your group's definition of a hero. Cut them

out and place them in the middle of the table.

3. As a group, review the cutout material. Select those pieces that best meet your definition.
- 4: Arrange them on the poster board for presentation to the class.

Part 2. Reviewing other Collages

1. As a group, review two other collages. Discuss what ideas you think each collage is trying to convey.
2. Based on the review of each collage, write what you think is that group's definition of a hero. Compare your observations with how each group defined a hero on the back of its poster board.
3. Return to your collage and review the definitions of a hero composed by the

other two groups. Compare them with the definition you placed on the back of the poster board. Discuss whether you want to make any changes in your group's collage or definition. Make changes as appropriate.

Step 5: Apply the definition of a hero.

Each student should now write down his or her own current definition of a hero, and select a person who personifies this conception. Students will now create project boards that include the hero's portrait, a brief biography, and a portrayal of one or more heroic characteristics/actions in a form of the student's choosing (e.g., pictures, quotes, an original poem or song). In a class discussion, students could talk about what they can or would like to do to be like their heroes.

Activity: Hero Portrait Gallery

Each hero portrait should include:

Name

Picture/Drawing

Brief Biography

Portrayal of Heroic Characteristics/Actions

(Note: For those interested in continuing with this unit, students could add to the Gallery throughout the semester or year. If students keep a portfolio, they might remove their last person and store her/him in the portfolio when they add a new person to the gallery. As a final activity, each student might choose a favorite hero for inclusion in a Hero Hall of Fame.)

Joseph O'Brien is associate professor and Steven H. White is assistant professor in the Department of Teaching and Leadership at the University of Kansas, Lawrence.

Websites

Carnegie Hero Fund Commission

trfn.cplgh.org/carnegiehero/

The Carnegie Hero Fund was established in the early 1900s to recognize acts of outstanding civilian heroism throughout the United States and Canada. This website contains summaries of the acts for which the Carnegie Commission awarded each recipient the honor. It also has information on the awardees since June of 1996. Additional links include a bibliography of recommended readings and a history of the award. This site would be useful when discussing characteristics of heroes.

TIME 100: The Most Important People of the 20th Century

cgi.pathfinder.com/time/time100/index.html

This site is maintained by *TIME Magazine*. *TIME* is currently profiling 100 remarkable people who have had an influence on the past 100 years. Special issues of the magazine featuring Leaders & Revolutionaries, Artists & Entertainers, Builders & Titans, Scientists & Thinkers, Heroes & Inspirations, and Person of the Century began appearing on newsstands in March 1998 and will continue until December 1999.

This website also contains the Time 100 Poll, which invites visitors to enter their choice for each of the categories mentioned above, and to see the data compiled from all entries to the Poll. Entries in the category of Heroes & Inspirations include Charles Lindbergh, Jesse Owens, Babe Ruth, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, Yuri Gagarin, and Neil Armstrong. This would be an appropriate site to broaden students' conceptualization of heroes by discussing why some people may and others may not consider the people listed as heroes.

Female Heroes

home.earthlink.net/~womenwhist/heroine.html

A section of the Women in World History Curriculum directed by Lyn Reese focuses on women considered to be central figures in their time, because of their abilities, achievements, or other qualities that helped define the period in which they lived. This website contains information on Female Heroes of the Regions of the World and Female Heroes from the Time of the Crusades. It is useful in examining how time and culture, and particularly the issue of gender, affect the identification of heroes.

My Hero

myhero.com/home.asp

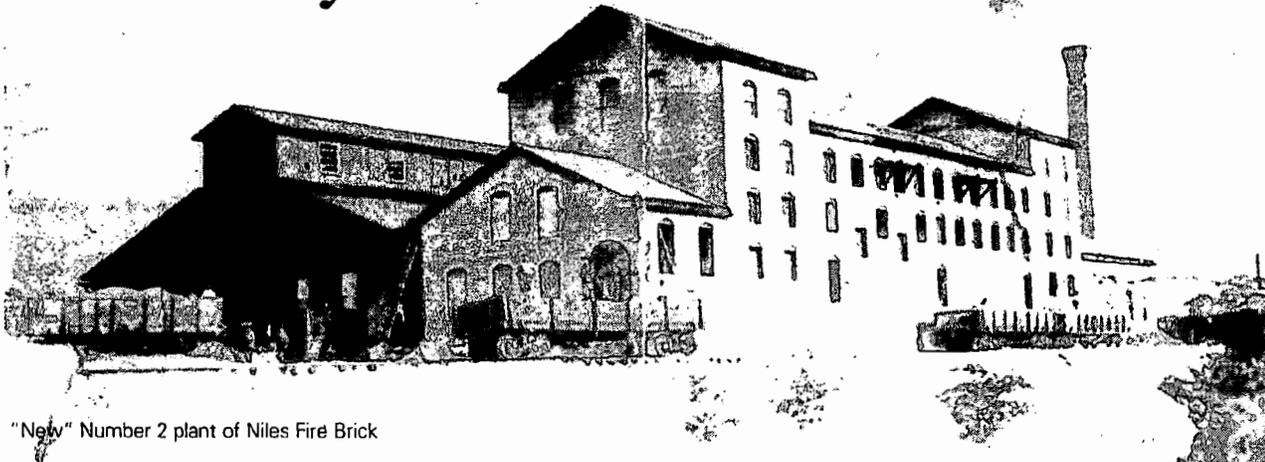
This is an interactive website that broadens the perspective that heroes can be relatives or friends as well as historical figures and current newsmakers. It offers featured stories about heroes—such as Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, and Albert Einstein—as well as stories submitted by visitors. Additional links include information on people placed in such categories as artists, explorers, lifesavers, peacemakers, teachers, and many others.

Welcome to Giraffe Country

<http://www.giraffe.org/>

The Giraffe Project is an effort to find, commend, and publicize information about people who act for the common good. The website features links to stories about local heroes who have provided help or inspiration to others within their community. Additional links are available for K-12 curriculum resources and activities to engage students in identifying and thinking about heroes in their communities.

My Brother and I: Brickyard Laborers in an Ohio Town



"New" Number 2 plant of Niles Fire Brick

Martha I. Pallante and Christian Shively

In 1872, Welsh immigrant John Rhys Thomas established the Niles Fire Brick Company in Niles, Ohio. The business manufactured high quality firebrick for the burgeoning steel and iron industries. This firebrick, also known as refractory brick, was used to line furnaces employed in the smelting of iron and steel.

The original plant was a wooden structure on Langley street in Niles. Because of the high temperatures involved in the manufacturing process, fire represented a major hazard. The Number One Plant was rebuilt at least three times between its establishment and 1903.

In 1905, company managers built a second plant in response to growing demand. This doubled the size of the work force and the number of bricks produced. Both plants were modernized during the 1940s, with electrification of plant operations and a switch from coal to natural gas to fire the kilns. Production grew from an

original output of 500,000 bricks in 1872 to 2,500,000 in 1953. But, within 20 years, both plants had been closed and torn down as a result of changes in the steel industry.

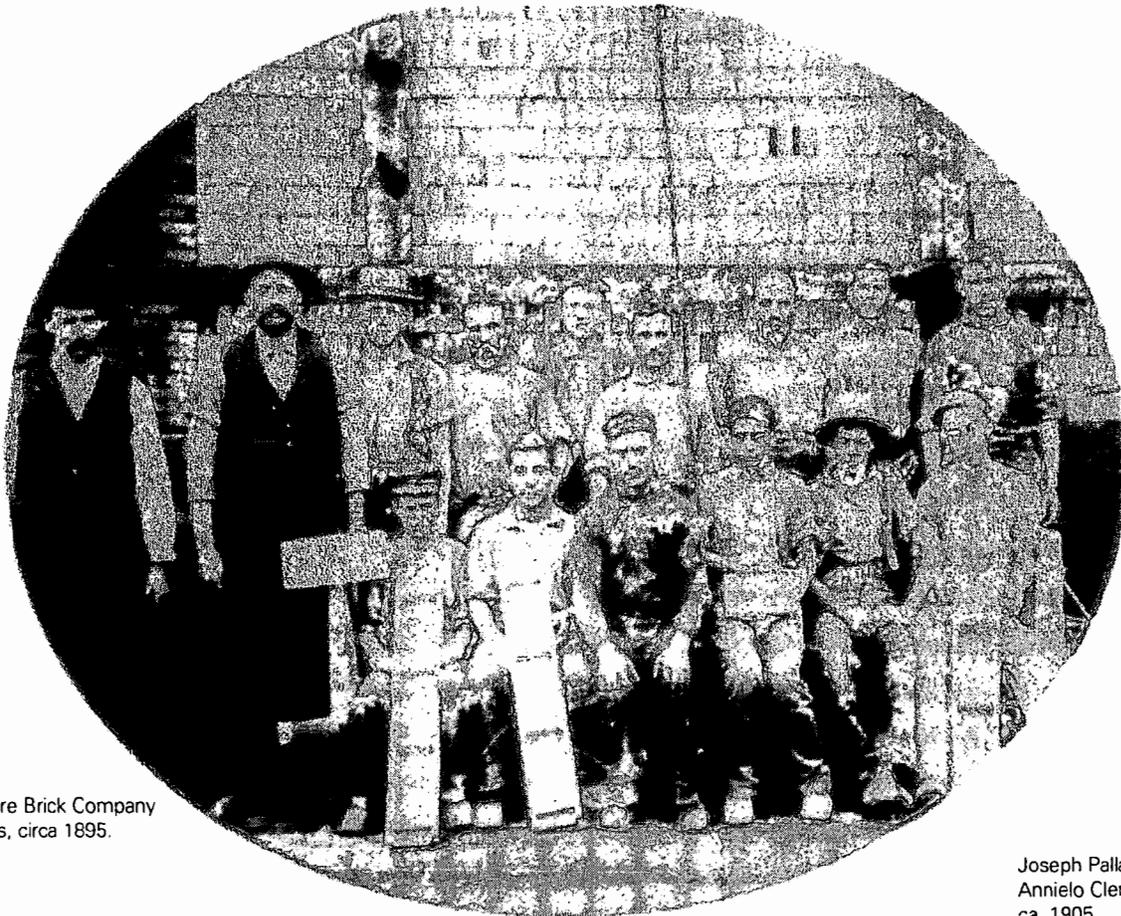
The Niles Firebrick Project

Serendipity...what a wonderful word to describe what is now known locally as the Niles Firebrick Project. It began in May of 1993, when I wandered into the Niles Historical Society to look at some records it had recently acquired from the owners of the Niles Fire Brick property. I stopped for two reasons. One was personal interest; the first job my grandfather held in the United States was at the Niles Fire Brick Company. The other was my curiosity as a historian, and that spur-of-the-moment stop has dramatically altered the course of my professional development and scholarly research.

The ultimate outcome was the Niles Firebrick Project, an outreach program from Youngstown State University to local schools made possible through an Ohio Humanities Council grant in December

1996. The project has provided university educators and graduate students, classroom teachers and students in kindergarten through grade 12, with hands-on experience in exploring local history. So far, the Niles Firebrick Project has traveled to nine schools in six Ohio school districts, with the majority of classrooms visited being at the middle school level.

The Niles Firebrick Project centers on the use of primary documents in the Niles Fire Brick Collection, which is now housed at the Ohio Historical Society's Museum of Industry and Labor in Youngstown. Supplementing these documents are oral histories of former employees and their descendants—many accompanied by photos, memorabilia, and other artifacts—collected with the aid of the Center for Historic Preservation at Youngstown State University. All together, these materials have provided the basis for an intensive museum experience—using display panels, transcribed documents, newspaper advertisements, and a slide show—that we take into classrooms.



Niles Fire Brick Company workers, circa 1895.

Joseph Pallante and Annielo Clemente, ca. 1905.

Our purpose in undertaking the Niles Firebrick Project was twofold. First, we wanted to focus on an aspect of our community's history that often goes unmentioned: the role of working class immigrants in the cultural and economic development of the region. Second, we sought a way of sharing techniques for using primary sources in the classroom with local teachers. Our effort proved timely in light of the recently-developed Ohio Proficiency tests, which emphasize both the use of primary documents and the teaching of the critical thinking skills needed to decipher them.

This project represents a true collaborative effort among its participants. For the university people, the experience has proved invaluable. We combined theories of teaching with the practical application of historical knowledge to produce a genuine hands-on experience in local history. In the classroom, we team taught the material, monitored cooperative learning groups,

and led classroom discussions—experiences that provided us with broader knowledge of local history as well as direct feedback on our approach to the material.

The teachers who invited us into their classrooms also felt they grew academically from the experience. Like us, they learned more about the past of their own communities. They also learned new techniques for working with primary sources and new ways to make use of university resources. Many teachers asked us to return the following year or requested copies of the documents in order to continue or extend the project. Gaye Breegle of Edson Junior High School in Niles has used





Worker housing on Langley Street.

rate of pay, and total wages earned for the pay period (see the example in Figure 1). Students were asked to write down ten items they found significant or unusual about the payrolls. These apparently simple instructions in fact prompted students to use critical thinking skills to compare and contrast the payrolls, and to make connections between these primary documents and their knowledge of local history during this period.

On the third day, students used the 1905 payroll in conjunction with other primary sources to speculate about the quality of life provided by workers' earnings. They considered the payroll in terms of living costs as reflected in newspaper ads from the November 15, 1905, edition of

The Youngstown Vindicator. For example, one ad priced the cost of furnishing three rooms in a house—parlor, bedroom and kitchen—at \$75.50. Ads for house rentals, articles of clothing, grocery items, and bicycles also helped give students a sense of what the dollar would buy for Firebrick workers and their families during this period.

Students were also asked to address the question: "What are some of the striking differences you find between workers in 1905 and today in terms of working conditions and benefits?" That is, they were asked to consider what does not appear in the payroll records—such as health insurance, retirement benefits, or leaves earned—that would now be deemed

essential in judging the quality of life.

We found middle school students to be avid detectives. They enjoyed working together and using the clues found in primary documents to unravel the mysteries of times past in their community. Clearly, the ideas underlying the Niles Firebrick Project can be put to work in other communities by teachers who want to help their students learn more about local history and its place in the larger framework of historical trends in the United States. ■

Martha I. Pallante is an associate professor of history at Youngstown State University in Youngstown, Ohio. Christian Shively is a secondary social studies teacher at Archbishop Hoban High School in Akron, Ohio.



Fostering A Critical and Caring Classroom Culture

**Pamela B. Joseph and
Mark A. Windschitl**

When fifth-graders in Barbara Vogel's class in Aurora, Colorado, learned that slavery was not a bygone occurrence in American history, but that people in the present day were enslaved in war-torn Sudan, the students were horrified and in tears. But their teacher did not try to comfort them nor rationalize such horrors. Instead, she sought to use their feelings of concern and outrage to encourage the children to take social action. She helped her students to start a letter-writing campaign to bring this dire situation to public attention. When letters did not change the fate of Sudanese slaves, the children raised money to buy freedom for a few slaves. As newspapers publicized the children's efforts, donations came in from around the world, so that the class eventually had over \$50,000 in funds to purchase the freedom of slaves. The class even developed a website to encourage others to stop slavery in Sudan.¹

Clearly, Barbara Vogel views her students as human beings with strong feelings of empathy and as social agents who are capable of making change. She believes that her job "is to balance the heart and mind of her students."² Her classroom is a place for caring and for taking a critical stance in a world that needs repair.

Another middle-school social studies teacher helped her students to learn about social injustice in a unit that grew from their interest in lawyer Jennifer Harbury's odyssey to find her husband, a Guatemalan freedom fighter who had "disappeared." Students engaged in research and background writing, artwork, the collection of artifacts, and presentations to their peers, their families, and other community members. This sixth-grade unit on Central America eventually included a letter-writing campaign to the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The class also sent copies of their letters to Jennifer Harbury, who visited the classroom, shared her story,

and described how she was touched by the students' letters on her behalf.³

The search for justice is a driving force behind civic action. By fostering a critical and caring classroom culture, middle level educators can raise students' awareness of civil justice and morality, and prepare them for future roles as active citizens. In such a classroom culture, the norms of classroom life encompass compassion, critique, and social action. Teachers consistently strive to empower students to make changes in their lives, communities, and the world.

For many educators, having this kind of a classroom means changing daily school life for themselves and their students. We believe that a commitment to this kind of classroom calls for more than teaching a special curriculum unit or attempting an occasional social action project. Rather, we believe that there is a need to infuse the ideas of civic justice and morality into classroom activities throughout the school year.

In a critical and caring classroom culture, teachers

- ▶ Identify their students' moral concerns and ideas about justice
- ▶ Broaden students' horizons by teaching them about human experiences and issues that lie beyond their immediate experience
- ▶ Offer a classroom environment that continually stimulates civic awareness
- ▶ Select issues for student action that are well-defined and allow students to develop their sense of empowerment

The educator committed to a caring classroom culture considers learners to be unique individuals with personal histories that are rich with the influences of family life, peer relationships, and popular

culture. Students bring into the classroom their expectations, life pressures, experiences of privilege or discrimination, and stories of survival. These life experiences are regarded as the primary means by which students make sense of the world.⁴ On the basis of these experiences, students have acquired values and a sense of how things ought to be.

By listening to students, educators can identify the issues that run through their conversations and concern them, and hence the themes that are most suitable for class examination and discussion. Teachers can ask students to select issues that interest them by asking the question, "What should I be paying attention to in my world?"⁵ In a critical and caring classroom, students are confident and relaxed enough to voice their concerns and hear those of others, and teachers ensure that students' ideas are not ignored or dismissed.

Students are guided to understand themes that are central to civil morality, such as dominance and liberation, justice, and silence about injustice. It is possible to discuss such issues on too abstract a level, and one of the teacher's challenges is to represent them in more concrete forms, such as stories, photographs, skits, collages, or songs. Students learn about insiders' viewpoints in the search for justice, as they listen to the stories of people of color, females, and other marginalized members of society whose voices have been too little heard.

Teachers can also stimulate critical thinking by confronting fixed views held by students. One high-school teacher, Bill Bigelow, made a provocative challenge to the interpretation that Columbus "discovered" America when he presented the point of view of the indigenous peoples of

this country. He came into class one day and absconded with a student's purse—announcing to the class that he had "discovered this purse!" His students' disconcerted responses became the basis for their thinking about the early history of this country.⁶

The critical and caring classroom has an environment full of stimuli to thought and discussion. Photographs, drawings of people interacting, cultural artifacts, advertisements, tools, toys, labels, and clothing can all be effective stimuli. Students should also have easy access to primary information sources such as newspaper articles, personal memoirs, original artifacts, biographies, and artistic works that allow them to make their own interpretation of current or historical events.

A key objective is to take action to improve social conditions. The problems suggested by teachers for class action should not be overwhelming or polarizing for students, but must offer possibilities for group affirmation and small actions toward change. Action, or follow-through, is essential to enable students to feel a sense of civic empowerment. Students should learn to see themselves as social and political beings with the right to question the systems of influence in schools, workplaces, and communities. They should be encouraged to find resources outside the school setting and to venture into the community to gather documents, conduct interviews, and make observations.

The final evaluation of students' efforts can take several forms: substantive comments by the teacher, written self-critiques by students during a reflection process, and observations by the teacher, by peers, or by community members who have been affected by student attempts at transformative

action. Evaluation needs to be seen as a guidance process as well as an indicator of accomplishment. The purpose of evaluation is to provide feedback about content knowledge, communicative skills, and, above all, critical insights. Whether or not critical insights are being realized by learners can be discerned through discussions, role-plays, presentations to the class, oral arguments, position papers, and letters to support social action.

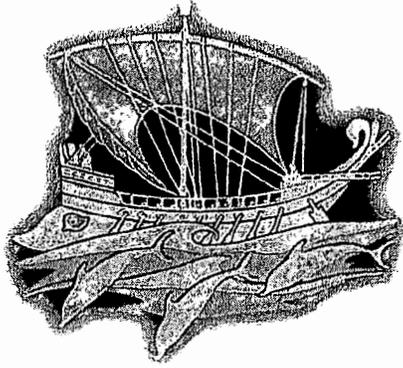
The critical and caring classroom can become the site of hope and possibility, as its experiences inspire children and their teachers to believe that caring through social action can make a difference in themselves and in the world. ☞

Notes

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SHIPWRECKED THROUGH THE PAGES



A LITERARY QUIZ by Jennifer Rothwell

The following paragraphs describe wrecks at sea, although not all involve ships.

Use the written and visual clues to find the answers to these questions.

The last one is the stumper!

(Answer key on page M3)



1. The hero of this epic poem is shipwrecked not once, but twice, on his way home from a war. On the first island where he washes ashore, he is held captive by Calypso. Set free, he puts forth on a raft to be cast up on another island, where he tells the story of his journeys to Alcinous. Can you:

- ▶ Name the poem?
- ▶ Name the author?
- ▶ Tell who or what caused the storms that resulted in the two shipwrecks?

2. In this fairy tale, the hero and his shipmates go ashore on an island paradise rooted in sand on the back of a giant fish. When they light a fire, the fish rises up, and all are thrown into the sea. Now the hero lands on a "real" desert island. Can you:

- ▶ Name the hero?
- ▶ Name the book of tales his story comes from?
- ▶ Tell what bird unwittingly helps the sailor escape from the island?



4. This story opens in the year 1812, when a family finds itself abandoned as their ship's crew takes to the lifeboats during a storm at sea. The members of the family must use all their powers of invention to survive on an uninhabited island. Can you:

- ▶ Name the book?
- ▶ Name the author?
- ▶ Tell what the family named its home on the island and why?

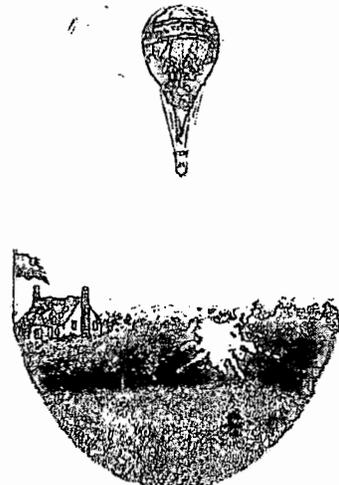
5. Five Union men escape from a Confederate prison in a balloon, which descends near a deserted island after many days of storm. Although they employ their wits to great advantage, it is an unknown benefactor who ensures their survival on the island. Can you:

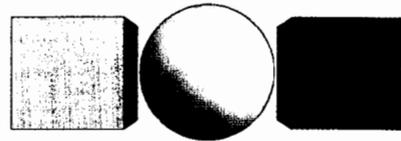
- ▶ Name the book?
- ▶ Name the author?
- ▶ Tell who saves them and what other science fiction story by this author he appears in?



3. The shipwreck that begins this play results from a storm created by the magician Prospero. Cast ashore on the island he rules is Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, who promptly falls in love with the magician's daughter, Miranda. Can you:

- ▶ Name the play?
- ▶ Name the author?
- ▶ Tell who first introduced Prospero to "all the qualities o' the isle, The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile"?





Middle Level Learning

2
Serious Fun in Social Studies for Middle Schoolers

Dan Rea

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Diane Zigo

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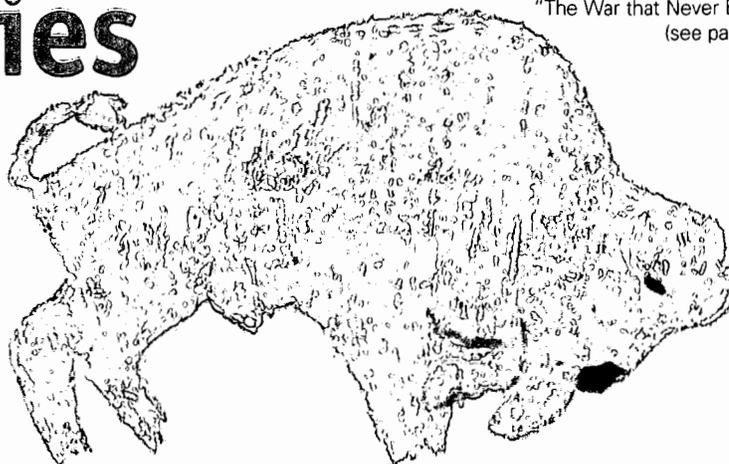
Alice Ann, Gini Bland, Barbara Brown, and Bruce Lavin

Serious Fun in Social Studies

Guest editors: Dan Rea and Robert L. Stevens

Serious Fun in Social Studies for Middle Schoolers

Student drawing from "The War that Never Ended" (see page M6)



Dan Rea

IN 1933, John Dewey proposed that the ideal learning condition is one that is "playful and serious at the same time." When play and work are isolated from each, on the other hand, "play degenerates into fooling, and work into drudgery."¹ The Serious-Fun model presented here echoes Dewey in proposing a balanced interaction of fun and seriousness in order to promote optimal learning.² When learning is fun, students become more excited, curious, and open to acquiring knowledge. When learning is serious, students see its object as more relevant, important, and doable. In short, "serious fun is play with a purpose."³

This article provides an introduction to the Serious-Fun model and describes how it can be applied to social studies at the middle school level. It first looks at some barriers that could undermine the model's application and offers recommendations on how to overcome them. It then suggests a number of workable strategies for making social studies more interesting and relevant. Throughout, this article sets the conceptual framework for the teaching activities that follow in this issue of *Middle Level Learning*.

Overcoming Barriers to Serious Fun
"Stop fooling around and get to work" is a phrase often heard in schools. It reflects a common belief that having fun in school is

antagonistic to serious learning. Having fun may be seen as an unnecessary frill at best and an invitation to behavior problems at worst. Yet many educators contend that integrating fun into the learning experience provides students with greater opportunities for academic success.⁴

When I present the Serious-Fun model to middle school teachers during inservice workshops, most say they like the model but are concerned about students getting off-task and out of control. Many teachers feel trapped on the horns of a motivational dilemma: "I want to let my students have fun, but I'm worried that they will become over-excited. On the other hand, I find that being strictly serious all the time is boring for both the students and me."

This dilemma is especially pertinent at the middle school level. The developing needs of students this age for more active fun, individual freedom, peer acceptance,

and personal power can threaten the teacher's need for classroom control.⁵ A common result is for teachers to try ever harder to get students to do serious work, and for students to fool around all the more. The power struggle created by this conflict sharpens the division between work and play with negative consequences for both motivation and learning.

There is no escape from the horns of this dilemma. However, teachers can take the bull by the horns and learn to harness its motivational strength. The best way to do this is by adopting a "participatory leadership style" that challenges students to set high learning goals and offers them personal support in attaining these goals.⁶ When teachers exhibit an "authoritarian leadership style" that makes high demands but offers little support, they stifle students' motivation. When teachers exhibit a "permissive leadership style" that is highly supportive but lacks

Table 1. Summary of Motivational Strategies for Interest and Relevance

Interest Strategies	Relevance Strategies
1. Pique curiosity	1. Meet personal needs
2. Confront challenge	2. Build on prior experiences
3. Allow choice	3. Offer direct experiences
4. Invite creativity	4. Provide vicarious experiences

challenge, they promote chaotic amusement seeking. A participatory leadership style provides the essential foundation for fostering serious fun in the classroom.

How to Make Social Studies More Interesting

There are a variety of motivational strategies that middle school teachers can use to make social studies more interesting, such as piquing curiosity, presenting a challenge, allowing choice, and inviting creativity.⁷ The following strategies highlight the “fun” aspect of serious fun and make the commonplace more interesting.

Strategy 1 (Curiosity): Stimulate student curiosity by using novelty, variety, discrepancy, suspense, surprise, and mystery.



The historical background is fundamental to the “Freedom Train” activity (see page M9).

One of middle school students’ major complaints about social studies is the lack of variety in what they are asked to do. Teachers can keep students stimulated and curious by using active teaching methods such as role plays, reenactments, simulations, field trips, group projects, reports, games, model constructions, and class discussions.

Teachers can pique students’ curiosity by pointing to challenging discrepancies (e.g., “Why do more people live north of the Equator than south of it?”) or inequalities (e.g., “How can we be a democracy

when so few people own so much of the wealth?”). They can involve students in puzzles of history and create suspense and surprise by asking students to predict the outcome of events described in a historical novel or a non-fiction history.

Strategy 2 (Challenge): Challenge students with thought-provoking questions and open-ended problems.

Many students are bored by social studies because they do not think it is challenging. Teachers can challenge students to think more deeply by using higher-order questions (not only What? but How? Why? Under what conditions? How do you know? What if?).

Middle school students are especially sensitive to moral issues. Teachers can

encourage them to evaluate ethical issues for which there are no simple answers (e.g., the pros and cons of gun control). Require them to do research and to justify their answers rather than merely state their subjective opinions.

Challenge students to do in-depth learning with inquiry projects. For example, a teacher might encourage students to do a sustained exploration of the conflicts between Native Americans and white settlers and to write collaboratively about what they have learned. Students take great pride and satisfaction in mastering a genuine challenge.

Strategy 3 (Choice): Encourage student choice by allowing options, preferences, and alternatives.

Even if some students do not like social studies, they will like it when you give them options. The options can be as simple as “You can do the even or the odd problems” or as complex as choosing what to take on a field trip. Allowing students to use their preferred learning styles can be very stimulating and reinforcing (e.g., “For this assignment you can write a short paper, draw a picture, or create a role play”). Choice frees up students and allows them to do a task in a variety of ways and to develop new skills.

Strategy 4 (Creativity): Allow students opportunities to explore, create, design, fantasize, and play with information.

Creativity is a powerful motivator that can tap into students’ imaginations and open up new possibilities. Allow students to design historical communities or to write their own story of a historical event supported by the facts. Creative activities help students to develop many advanced academic and social skills that take them far beyond their regular assignments. Asking creative questions such as “What if Hitler had won World War II, what would our world be like now?” enables students to gain new perspectives on the past as well as the present.

How to Make Social Studies More Relevant

Teachers can make what at first seems remote to students more relevant when they take account of students’ personal needs, build on their prior experiences, offer real experiences, and provide vicarious experiences.⁸ The following strategies highlight the “serious” value of serious fun and make the unfamiliar more relevant.

Strategy 1 (Personal Needs): Relate the learning task to students’ personal



A classroom session in "Using Computers to Design Historical Communities: (see page M11).

needs, interests, concerns, or goals.

Middle schoolers commonly report that they do not think social studies is important to the development of their career goals or life skills. While not many students will become historians or politicians, they will all become citizens with civic responsibilities and rights. Teachers can communicate how social studies helps students to develop the life skills necessary for becoming responsible citizens.

Middle schoolers respond best when learning is related to the development of their personal needs for affiliation, autonomy, and physical activity. Hands-on projects that allow middle level students to work in groups and solve problems such as simulating the escape of slaves or constructing finished products like a Native American sweathouse are especially relevant to students' personal needs.

Strategy 2 (Prior Experiences):

Relate the learning task to students' prior knowledge and experiences.

History can seem far removed from the personal lives of middle schoolers. Teachers can help students by drawing comparisons between historical events and current events that are more familiar. When students see how the past connects with the

present, the past becomes more relevant to them. Teachers can teach history by relating it to students' prior experience. For example, teachers can ask, "Has anything ever gotten you fighting mad?" After students discuss their experiences, the teacher can explain why the British Tea Acts made some American colonists "fighting mad."⁹

In general, teachers can build on students' prior knowledge and experience by using familiar comparisons, analogies, metaphors, or similes to help students understand concepts and experiences that are foreign to them. Better yet, teachers can encourage students to create their own comparisons and metaphors.

Strategy 3 (Real Experiences):

Provide real life experiences related to the learning task.

If students have limited prior experience with a learning task, as most do, teachers can supply direct hands-on experiences with the task. Teachers can use participatory experiences such as field trips, simulations, and finished products. These activities can create a sense of ownership and empower students.

For example, students do not have to wait till they grow up to become active citizens. Involve them in community service

projects. Allow them to conduct opinion polls on various social issues and to report on current events. Students can learn first hand about history and the judicial system by participating in a mock trial of a historical case. Students can learn about early Native Americans and survival skills by building an earth lodge in early winter.

Strategy 4 (Vicarious Experiences):

Provide vicarious experiences related to the learning task.

Direct experience with a social studies topic is not always convenient or feasible. When students can not gain direct experiences, they may benefit from vicarious experiences portrayed in biographies, novels, storytelling, films, guided imagery, or the Internet. Students may not be able to go on a field trip because it is too expensive or involves places in the distant past. However, they can take a free field trip back in time with guided imagery or a novel. The teacher can guide students in visualizing what happened during some critical event. History comes alive when students read and empathize with the moving experiences of young people such as Anne Frank in Nazi Germany.

How to Make Social Studies Both Fun and Serious

The Serious-Fun model proposes that the best way to motivate middle-level students is to create a balanced interaction between what is interesting fun and what has serious relevance in social studies. This motivation develops when students are given opportunities to playfully seek new challenges and to master these challenges seriously. The mastery of one challenge gives students the skill and confidence to seek more challenges, thus creating a continuous spiral of complex learning.¹⁰

During the "challenge phase," teachers ask students to do something fun that arouses their wholehearted efforts. This fun activity may be a field trip, a role play, a group game

or simulation, a creative design, an open-ended inquiry, or the construction of a finished product. During the "mastery phase," teachers provide students with the opportunity to reflect seriously on what they have learned from an activity and/or how they might improve their performance. Optimal motivation occurs when there is a balanced interaction of challenge and mastery.¹¹

If a learning activity is too challenging for students to master, they will likely experience anxiety or over-excitement. If the learning activity is less than challenging, they will likely experience boredom or apathy. When there is a good match between challenge and mastery, students experience the optimal motivation to learn. As challenge and mastery phases merge, students commonly report a "flow" experience in which their absorption in a task makes time seem to fly by and their efforts seem "effortless."¹² Teachers know their students are in this flow when they become so involved in a discussion or activity that they stop fidgeting and looking at the wall clock. When the school bell rings, they want to continue the activity. This type of motivation is contagious, pulling others into the flow and energizing the whole class to learn more.

There are many types of serious-fun activities that serve different teaching and learning purposes. Using Bloom's taxonomy,¹³ I classify and arrange serious-fun activities from the simplest to the most complex as follows:

- ▶ "recall" activities such as review games, songs, and imaginative mnemonic devices
- ▶ "comprehension" activities such as

graphic organizers, hands-on manipulatives, and analogies that clearly and vividly illustrate the main points of a lesson

- ▶ "application" activities such as role plays, case studies, and simulation games
- ▶ "analysis" activities such as solving mysteries, perplexing phenomena, and logical puzzles
- ▶ "synthesis" activities such as creating new designs, inventions, and open-ended inquiries
- ▶ "evaluation" activities such as debating the pros and cons of controversial issues, judging contests, and appraising creative designs.¹⁴

This continuum shows middle school teachers that they have a wide range of options for creating serious fun in social studies. Teachers can use the continuum as a diagnostic tool to examine whether they are diversifying their activities enough. Many teachers overuse the lower-level activities to the neglect of the higher-level activities that best promote creative and critical thinking. I find multi-leveled activities to be the most stimulating and enriching of all. 📖

Notes

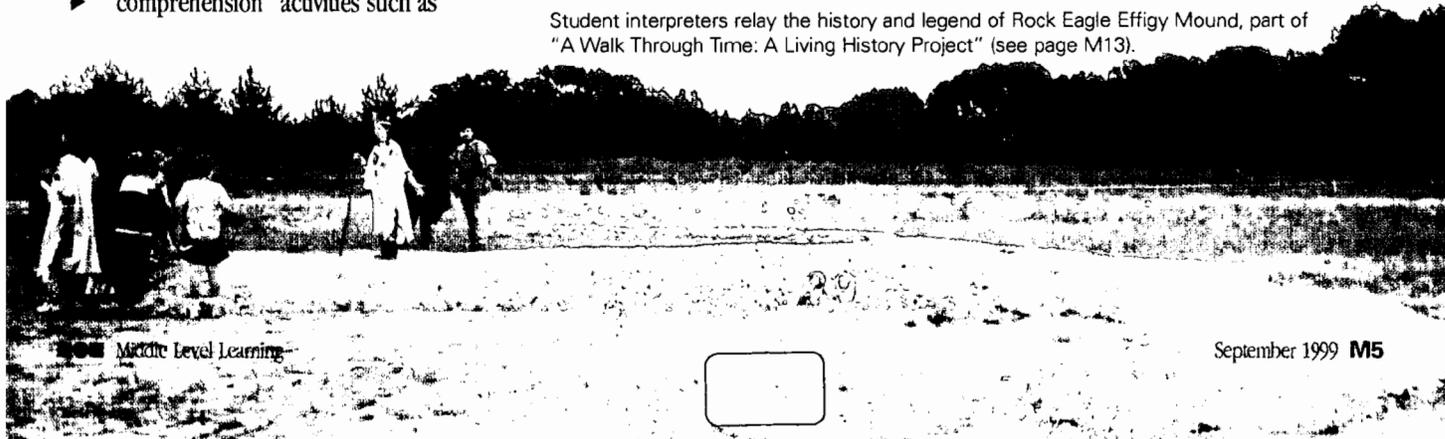
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Student interpreters relay the history and legend of Rock Eagle Effigy Mound, part of "A Walk Through Time: A Living History Project" (see page M13).



"The War that Never Ended"

Special Education Students Write History

Diane Zigo

Children who struggle with reading, writing, and recalling information may or may not be formally classified as special education students. Some teachers may encounter such youngsters in their classes as "mainstreamed" students, while others will have students in their classrooms who—while not identified as special needs students—still experience serious difficulty in comprehending textbooks and mastering content. When students struggle with their courses and have little experience putting their ideas in writing, what options does a teacher have? Should instructors seek textbooks with low readability? Limit assessment to simple objective tests? Or simply walk away and leave writing to the language arts classroom?

My experience working with urban youngsters in a self-contained special education classroom for intermediate grades (4-6) makes the concept of "play with a purpose" very attractive.¹ I believe that serious fun holds great promise for engaging special needs students in meaningful learning experiences in social studies. As part of a research study on successful learning strategies for special education students, I saw how creative play with plastic action figures and home-made props led naturally to both the challenge of composing oral and written narratives about social studies concepts and the emergence of critical sensitivities regarding the attitudes, values, and behaviors of people in the past.

A Writing Group Is Born

I had been visiting Gail Unger's classroom for several months to observe how her stu-

dents made use of a variety of learning strategies in both large and small group activities. During break time one day, I noticed four students—André, Scott, Cynthia, and Omar (not their real names)—absorbed in setting up small plastic cowboy and Indian figures on a table. Cynthia had brought the figures in from home at Gail's request, their teacher thinking this might be a possible way to help them grasp concepts in their study of the American West. Gail talked frequently about the value of learning through play. "I'd love to design a curriculum based on the way kids really learn, through directed play," she once said, adding that "just turning kids out to play isn't enough. You have to provide them with direction, guidance in strategies, play with intent and purpose, and the right supplies."

The children arranged the cowboy figures on one side of a plastic fence, aiming rifles at the Indians lined up on the other side. André, the most verbal member of the group, explained, "This is the Texas-Mexican border. The Indians are fighting to protect their land. The cowboys are going to win because there's more of them, see?" He then began to elaborate in increasing detail: "This guy snuck around here [said while moving a cowboy figure] to shoot the chief in the back. They're gonna' capture the chief and take him prisoner." Now Scott joined in, moving the chief far back behind the cowboys' line. At that moment, Gail walked by, and I told her that the students were creating a narrative. Gail lit up and brightly suggested to them, "Maybe you could talk about this into a tape recorder and create a story?" All four students were interested. "We can write a story!" Scott

said. "We can present it to the class! Omar, ask her if we can do that."

Scott was among the least proficient writers in the class. At age twelve, the act of printing isolated letters was still a challenge to him, and his initiation of the plan to "write a story" was exciting for us as well as him. Gail and I agreed that this was the first time we had seen Scott talkative and eagerly involved with any school activity. Clearly, Scott had become immersed in what Dan Rea calls the "challenge phase" of learning.

Our Writing Group began to meet for half an hour, three days a week, in a small workroom next to the classroom. During our first sessions, the four students arranged the figures and props for their story. I used a tape recorder to capture the developing narrative, occasionally asking questions or offering prompts to encourage the students toward the deeper, more reflective thinking associated with the "mastery phase" of learning. Although André often took the lead in creating the main story line, the others listened attentively and agreed with him or added corrections when they felt so moved. As the narrative developed, all four students engaged in the give-and-take of investing their story with meaning.

A Story Theme Emerges

After reviewing the transcript I made from the students' first narrative, I noticed that episodes from the original story were becoming more elaborate. Given more time and space—and without any prompting from me—the youngsters began to say more about their understanding of the injustice inflicted on the Indians. They seemed to be drawing on several sources, including classroom discussions, education-

al software programs, and images recalled from television and films. In addition, this longer narrative was being enacted with less physical violence than the one originally composed during the break.

Although the students spoke of the great violence inflicted upon the Indians, there was little physical re-enactment of battles scenes. Instead, the story took on greater poignancy, with more talk about the consequences of battles, including the slaughter of women and children and the high numbers of casualties among the Indians. The students described how peace treaties were continually broken as tribal lands became more valuable in the eyes of settlers. The tone of the students' delivery conveyed their growing indignation at forms of oppression the Indians suffered, such as being forced to give up their religious beliefs.

It seemed that the tactile activity of holding and manipulating the figures was helping the students move toward increasingly complex articulations of their thinking. Gail explained to me that her students "need something for their imaginations to hang onto. If children didn't have books to help them do that when they were smaller [referring to the students' difficulties with text], there's very little to hang on to. And TV doesn't do it. You're just passive. You can't interact with it."

"A Much Bigger Narrative!"

A few days later, Omar carried into school a large diorama he had built at home using two cardboard boxes. In one box was a model of the settlers' world as he saw it, complete with a ranch building. In the other was the Indian world, featuring a small village, a lake, and a forest. The two boxes were connected by a bridge on which Omar had placed a large wagon moving from the settlers' world into the Indians' world. As Omar and his friends carried the diorama

to the back of the room, the reticent Omar beamed with pride. Gail took me aside and whispered, "I think this is turning into a much bigger narrative!"

In the writing sessions that followed, Omar's diorama emerged as the focus of the story. By now, I had shared with the students typewritten copies of their narrative. The students were eager to read it together, and took turns reading their own lines. They read slowly, pausing word by word to decode the sentences. I suggested trying a choral approach. They liked this better, as they were able to read the entire script with greater fluency and facility. As they read, I gave them the option of making revisions, explaining that this was part of the process of writing.

I noticed the students' own use of a variety of decoding and comprehension strategies they had learned in reading instruction over the years. They did not need prompting; rather, the opportunity to read their own words proved so meaningful to them that it overshadowed their initial frustrations with the act of reading. Further, their increasing confidence helped sustain their motivation to fulfill their initial goal: writing a book.

A Book Takes Form

I felt the students were now ready to consider the various forms their narrative could take. It was time to engage them in the process of writing that leads to publication.² Because of time restrictions and their very real difficulties in reading and writing, I needed to provide a great deal of support and guidance. After typing and reading a transcript of the whole story, I decided to focus on the story details that generated the most interest among the students. For example, they took great pleasure in describing what they knew about Indian life on the Great Plains, based on a recent reading unit that used Native American stories.

I introduced the students to the written version of their story with a sheet labeled "Introduction." Below this heading was a list of words or phrases I took directly from their script:

Cheyenne (Colorado)

Sun Dance

respect for the buffalo

told stories about the stars, moon, and

the Big Dipper

chief named Kolaykay

knew their land very well

I asked the students to read these over and talk about how they might best be described in their story. Omar and André composed the first sentence together: "This is a story about the Cheyenne Indians and the United States soldiers." I then helped the students write this sentence on lines at the bottom of the sheet. They decided to add "Colorado" in a second sentence. André elaborated on the phrase "respect for the buffalo" by turning it into the sentence: "They showed respect for the buffalo when they killed them." Altogether, the students composed an opening paragraph that read:

This is a story about the Cheyenne Indians and the United States soldiers. It takes place in Colorado.

They do a Sun Dance. They show respect for the buffalo when they killed them. They told stories about the stars, moon, and Big Dipper.

Their chief's name is Kolaykay, and his son is named Thunder Cat. The Cheyenne knew their land very well.

The act of writing these sentences was physically challenging. I debated whether to encourage individual compositions and invented spellings in order to help them compose naturally and develop self-confidence in their own voices.³ I decided to continue proceeding in a more directive manner, however. First, we had only limited time and an important goal to reach. Second, I agreed with the opinion Gail often

expressed about the need of these youngsters to experience immediate success. The story was, after all, their construction. They worked out each sentence together, revising their story through an oral rather than a written process. I inserted mini-lessons on punctuation and capitalization when needed.⁴ For example, it was often necessary to remind them at the beginning or end of a sentence, "What do you need to do here?"

The students seemed to appreciate having the words typed out in front of them so that they could copy them with ease. In fact, they became excited when they recognized words on the sheet: "There's Cheyenne!" they'd cry out. I noticed their relief, especially Scott's, when they realized it was all right to copy the words and phrases into their paragraphs. It took nearly thirty minutes to write our initial paragraph of seven sentences. That alone may give the reader an indication of just how difficult the process of writing is for these children. When we finished, their beaming smiles and confident postures, and the care they gave to re-reading their paragraph aloud, suggested how proud they were of this work.

Our next step was to turn the handwritten text into a "published" format. I rewrote the story on my word processor, leaving a large area of white space above each paragraph. As I handed out the first sheet to the students, I asked, "What does this look like?" "The page of a book," they replied. "Why did I leave so much blank space?" I asked. "So we can draw on it," they answered with pleasure. Now the students looked for books in the school library and at home that would give them ideas about how books are designed and illustrated.

Scott looked for books with depictions of Western landscapes to use as models for his own illustrations. Cynthia owned the most books, and brought one in each day in what became a "show and tell" ritual at the beginning of each writing session. Students



The Indians signed a peace treaty to end the war. The treaty sent the Indians to a different land. But the treaty was broken because the whites wanted to settle in their land again. And the war kept going on and on to today.



The End

discovered that many books had jackets that contained an "About the Author" section. This led to a unanimous decision to compose their own Author's Note, which appeared in final form as:

This book is for Campus North School, for our favorite principal, our teachers, and the students. We are some students from Room 108. We all like to draw, and we come up with good ideas. We get our ideas from our reading and social studies class. We look forward to doing drama, art, and writing more books for our friends in our school. It is good to write books about things we think are not fair, like what happened to the Indians in our book, *The War that Never Ended*.

Concluding Thoughts

I want to stress that I am not advocating that play and oral narratives become substitutes for traditional methods of teaching students to read and write. The students involved in this effort asked, right from the start, if they could "write a book." During my weeks

with the Writing Group, I watched four students who demonstrate severe disabilities in printing letters, decoding words, and composing sentences throw themselves into the hard work of reading and writing.

In pursuing their goal together through both spatial and oral composition—that is, through a happy combination of play and work—these students rarely exhibited the frustration that reading and writing normally cause them. Rather, the engagement of their full range of abilities provided the motivation needed for them to imagine, compose, write, and revise their story.⁵ Although this activity took several weeks, the length of time required should not be a reason to avoid such activities. What is more important is that these four students—André, Cynthia, Omar, and Scott—collaborated in writing and illustrating their own book, and then asked for the opportunity to write more. This is serious fun in social studies indeed. ■

Notes

1. Dan Rea, "Motivating At-Risk Students with Serious Fun," in D. Rea and R. Warkentin, eds., *Youth at Risk: Reaching for Success* (Dubuque, Iowa: Benchmark & Benchmark, 1995).
2. Lucy M. Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1986).
3. Constance Weaver, *Understanding Whole Language: From Principles to Practice* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1990).
4. Nancie Atwell, *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents* (Montclair, N.J.: Boynton/Cook, 1987).
5. J. F. Almasi, M. G. McKeown, and I. L. Beck, "The Nature of Engaged Reading in Classroom Discussions of Literature," *Journal of Literacy Research* 28 (1996): 107-146.

Diane Zigo is assistant professor of Education at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro.

FREEDOM TRAIN:

Building an Underground Railroad

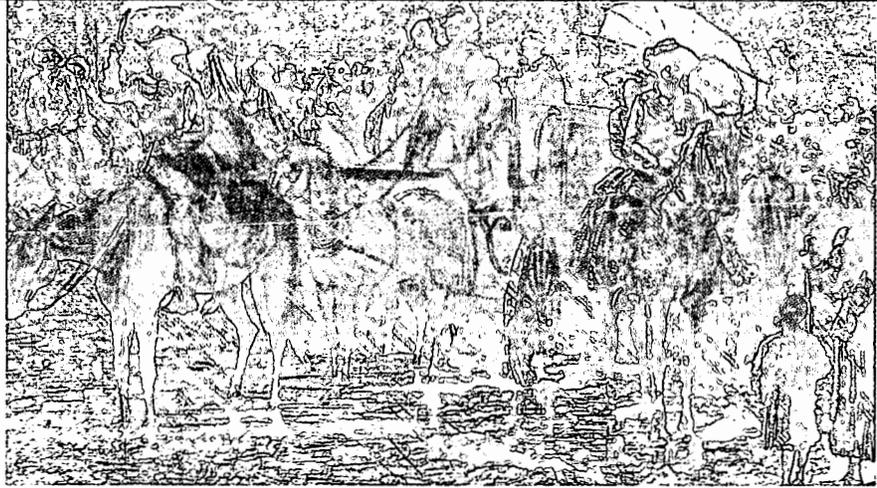
Wayne Hickman

ALL TOO OFTEN I hear teachers complain about student apathy toward social studies classes. Yet the various disciplines within the social studies lend themselves well to exciting, student-centered learning. Freedom Train is an activity that helps my eighth graders gain a better understanding of both the importance and the dangers of the Underground Railroad. Not only does this simulation create immediate excitement; more importantly, it provides the opportunity for students to reflect on the responses of individuals, groups, and institutions toward a critical issue in American history.

Learning the Historical Background

As often as possible, I try to provide students with activities that help sharpen their skills of critical thinking and reflective writing. The Freedom Train project has the added benefits of encouraging students to work cooperatively while reinforcing their research and map skills.

I begin this unit with an overview of the events and conditions that precipitated the Civil War. Students research and discuss the institution of slavery and how it influenced the growth and development of the state of Georgia. They also choose topics for additional research. These include the daily life of enslaved African Americans, the folklore of slavery, the rise of the Abolitionist Movement, and the workings of the Underground Railroad. Students work in groups, with specific responsibilities assigned to each member. Each group is



ultimately responsible for presenting its research findings to the class. Finally, the whole class studies some of the spirituals that grew out of slave culture. Of particular interest to students are the hidden messages and double meanings found in many of the songs. These messages serve as the basis for one part of the Freedom Train activity. The activity itself begins only after the research foundation is complete.

Traveling on the Underground Railroad

Freedom Train starts with my informing students that each will assume the role of a Georgia slave who hopes to escape to freedom by way of the Underground Railroad. Each student is instructed to draw a map—from memory—of the school grounds, and to indicate the route he or she will take in order to escape from slavery in Georgia (the rear of the school) to freedom in the North (the front of the school). Next, students are placed in random pairs, where they adopt a final map and commit it to memory for the actual escape.

The paired students now receive number cards to wear so that accurate records

of successful escapes can be kept. The various escape routes planned by students are both inside and outside the school. Some students stay inside, moving from the eighth grade hall to the media center, from the media center to the cafeteria, and from the cafeteria through the music complex to the front doors. Other students choose an outside route. They slip down the eighth grade hall, run across the athletic field, and hide behind vehicles in the parking lot waiting their chance to reach the front of the building undetected. (For safety reasons the school roof, road into campus, and nearby woods are off-limits.)

Adults—including staff members and parent volunteers—play the roles of abolitionists and pro-slavery citizens. In the beginning, students have no idea which adults are friendly and which are not. Those representing abolitionists can pass along information about others who are friendly, and give students directions to good hiding places. Another option is to allow “free travel” in which abolitionists give students thirty seconds to one minute in which they cannot be captured by the pro-slavery characters. Those representing



on those who were enslaved, those who opposed it, and those who supported it?

As a final exercise, students work alone or in groups on a creative writing activity. Based on the spirituals studied in advance and their own “escapes,” students compose a spiritual that contains a hidden message or double meaning meant to aid those attempting to escape on the Underground Railroad.

In Summary

For me, the Freedom Train has proven an excellent way for my students to better understand the actions of individuals, groups, and institutions with regard to slaves who attempted an escape to freedom on the Underground Railroad. Invariably, my students gain a deeper and more lasting understanding from researching and creating their own Underground Railroad than they ever would through simply reading a story or listening to me. The key to making this a serious-fun learning activity, as opposed to a glorified game of hide-and-seek, is the reflective writing that occurs at the end. This is the point where students are challenged to think critically, examine themselves, and express how their own understanding of slavery may have changed as a result of this activity. 📖

Wayne Hickman is a social studies teacher at Burke County Middle School in Waynesboro, Georgia.

the pro-slavery characters are charged with capturing the escapees and taking their number cards, which means removing them from the activity. As the activity progresses, students pass information regarding friends and foes by word-of-mouth, and adjust their escape routes accordingly.

Students in the first pair to make it to freedom turn in their number cards and receive in exchange cards labeled “Moses,” a reference to Harriet Tubman. This designates them as guides for others who are attempting to escape. The “Moses” pair has the same responsibilities as the adult abolitionists and, like them, cannot be captured. The activity continues until all pairs have either escaped or been captured. Few students escape.

Reflecting on the Freedom Train

When all students have completed the escape attempt, follow-up activities begin. First, students are presented with a teacher-made map of the school grounds and asked to draw the route they actually followed in attempting to escape to freedom. They label

the places where they hid, where they found help, and where they were captured if that occurred. Next, students write about their escape experiences, often focusing on their anxiety over the escape. For some, this stems from having to plan their escape route from memory alone. Others talk about the apprehension they felt meeting adults from the community without knowing who they actually were, much less what sentiment they were representing.

Finally, students are asked to reflect on a series of questions:

- ▶ What do you know about the feelings of people—both escaping slaves and their helpers—who participated in the real Underground Railroad?
- ▶ If you could travel back in time to help slaves escape, what would you take with you to help them?
- ▶ Do you think you would you have the courage to attempt or aid a real escape? What factors might influence you one way or the other?
- ▶ What do you think this activity has taught you about the effect of slavery



Using Computers to Design Historical Communities



April Mock

This article is about having serious fun in social studies using the theme and tools of technology. It describes how middle school students can use computers to design buildings for historical and contemporary communities. Students are seriously motivated by the useful computer skills they learn and the hands-on experience of constructing authentic historical buildings. They are playfully motivated by the variety of options for creative design available and by working with their peers. The activity is particularly suitable for the early middle-school level.

There are many types of computer software that can be used to design buildings. The software discussed in this article

Today. Other time periods may be purchased separately. This software can be used in a lab setting or in a one-computer classroom as a center-type demonstration.

Choose the time period closest to what the class is studying. Then begin by having the class view the pictures for that period in the Photo Gallery and listen to the accompanying narration. Students can also preview the sample homes in the "print goodies folder" for more ideas on how to design a house. Or, they may want to design their own buildings based on other sources they consult.

Next, lead the class in a discussion of communities. Ask students to brainstorm what types of buildings are appropriate for the historical period involved. Assign students working in groups to design a house,

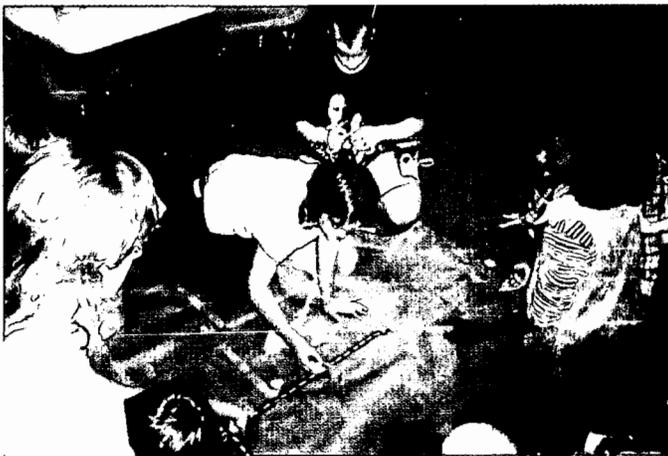
store, workplace, or some other building in a style representative of the period. Students can research their buildings using texts, references, and trade books and share their findings with the whole class.

The computer program allows students to choose the shapes of buildings as well as their roof styles. The correct names

for the fifteen or so roof styles appear as students point to them on the computer screen. The buildings may be limited to a particular time period, or draw on features from an earlier time period where appropriate. Once the building's shape and roof type have been determined, students choose the color and texture for the exterior.

Students can design all four sides of their structure according to selected options. For a house, they may add doors, windows, steps, porches, and dormers, as well as trees and shrubbery—and satellite dishes if the period is Today. They can also populate their community with figures dressed in appropriate historical costumes. Once a design is complete, students print out a copy, or net, of their building. This net includes cut-and-fold lines for them to follow in creating three-dimensional models.

When all of the buildings are ready, the class works together to design the community. The program offers several maps that can serve as plans, or students can sketch their own maps of the community. Green bulletin board paper makes a good base, while strips of black and brown paper can be used to represent paved or dirt roads. For the modern period, students can name streets and add traffic signs. They can also create parking lots, swimming pools, farms, trees, and cars when appropriate. The net result is a striking community of which the entire class can be proud.



is titled *Community Construction Kit*. It offers design options for four time periods: Colonial, Early American, Medieval, and

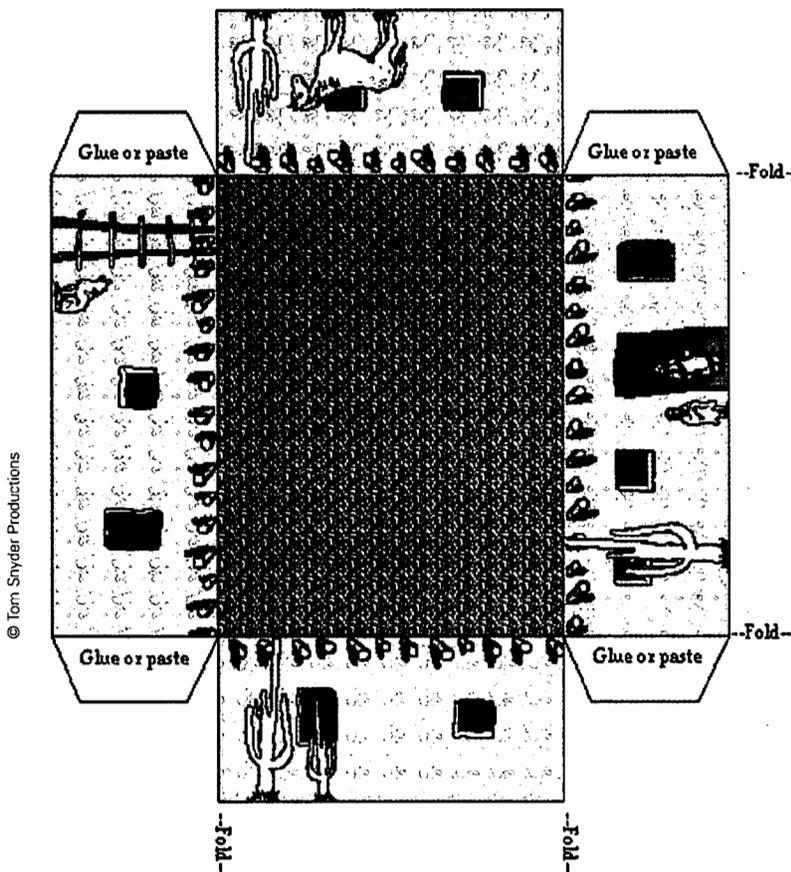
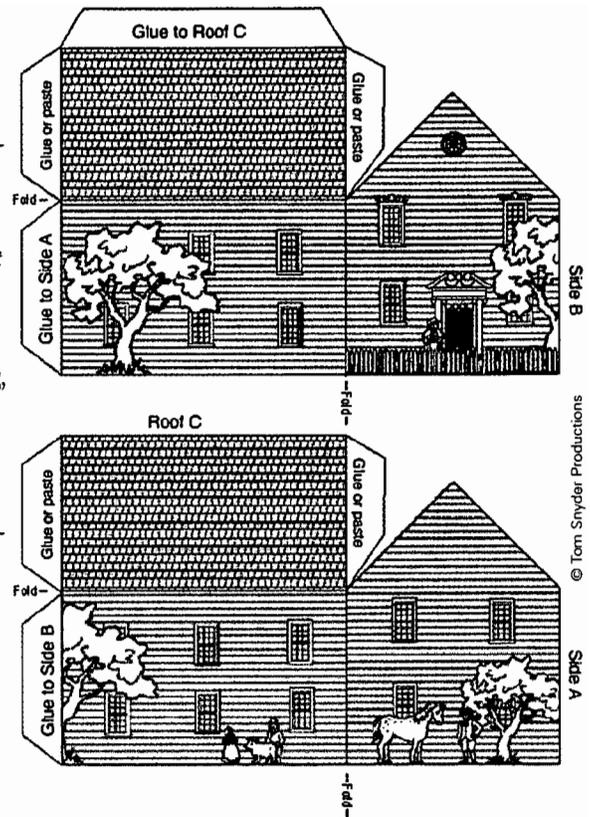
Designing and constructing historical communities is indeed serious fun for students. They take it seriously because they are learning firsthand how to design authentic buildings and use legitimate artifacts. The fun part lies in the design process. Students love to play with different design features and then drag the ones they don't like to the trash can. They also like to experiment with resizing objects. For example, the program has only one car, which children enjoy stretching into a limo or shrinking into a Volkswagen. They also enjoy stretching and shrinking the human figures to represent different historical characters or family members.

A favorite activity is designing their own personal homes. There are few constraints, and students can use their imaginations playfully to create any style of house they want. Students are challenged most when it comes to designing a specific type of building, such as a modern grocery

store. They must choose carefully those objects that will best make a house look like a store—for example, canopies, glass doors, and prices on the windows.

Community Construction Kit provides students with a beginning glimpse at what is involved in such careers as architecture, landscaping, and urban design. It also promotes communication skills as students work together not only to create their own visualizations but to incorporate the ideas of others. Students also practice valuable computer skills throughout the activity.

The community construction activity requires minimal planning and classroom management. The teacher needs to outline what students are expected to do and add time constraints so that they can work efficiently. Students need at least one period to explore



the program and learn where the different options are located. This exploratory time may get noisy, but it is very helpful in keeping students on task during the design phase of the project.

Using computer technology to design communities is serious fun for all students. The engaging nature of this activity can help students with behavior disorders to become genuinely involved in their work. Students who have trouble reading have a chance to learn—and perhaps excel—in another way. Students of all ability levels may discover unknown talents which they or other classmates possess. And, finally, all students have the satisfaction of knowing that they have contributed to a significant project in their own classroom community.

Note

This activity is based on use of the software program *Community Construction Kit* and the accompanying Teacher Resource Guide by P. Stearns and S. Nolan (Watertown, MA.: Tom Snyder Productions, 1998).

April Mock is an instructional technology teacher at Screven County Elementary School in Sylvania, Georgia.

Welcome to Old Buck Creek Run—the frontier section of "A Walk Through Time."



A WALK THROUGH TIME: *A Living History Project*

**Alice Aud, Gini Bland,
Barbara Brown, and Bruce Law**

IN THE SPRING OF 1993, students in a Georgia middle school reconstructed a Mississippian village site in an outdoor classroom on the shores of Carolina Bay. The effort was part of their study of Georgia history in eighth grade. This experience was so successful that it was repeated in social studies classes over the next two years. Because the project involved students in preparing a research paper and presenting it orally in class, language arts came on board during the fourth year. These teachers were interested in broadening the project to include the frontier era.

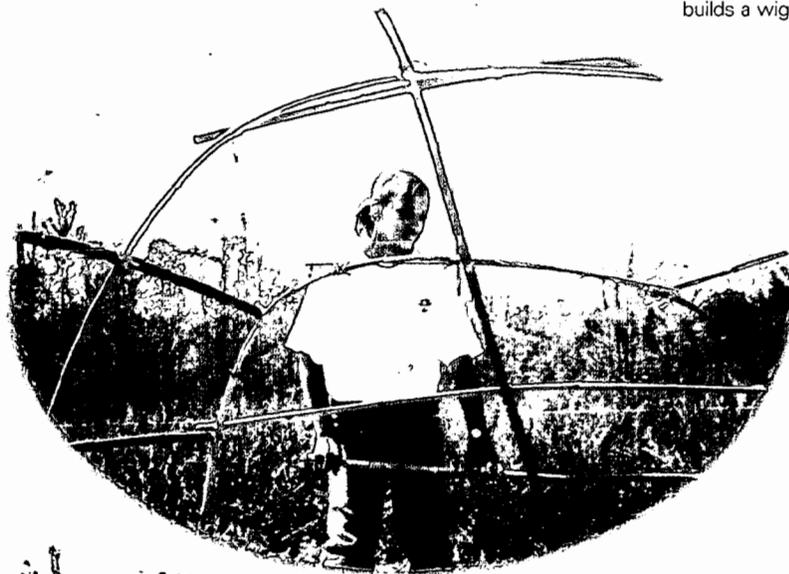
When Screven County Middle School moved to a new campus in 1997, the project expanded to cover a six-acre site including both the Indian village and a new frontier settlement. It was also re-structured to allow students and visitors to move through its various components in chronological order. The project was accordingly renamed A Walk Through Time.

A Walk Through Time has now evolved into a student-created living history event

that attracts large numbers of school children and other visitors on tour days. It begins with a walk through the woods to an archaeological dig and proceeds through Paleo, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian Indian sites that include an earth lodge and a replica of the Rock Eagle effigy mound. Visitors then walk through villages representing the Creek, Seminole, and Cherokee Nations by way of a gold mine that helped cause the removal of these proud peoples from their homeland. Guests

join the Indians on their march along the Trail of Tears before entering the frontier settlement, where many aspects of Georgia's pioneer lifestyle are demonstrated. These include cooking; the crafts of shingle making, candle making, and hide tanning; and a blacksmith shop and livery stable. A school, a log cabin, and law and order stocks on the town square are also showcased. This very serious project is also a great deal of FUN!

Eighth-grader Deidra Taylor
builds a wigwam.



The Project

A Walk Through Time is an interdisciplinary project that focuses on two areas of the curriculum: social studies and language arts. Social studies teachers provide the historical backdrop for the research projects that students carry out in their language arts classes. This research culminates in one long paper and at least three additional essays and speeches. It also provides the foundation for hands-on work at the site as students build and demonstrate what they have learned.

History sometimes makes little sense to middle school students because of their limited knowledge of life. The concept of having to construct homes with few or no tools in adverse conditions may not mean much until they experience it for themselves. Understanding how different groups of Native Americans lived is much easier when one is elbow-deep in red clay making pots or sinking in muddy ground while sealing the sides of a sweathouse. The skills possessed by the first Americans are never more clearly evident than when students try to scrape and tan deer hides or build an earth lodge in early winter.

A Walk Through Time meets the needs of tactile/kinesthetic adolescent learners and motivates them to produce better writing as they make real connections with history. Research for an exhibit may take as long as a month, while the actual construction generally takes two or three weeks, depending on the size and complexity of the particular experience. The final step is for students to do a demonstration/ presentation for visitors to the site.

The equipment needed for building an exhibit varies according to the topic chosen. Basket weaving, candle making, cooking, gardening and growing herbs are low budget. Projects such as building an earth lodge, housing and caring for farm animals, and making weapons require more money



Bruce Law ensures that the earth lodge will be sound.

and supervision. The local 4H club works closely with students who are working with animals. The fire department is present on campus for cooking and candle-making demonstrations.

As pointed out earlier, A Walk Through Time involves a close interweaving of the social studies and language arts curricula. But the project goes further to include other disciplines. For example, math teachers ask their students to calculate the area and materials required for building a log cabin or smokehouse. Science teachers have used the village's new sugarcane field to illustrate biological processes and our arboretum to teach students to identify native trees. Science is also part of the research for everything from diseases and medicine to making dye from walnuts and soap from lye and lard. Students in art classes create maps and graphics used in the village and settlement, while costumes are designed and made through the support of the Family Living exploratory lab. Technical education students are part of the safety team and video

crew, while music remains a specific research area.

To-date, the project involves all students in sixth and eighth grades, but only one team of seventh graders. Our ultimate goal is to involve all students and all academic disciplines in this living history event. Future plans include a model farm with animal and tractor-powered sections separated by a railroad track and depot, a greenhouse (complete with a hydroponics system), and raised beds to be developed by seventh grade students.

The sixth grade will be responsible for the arboretum, an orchard, and a forestry plot established near the front of the grounds. Proposed agricultural products will include cotton, corn, timber, and livestock, with an exhibit tracing the historical development of these commodities from earliest times to the present.

Because we are a rural county, our focus is on agriculture. However, A Walk Through Time could be centered on many other aspects of culture. A similar timeline could be developed around music or dance, costume or cooking. It could result in an architectural exhibit ranging from Old and New World pyramids to the Great Wall of China.

Assessment

A Walk Through Time addresses many of the objectives for middle school learning established by the State of Georgia. However, other project outcomes are not measurable on standard evaluative instruments. Among the results that can be documented, our students have shown an increase in writing and history scores on standardized tests, and greater interest and higher grades in these content areas. There

has also been an increase in community and parental participation, and fewer absentees and discipline referrals.

As evidence of the improvement in writing skills attributed to the project, average scores from the Georgia Curriculum Based Assessment Writing Test were recorded from 1993 through 1998. When compared to other schools in our demographic group, students scored lower each year until the inclusion of the language arts component of the project in 1996. Scores in 1997 and 1998 showed steady improvement, in both cases equalling or surpassing the other schools in our group.

A Walk Through Time addresses all of the character qualities identified by the State Assembly as important for public school students. Such characteristics as good citizenship, cooperation, self-control, compassion, creativity, and respect for the environment take on new meaning when experienced in the setting of a community which students adopt as their own. It is difficult to put a quantifiable grade on the skills learned through working in a group setting and being accountable to others, but these vital attributes are critical to the future of our students.

"Just plain fun" is also part of this experience, and the obvious pleasure in learning and doing is

Amy Hudjins leads a group of elementary students through the Ceremonial Site during the Green Corn Ceremony.



as easy to identify as it is difficult to formally evaluate. Some students discover a gift for teaching younger children, others uncover an interest in cooking or wood working, and still others develop a simple love of the outdoors. This experience can also call forth unsuspected talents; one student with an intellectual disability and a speech impediment gave a remarkable performance which he repeated over and over to groups visiting the site.

Even though Screven County is rural, most of our students have almost no first-hand experience in an agricultural setting. Participating in or visiting the site of A Walk Through Time corrects a lot of misconceptions. Two years ago, a kindergarten child asked whether "that

great big bull laid eggs," her only experience with this concept having been the eggs sitting next to the milk in the grocery store.

In sum, the effects of this project are assessed continually in both traditional and non-traditional ways. All students are evaluated on their understanding of core knowledge and standard research methods through written tests and the research paper. Other skills are measured on an ongoing basis as students work on the construction site. Safety skills are taught to all students before they are allowed to enter the site. Upon completion of the project, student attitudes are measured through a written evaluation in the form of a questionnaire, survey, or informal essay.

The School and the Community

School systems are reflections of the communities they serve. Screven County Middle School (in Sylvania) is the only middle school in this county of some 14,000 people. The population is made up largely of blue-collar working class people. The school population of 714 students in three grades is 57 percent African American and 43 percent Anglo American, with 14 percent of students enrolled in a special education program.

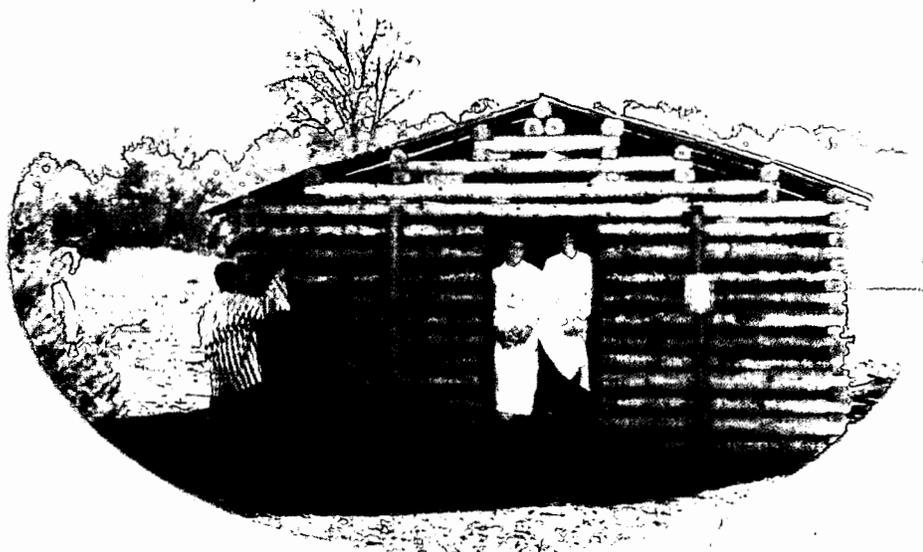


Gunsmith Daniel Leverett hones his craft.

Improved ties between the middle school and the community have been an important outgrowth of the Walk Through Time project. Parents and other community members are proud of the innovative achievements of their middle school students. They offer various kinds of help to the project, often coming in after school and on Saturdays during the construction phase of the project. This past spring, a neighbor assisted with the planting of the first sugarcane crop, and has agreed to help with the harvesting and syrup boiling in the fall. A local farmer has put a wagon (circa 1880) on permanent loan in our frontier site. A blacksmith and other re-enactors often come and join us for the tour days.

Some 3000 people visit A Walk Through Time on tour days. Students from the local elementary school, with an approximate enrollment of 1600 students, come on buses provided by the county. Several high school and alternative school classes also make the trip. Additionally, seven other schools outside of our county visited on tour days this past spring.

This log cabin was handcrafted by eighth-grade students at SCMS.



Visitors participate in a frontier school.



Conclusion

A Walk Through Time is an innovative idea that crosses all academic disciplines and developmental boundaries among students. It addresses the goal of high academic achievement through both traditional assignments and direct hands-on experience in carrying out projects.

For schools wishing to replicate this idea, the physical site of a school will largely determine the extent of the project. Although an open field or wooded site is ideal, parts of this activity can be carried out in a school

parking lot. Basic skills and crafts require minimal funding, while major construction activities obviously call for more resources. We are now developing a curriculum guide that will include not only a large variety of topics for exploration, but also variations on the presentation of each topic.¹

The majority of students who have participated in this project over the past seven years recall the "Indian Village" as the high point of their middle school experience. We believe A Walk Through Time exemplifies the conditions for ideal learning proposed by John Dewey and elaborated in Dan Rea's model of serious fun in social studies. 

Note

1. To find out more about how to adapt this project, write to the Innovation Program of the Georgia Department of Education 1852 Twin Towers East, Atlanta, GA 30334; or call Brendan Long at (404) 657-8335.

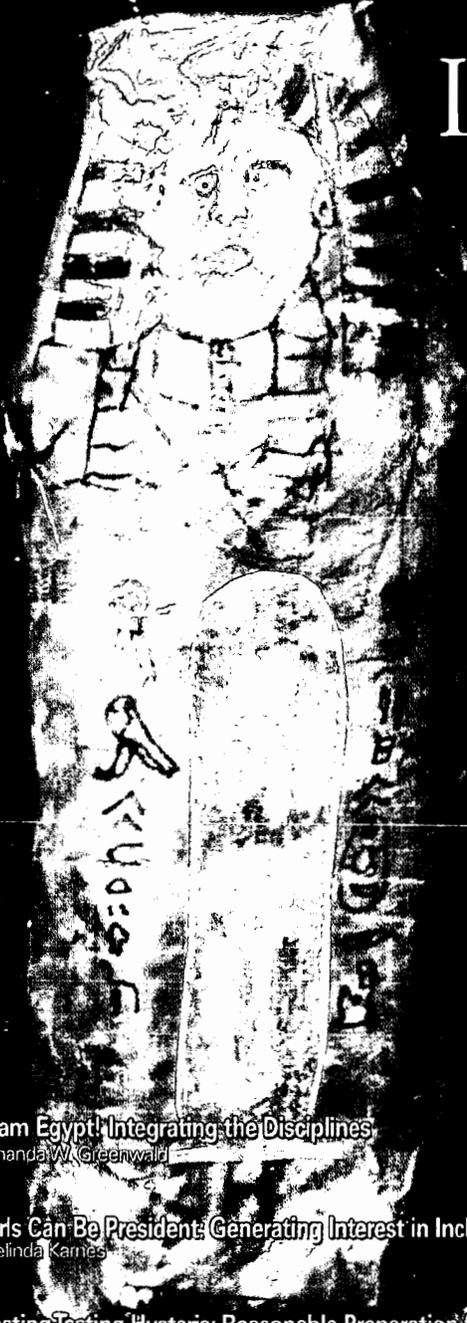
Alice Aud, Gini Bland, Barbara Brown, and Bruce Law are middle grade teachers at Screven County Middle School in Sylvania, Georgia. Photographs for this article and the cover are by Chase Puckett.

On the cover

Eighth grader Ernest Dixon guides a visiting elementary student into the Temple Mound.



Middle Level Learning



2
Team Egypt! Integrating the Disciplines
Amanda W. Greenwald

5
Girls Can Be President: Generating Interest in Inclusive History
Melinda Karnes

8
Besting Testing, Hysteria: Reasonable Preparation for Standardized Tests
Sherry L. Field

12
Revolutionary Women: Portraits of Life in the Thirteen Colonies
Mary E. Connor



Team Egypt!

Integrating the Disciplines

Amanda Welsh Greenwald

Sarah walks into her sixth-grade social studies class and, for the next forty minutes, learns about the causes of the American Revolution. She then walks to her language arts class where she writes an essay about coming of age in Pakistan. In the next class, art, she models clay in the pattern of a Mayan design. Her day continues in much the same manner, as she moves from class to class, shutting off her mind to each class in turn when the concluding bell rings.

Emanuel, a sixth-grade student at a school across town, walks into his social studies class and draws a diagram about the causes of the American Revolution. He then walks to language arts class and writes an essay about *My Brother Sam is Dead*, a novel about an American family torn apart by the American Revolution.¹ In art class, he contrasts paintings by American colonists in the 1700s with portraits of European royalty of the same period, and he paints a self-portrait in American Primitive style. As his day continues, Emanuel begins to make connections between what he learned about the attitude of the colonists towards England and what he reads in the novel and sees in paintings.

On the cover

Models of an Egyptian sarcophagus and mummy by Peter deMontmollin, a sixth-grade student at Winchester Thurston School, Pittsburgh, PA. The approximate height of the models is 20cm.

As a sixth-grade teacher at Winchester Thurston School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,² I yearned for a curriculum like Emanuel's—one that would encourage students to see knowledge integrated between the disciplines. Harvey Daniels and Marilyn Bizar, authors of *Methods that Matter*, state that an integrated curriculum results from “teachers translating models from one field into another, importing promising ideas from other subjects, designing cross-curricular investigations, and developing rich thematic units that involve students in long-term sophisticated inquiry.”³ When teachers get together to create a curriculum in which one class complements the other, students’ ability to learn—and to demonstrate that learning—is enhanced.⁴

During the summer of 1997, Cheryl Capezuti, an art teacher, and I noticed that we both teach lessons on ancient Egypt in our separate classes. We decided to work on an integrated unit of study in which students would research aspects of ancient Egypt in their social studies class and then apply this knowledge in their art class. As we put our ideas into practice with the students, the project inspired other teachers to integrate their classes into the curriculum.

Right from the start, we got interest and support from administrators. Now there are interdisciplinary coordinators for grades six through twelve, faculty members who meet once a week with all of the teachers in a particular grade. We use our meeting time to discuss curricula, projects, trips, and the progress of individual students. I enjoyed working on these projects so much that I

applied for, and was awarded, the interdisciplinary coordinator position for the seventh grade for the current school year.

A Unit on Ancient Egypt

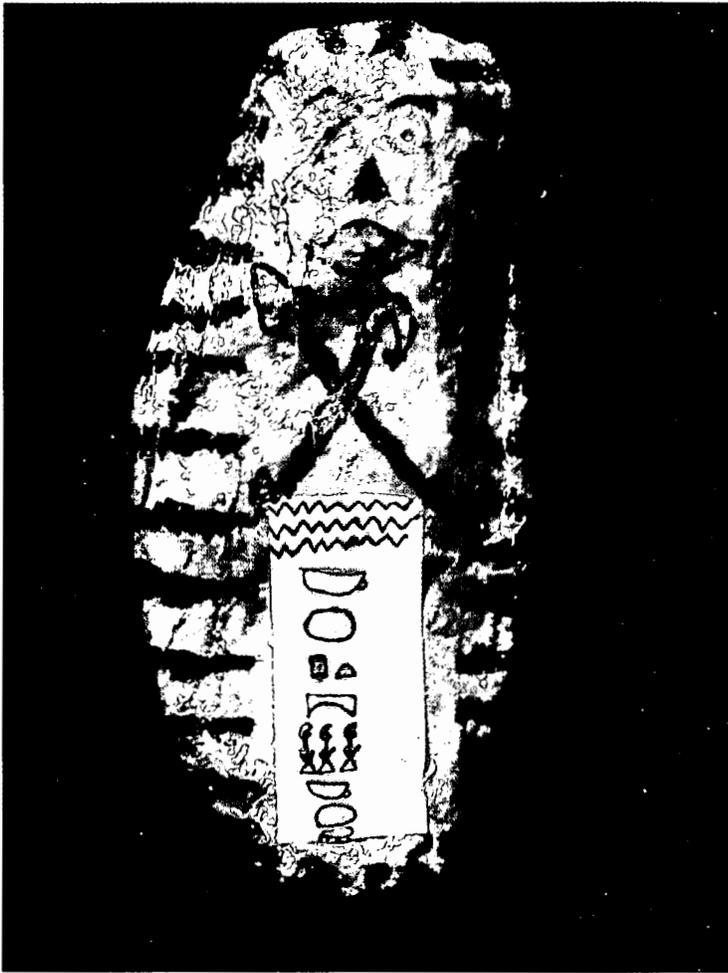
In social studies class, students choose a topic in the daily life of Ancient Egypt (commerce, agriculture, worship, transportation, or the social hierarchy) that interests them. They acquire information from books and the web and write a rough draft of a paper on their topic.⁵ They then exchange drafts with a peer, and each “formally critiques” the others’ work by writing criticisms and suggestions in the margin. Then each student produces a short, polished paper.

In their language (Latin) class, students learn about hieroglyphics and choose an appropriate phrase or name to write in hieroglyphics on the sarcophagus that they are making in art class.

Science class allows students to investigate the mummification process in order to give authenticity to the mummies they create in art class. They learn which Egyptians were chosen to be mummified and how the process occurred.

In art class, students look at examples of Egyptian art and study mummies and sarcophagi. They learn about the significance of wall paintings to early civilizations. Finally, they demonstrate their knowledge by creating a mummy, sarcophagus, and a small “wall painting” (that is, a mural).

And last year, in computer class, students built web pages using pictures of their art project (taken with a digital camera), written notes, and links to other interesting



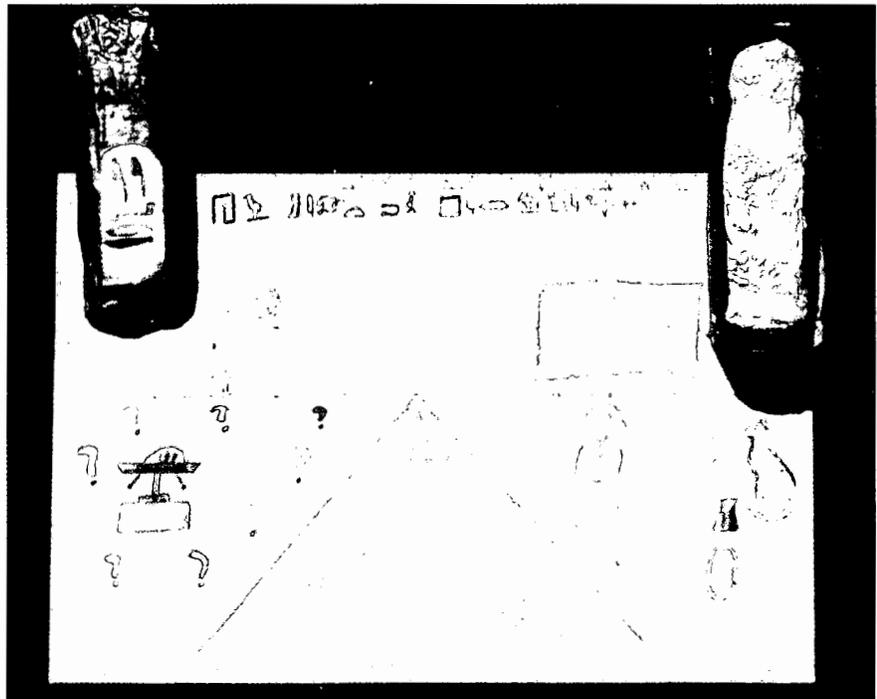
Model of an Egyptian sarcophagus by Michael Sablowsky, a sixth grade student at Winchester Thurston School, Pittsburgh. Approximate length, 20 cm.

sites. As a culminating experience, the school's computer lab was turned into a multimedia art gallery for an evening. The research papers, art projects, and web pages were on display. Parents came for guided tours of the gallery, creating one of the most rewarding moments of the semester.

Separate Assessments

The team of teachers who created this curriculum debated whether to give one cumulative grade for the entire project or to grade each discipline independently. We decided to grade each discipline indepen-

Models of sarcophagus and mummy and diorama presenting—with hieroglyphs—different hypotheses about how the pyramids might have been constructed. Art by York Chen, a sixth grade student at Winchester Thurston School.



dently in order to reward students' strengths. For example, in social studies class, students were graded on their research effort, their participation in each part of the writing process, and on the quality of their final paper. In art, it was their careful use of the materials and incorporation of ancient images that counted.

Interdisciplinary Curricula

Each year, I rely on my team members for their expertise in the various subject areas. They add new dimensions to the unit of study that I would have been unable to offer. I can envision other disciplines being included in this curriculum. In math class, for example, students could study the geometry of the pyramid or attempt to draw one to scale. The collaboration by teachers on this unit has motivated students to become excited about learning and to take pride in their efforts. It also has built a support group of teachers that is invaluable in an academic environment. Daniels and Bizar state that teachers who work together to create integrated units "are showing kids how to think and are exemplifying the

principles that learning never ends, that even teachers have room to grow, and that students have knowledge to be shared and valued" (3, p. 30). 📖

Notes

1. James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier, *My Brother Sam Is Dead* (New York: Scholastic Paperbacks, 1989).
2. Winchester Thurston School is an independent, private school in Pittsburgh, Penn. It is co-ed and has about 600 students, pre-K-12.
3. Harvey Daniels and Marilyn Bizar, *Methods That Matter* (York, Maine: Stenhouse

4. Publishers, 1998), 20-21.
4. John H. Lounsbury (ed.), *Connecting the Curriculum Through Interdisciplinary Instruction* (Columbus, Ohio: National Middle School Association, 1992); Thomas S. Dickinson and Thomas O. Erb, *We Gain More Than We Give: Teaming in Middle Schools* (Columbus, Ohio: NMSA, 1997).
5. "Egyptian Art: Working with Sculpture," *Art & Man* 20 (January 1990): 1-16; Mary Barnett, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Smithmar, 1996); H. W. Janson and Anthony F. Janson, *History of Art for Young People* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987); "Working with Stylized Images of Egyptian Art," *Scholastic Art* 29 (November 1998): 1-16; Maia

Weinstock, "Mummies Unwrapped," *Science World* 56 (October 1999): 1-16; Carol Donoghue, *The Mystery of the Hieroglyphs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); "Children of Ancient Egypt," *Appleseeds* (February 1999): 1-34; "Mysteries of Egypt," *Archaeology's Dig* (August/September 1999): 1-40.

About the Author

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Answers to "Mysteries of Ancient Egypt" (on the back cover)

1. The Curse. In 1922, British archaeologist Howard Carter discovered the steps in the sand that led down to the tomb of King Tutankhamen (King Tut). The four underground rooms contained gold, jewels, and thousands of objects to be used by the fun-loving pharaoh in his afterlife (he died at the young age of 18, possibly by assassination). Carter lived a normal life span (to sixty-four), but his financial sponsor, Lord Carnarvon, died five months after walking into the tomb, possibly from a centuries-old germ that awaited in the dust. London tabloids noted that a warning had been found on King Tut's tomb not to disturb it, and they called it "the curse of the pharaoh." Several of Carter's associates subsequently died of various causes, but the tabloids linked them all to "the curse."

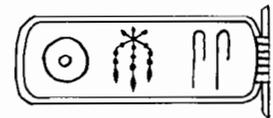
Today, archaeologists take precautions (like wearing gauze masks) when they open a tomb because dangerous germs may, in fact, be present in the dust around the corpse. Some bacteria or viruses might be able to exist in a dry, dormant state for centuries, only to awaken when breathed in by warm, moist, living, and unsuspecting lungs.

2. The Riddle. With the head of a pharaoh and the body of a lion, the Great Sphinx rests near the pyramids at Giza (near modern-day Cairo). Made of soft limestone, the Sphinx (carved around 2500 B.C.) has been eroded by weather and wars fought around it. The Greeks, who invaded Egypt in 332 B.C., had legends that told how, if a traveler came across a sphinx god, it would ask him a riddle. If the traveler did not know the correct answer, the sphinx would kill him.

3. The Mountain. The pyramids at Giza, which are over 4,000 years old, are arguably the most massive structures ever created by humans. Teams of men may have pulled the huge blocks of stone (each weighing more than two tons) over rolling logs (or on sleds), up a gently sloping ramp of rocks and sand, as the pyramid was constructed layer by layer. But archaeologists are still searching for any sort of working illustrations or "engineer's blueprints," maybe on papyrus, to confirm this theory.

4. The Code. One of the greatest mysteries of all time was the meaning of the hieroglyphs on tomb walls, sarcophagi, and pottery of ancient Egypt. In 1799, a French soldier found the Rosetta Stone, which had Greek and Egyptian writing carved on its face. People suspected right away that the mysterious hieroglyphs, which nobody could understand, told the same story as the Greek sentences carved below them, which scholars could understand. A race began to see who could break the code first, but the hieroglyphs were not fully deciphered until 1822. Why did it take so long? A big part of the confusion was that scholars had assumed that the hieroglyphs stood for concepts (a snake could mean devious). But most of the characters stand for sounds (a snake, in fact, indicates a "j" sound).

The first character in this set is the sound "ra" (Ra was also the sun god), the second is "m" (and it looks rather like an "m"), and the third character, which is repeated (and looks like a staff), is "s." The cartouche (the oval loop) indicates that these hieroglyphs spell the name of a royal person. RAMSES the Second was the pharaoh who built the great temple at Abu Simbel. 📖



References

- Carol Donoghue, *The Mystery of the Hieroglyphs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)
 Stephen Hanks, "The Mysterious Sphinx," *Archaeology's Dig* 1, No. 3 (August/September 1999)

- James Putnam, *Pyramid* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994)
 Donovan Webster, "Valley of the Mummies," *National Geographic* 196, No. 4 (October 1999)

Girls Can Be President

Generating Interest in an Inclusive History

Melinda Kames

As a public school teacher for eight years, and now as an associate professor of education, I have always searched for ways to interest and engage young students in their history lessons. During the 1997-1998 school year, I asked a dedicated group of ten pre-service teachers and their mentors ("teachers" hereafter) to informally poll students about their attitudes toward social studies instruction. The students, in the third through eighth grades, were from rural and small town settings, a mix of poor and wealthy, male and female, white and minority. The districts were generally not able to afford much computer hardware, so although most of the teachers were savvy with regard to technology, they usually had to depend heavily on textbooks.

The teachers and I constructed a short, basic questionnaire (see box) that students completed anonymously. We found that the 274 students (in the third through the eighth grades) perceived the relation between their lives and history to be weak. On a scale of 1 to 5 (the score of 5 indicating the highest degree of interest and relevance), 92 percent of the respondents ranked their classes low, with a score of only 1 or 2.

Students Rank Interest and Relevance

1. I was not interested in the study.
2. I was somewhat interested in the study.
3. I can see the reasons for such a study and can identify with the content.
4. The study is relevant to my life, and I found the unit interesting.
5. The study is extremely relevant and very interesting.

These results supported teachers' general observation that students were having trouble relating to social studies instruction. It was no surprise that they had heard comments such as "Why do we have to study these old white guys?" "I don't remember anything from that class." "Why aren't there more stories for me?"

A Call to Action

The service teachers, concerned about these results and determined to make their own teaching relevant to young students, wanted to develop a more inclusive "action philosophy." They decided to focus on women's issues as a beginning, but admitting that their own knowledge in this area was not strong, they began researching and reading about that topic—and also examined the classroom textbooks.

In a 1987 issue of *Social Education*, Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault analyzed the ways in which women and gender were portrayed in social studies texts and curricula.¹ The service teachers summarized the five "phases of thinking about women in history" described by Tetreault in this way:



Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the second and first presidents (respectively) of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association. (1890)

1. **Male-defined history** — The absence of women in the historical record is not noticed, and male experience is considered the only knowledge worth having;
2. **Contribution history** — The absence of women on the "main stage" is noted, but only in the male-defined context of what determines greatness;
3. **Bifocal history** — This dualistic approach to history describes the contributions of males and females, leading to the understanding that the male experience has been dominant;



Ruth Muskrat, a Cherokee Indian, presents President Calvin Coolidge with a copy of *The Red Man in the United States*, a survey of American Indian life. (1923)

4. **Histories of women** — This multifaceted concept of women recognizes that there are other factors (besides sex) that shape lives, such as socioeconomic phase, class, and personal characteristics;
5. **Histories of gender** — This perspective weaves male and female contributions together based on common denominators of experience, citing the particulars of motivation and accomplishment.

Content Analysis

With the use of Tetreault's scale, the teachers first examined the content of our primary sources for teaching, the textbooks. They found that these texts (primarily published in the late 1980s) generally omitted pertinent information on women's accomplishments. They found that most of the information about female contributions appeared to be "added on" to content that the students perceived as "the really important stuff." Historical pictures of females were included with little explanation of their significance. Written information on the daily lives of people of the past, and the interaction between men and women to improve society, was scant at best. The teachers

concluded that much of the text describing female contributions was trivialized, and, in their opinion, barely reached phase 2 on Tetreault's scale.

We ordered samples of new texts, and found that to add the "cultural and gender element," authors briefly mentioned one or two women in a chapter. The teachers thought that this was still not enough information to reach the level of understanding that they

hoped to achieve. New social studies texts were not a purchasing priority for the districts. Updating course material seemed a monumental task at this point in the careers of these teachers, but they decided to try, beginning with the units they were teaching.

Planning and Preparation

The teachers set as a goal creating units of study that would include particular accomplishments by men and women, as well as a description of everyday life during the era of study.² For example, a unit on inventions included innovations created and used by men and women of different ethnicity and social class. Political leaders were studied, inclusive of physical disabilities, gender, social class, and religion. The concept of "nations" was presented from the indigenous point of view, as well as the conqueror's point of view. The everyday lives of people were examined as well as those of the great and mighty. Some unsuccessful attempts at leadership and reform were included as well as successes.

Teaching Methods

Early in the year, the teachers taught what they considered to be Phase 5 (on Tetreault's scale) units of study in ten classes in the third through eighth grades. Half way through the year, however, students in seven of these classes evaluated the lessons

as not interesting or relevant. The teachers decided not to disregard their work so far on improving the content of the lessons, but to turn to the pedagogy and environmental concerns in an attempt to increase student interest.

In teaching a unit about national documents of the United States, one teacher had prepared an additional lesson about the 1848 "Declaration of Sentiments" of the Women's Rights Movement.³ It was a wonderful lesson filled with active learning exercises, but it was perceived as a "tag-on" to the lessons about the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and the U.S. Constitution. Students remarked, "Another one? [sigh]" and "What does this have to do with what we studied?" The teacher was dismayed.

It's not just what we say, but how we say it. By stating, "Now we are going to study another document, the Declaration of Sentiments," the teacher had made clear to the students that they had "wandered away" from the traditional curriculum. The perception was that this new information was not going to prove to be important. We concluded that the lesson had fallen to Phase 2 (Contribution History)—the Women's Rights document was viewed as an appendage, not as a central part of the body of history. That example prompted a discussion of similar disappointments, leading the



Programmer Grace Hopper is responsible for the computer term "bug." The original bug was a moth that caused a hardware fault in the Mark I computer. (1945)

group to conclude that its teaching methodology must be changed.

Through a series of trial and error situations, the teachers found that no matter what the topic of the social studies unit, they achieved the most success when the information was presented in something close to chronological order, thus avoiding the appearance of assigning some sort of priority to any one example, event, or person. Timelines, developed by the students, became more important, and the teachers began to use thematic eras as the basis for units. Students could then compare everyday life with major accomplishments, coordinating the time chronology in their minds, thus creating an understandable setting to which they could relate. For example, if national documents were the topic of a unit, the teachers presented all of the documents in chronological order, and students discussed each document's particular contribution to society.

The teachers also used Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligence* as one basis for their instruction.⁴ When their pedagogy was varied (that is, not always a lecture or discussion), the students were more engaged. There appeared to be a "natural" connection between the infused inclusive content the teachers were presenting and a more inclusive holistic pedagogy, appealing to various styles of learning. The numerous teacher workshop materials based on Gardner's theory presented a wealth of ideas that provided avenues for connecting teaching techniques with the historical information to be learned.

Classroom Environment

A poster of the U.S. presidents, displayed in a third grade classroom, had an empty frame in one corner with a question underneath, "Could this be you?" A girl looked it over and said, "I'd like to be President some day," to which a boy responded, "You



The first female U.S. astronaut Sally Ride answers questions for ABC TV's "Nightline" in a NASA laboratory. (1983)

can't. You're a girl." The teacher interjected, explaining that a person does not have to be male to be president, it just happens that all of the presidents so far have been male. The boy scoffed, "Look at the pictures," and walked off.

Later, we discussed this event, concluding that the classroom environment was important, maybe no less than the content of the lessons or the teaching methods. The event also inspired the teacher—not to lecture on the requirements of being president, but to teach a unit on job qualifications, presenting careers spanning all walks of life, infusing materials throughout the unit that were cross-cultural and gender inclusive. Of course, she was also inspired to redesign the classroom environment appropriately for the unit, including posters, books, articles, and teacher materials that portrayed a cross-section of citizens working at various jobs (including the presidency). By the end of the unit, the classroom was full of visuals, videos, slides, music, student-created newspapers, and other pro-

jects portraying the idea that the career market is, or at least can be, gender-inclusive.

Results of Interest

At the end of 1998, the same questionnaire was administered to the same groups of students in the third through the eighth grades. The results were gratifying: No student ranked any class in the lowest two points of the five-point scale of interest and relevance; 34 percent of the students gave their classes a score of three, 53 percent gave a four, and 13 percent awarded a five, "The study was extremely relevant and very interesting."

The teachers summarized their efforts by stating the three components of teaching that seemed to be correlated with student interest.

1. Improve the content of the lessons so as to include not only the successes of white males, but also the achievements of, and challenges faced by, men and women at all levels of society in a given age. Present information chronologically, not ranked by "importance." Aim for Phase 5 of Tetreault's scale, to "define what binds together and what separates the various segments of society."
2. Strive to use various materials and sources (for example, videos, historical fiction for young people, online resources, the library, and the local historical society) and different methods of teaching and assessing (as described by Gardner and others).
3. Create a classroom environment that reflects the content of the unit of study and presents a welcoming face to every child in the class.

Earlier in the year, these teachers tried to change all of their units to be in accordance with a new organizing principle or teaching technique. They got frustrated because they were trying to do too much



I SELL THE SHADOW TO SUPPORT THE
SUBSTANCE.
SOJOURNER TRUTH.

Library of Congress

The caption to this photo of abolitionist Sojourner Truth reads, "I sell the shadow to support the substance." (1883)

and were not seeing results. They found that, by using this three-component strategy to revise one unit at a time, the work load was not overbearing and the results were rewarding for the teacher and student.

These three components are goals, not requirements. Not every lesson can be a blockbuster, and there is not always time to

enrich the course material. But by taking a more active role themselves, these teachers appeared to have raised the interest—and maybe even the expectations—of their students in the field of social studies. ■

Notes

1. Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault, "Rethinking Women, Gender and the Social Studies," *Social*

Education 51, No. 3 (March 1987): pp. 170-178. Useful tables, with "questions commonly asked in each phase," are on pp. 172 and 173.

2. Books that provided a rich, inclusive history include Joy Hakim, *A History of US* (New York: Oxford University Press Children's Books, ten volumes, 1999); Christine Lunardini, *What Every American Should Know About Women's History* (Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams, Inc., 1994); Wilma Mankiller, Gwendolyn Mink, Marysa Navarro, Barbara Smith, Gloria Steinem (eds.), *The Reader's Companion to U.S. Women's History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998); Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492 to the Present* (New York: Harper Perennial Library, 1995); *The Twentieth Century: A People's History* (New York: Harper Perennial Library, 1998). There is a comprehensive list of resources in *Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice*, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Bill Bigelow, Barbara Miner (eds.), (Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 1994). See also the sidebar of websites in this article.
3. "Declaration of Sentiments," in *Report of the Woman's Rights Convention, 1848* (Seneca Falls, New York). www.closeup.org/sentimnt.htm
4. There are many interpretations of Howard Gardner's original work, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). Gardner himself has expanded his offerings with two key titles, *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); and *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). There are also numerous workshops based on Gardner's theory. Perhaps the most prolific series comes from Sunlight Publishers, including David Lazear's works such as *The Eight Ways of Knowing* (Palatine, IL: Skylight Publishing, 1999).

About the Author

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Useful websites include the National Women's Hall of Fame at www.greatwomen.org, which has a great list of



resources; the National Women's History Project at www.nwhp.org, which promotes inclusive history through newsletters and teaching projects; and the search directory of Women Online at www.women.com, which is useful for research on specific topics.

Besting Testing Hysteria *Reasonable Preparation for Standardized Tests*

Sherry L. Field

STANDARDIZED TESTS, born in the early 1900s, have taken firm root in the American educational system. During the testing movement of the 1920s, specific-response (or "objective") tests were developed, while essay examinations were criticized as being unreliable and inaccurate. Today, short-answer, standardized tests remain a grim reality. According to a recent survey by *Newsweek*, forty-nine states have implemented tests for measuring student achievement.¹ In many instances, these are "high-stakes" tests: if a student does not perform well, he or she may not be allowed to progress to the next grade or to graduate (as is now the case in twenty-six states). On the basis of poor test scores, college admission might be denied to a student, despite other achievements. *Newsweek* states that there is a growing "anxiety among parents, teachers, and kids over the proliferation of standardized tests" and that "reformers try to improve school quality by holding educators accountable" for test results.

A school's academic reputation is largely based on achievement test scores. For example, student performance in the largest school district in Georgia was recently touted by this newspaper headline: "County Tops National, State SAT Averages." State superintendent of schools Linda Schrenko attributed Georgia's gains in SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) scores to a rigorous core curriculum, increased math requirements for graduation, the use of funds for all sophomore students to take the Pre-SAT test, and "hard work by administrators to improve student achievement."²

What will the future bring in the way of testing policies and legislated mandates? According to Judy Mathers, a policy analyst at the Education Commission of the States, "We're in the middle of the maelstrom. It's very difficult to see which way it's going to go."³ Many teachers are concerned that what they teach and how they teach may be increasingly determined by the dictates of the standardized test "empire."

How should middle school teachers respond to this sort of pressure? Ignoring the storm of standardized tests would not help students or schools. On the other hand, "teaching to the test" exclusively (with constant memory drills and practice of test-taking skills) can backfire as students, and teachers, succumb to boredom. A more rational approach might be for teachers to compare the form and content of standardized tests with their own standards for learning and assessment. If teachers, throughout the year, would refer to their own chosen standards (as they plan lessons and design their own assessments of student learning), they could probably enhance students' performance in standardized test situations—without having to make this result the "holy grail" of their professional life.⁴

Content of Standardized Tests

Let's take a closer look at the actual social studies content in a widely used current standardized test, the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills). A recent survey⁵ of the content of the social studies portions of this test revealed six general categories of knowledge being assessed (Table 1). These categories were present in recent tests for third, fifth, and eighth grade students in roughly similar proportions, except for



Table 1. The Social Studies Content of the ITBS

Category	Sub-topic	Proportion*
History	Traditions and heritage of the people of Earth	10%
	People who have shaped history	
	Examples in history of conflict or cooperation	
	Situations in history involving change or adaptation	
Geography	Physical features of Earth	27%
	Interactions of people with the environment	
Economics	Work and workers	23%
	Economic principle of supply and demand	
	Material needs and wants of people	
	Economic impact of technology	
	Economic interdependence of people and nations	
Political Science	Rights and responsibilities of citizens	23%
	Rules and laws	
	Structures and services of government	
Sociology/Anthropology	Human culture	13%
	Social interactions of people	
	Human needs and wants	
	Psychological principles of human behavior	
Related Social Sciences	Human culture as seen through fine and applied arts	4%
	Systems of ethics and human values	

* Proportion equals the number of questions on a sub-topic divided by the total social studies questions (n = 30) in the test for third graders.

that of history, which increased. (In the third grade test, 30 questions make up the social studies portion, including three questions (10%) from history (Table 1, line 1). At the fifth grade, this proportion rose to 20%; at the eighth grade, it was 28%.)

Of course, the difficulty of the questions increases with grade level. For example, in the third grade, students may be asked to (1) identify an original American cultural group, (2) identify an animal that was historically important to American travel and settlement, and (3) choose an appropriate form of transportation for a specific purpose. Fifth grade students may be asked to (1) recognize a historical term or concept, (2) state one reason for colo-

nization, and (3) identify the historical settlement pattern of the United States.

NCSS Standards for Assessment

A comparison of the ITBS categories (Table 1) and questions with some of the National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Standards⁶ shows many similarities. The ten NCSS standards were written by teachers and other social studies professionals for use by schools, departments, and individual teachers when they design curricula and assessments. Each standard has "performance expectations" that can serve as the basis for assessing student knowledge at different ages.

II Time, Continuity, & Change

"Demonstrate an ability to use correctly vocabulary associated with time such as past, present, future, and long ago; read and construct simple timelines; identify examples of change; and recognize examples of cause and effect relationships."

This performance expectation might be represented on standardized tests by having children read a short paragraph and then place an event appropriately on a timeline. Young students might sequence pictures of many different activities or events. Older students might sequence phrases or sentences. On many state and "gatekeeper" tests, middle school students will be asked to write a brief, reasoned essay on the basis of historical information provided in a test question.

III People, Places, & Environments

"Use appropriate resources, data sources, and geographic tools such as atlases, data bases, grid systems, charts, graphs, and maps to generate, manipulate, and interpret information."

A surety on standardized tests is that students will have many opportunities to interpret various representations of data. (Many tests rely heavily on these skills at the expense of other social studies knowledge and skills.) Younger students might read and interpret cardinal directions and trace a path. They may be asked to identify relative locations. Middle school students might read and interpret sophisticated maps and graphs and find information on them quickly. Often, this skill is assessed in conjunction with a related narrative in which students are given large chunks of information, which they then have to weed out. Geographic land forms and related vocabulary (terms about natural resources and cultural traits) are often featured.

Production, Distribution, & Consumption

"Give examples that show how scarcity and choice govern our economic decisions."

Students should show an understanding of basic economics concepts and be able to interpret various types of economics situations and data, such as charts and graphs. A typical question for younger children might ask them to distinguish between needs and wants. Middle school children might be asked to describe the role that supply, demand, and price play in determining what is on the market. Specialized economics vocabulary is prevalent, as are questions about economic problems and relationships between production, distribution, and consumption.

Thus, content of standardized tests in elementary and middle grade social studies does not have to be at odds with school districts and states that aim to use various types of assessment tools and to meet benchmarks set by local, state, and national standards. Nor do the tests have to be at odds with our day-to-day work as social studies teachers if our goals include teaching specific skills and content, and then measuring student learning in several different ways.

Principles for Improving Performance

I would like to offer the following few principles to help with systematic thinking, discussion, and practice.

1. Standards for social studies education (as stated by individuals, schools, governments, professional organizations, and testing institutions) often overlap.
2. Classroom assessments can be based

on a teacher's own standards for content knowledge and skill acquisition.

3. Ongoing classroom assessment can help students prepare for the end-of-the-year (or the occasional) standardized test.
4. Reasonable efforts can be made to prepare students for the emotional and "mechanical" aspects of test-taking (for example, by reviewing techniques of time management, learning how to eliminate multiple choices, practicing methods of at-the-desk relaxation, writing an essay under a deadline, etc.).
5. Student performance and knowledge can be assessed in many different ways, some of which can be similar to standardized tests (for example, multiple choice, fill in the blank, short essay, creation of a chart or graph given data, etc.) and some not (creating a dramatic performance, holding a debate, drawing a picture, or composing a website).
6. Students can be tested on different types of problem solving, literacy, and reasoning, as well as specific knowledge of various topics. (For example, analytical questions can assess a student's ability to understand and use maps, charts, graphs, and other forms of data representation. Vocabulary questions assess one's ability to remember the meaning of terms. Simple historical questions test one's knowledge of major events, people, and dates.)
7. Beyond formally administering a particular standardized test, teachers can learn about the methods of assessment used in a particular test instrument, the skills that students are expected to

have, and the content that students are expected to know.

8. Standardized tests are one form of assessment among many. Social studies teachers could provide an important voice in local, state, and national debates over the meaning and use of test results.

By systematically integrating these principles into a year-long school curriculum, teachers (and their students) might experience increased confidence when the season of standardized testing arrives.⁷ After all, assessment of some sort is a useful part of any learning situation. Maybe we can take reasonable steps to improve students' performance on these tests without getting caught up in "testing hysteria." ☹

Notes

1. D. McGinn, "The Big Score," *Newsweek* (September 6, 1999): 46-51.
2. D. Zillich, "County Tops National, State SAT Averages," *Gwinnett Daily Post* (Wednesday, September 1, 1999): 1A, 9A.
3. McGinn, 51.
4. S. Walton and K. Taylor, "How Did You Know the Answer Was Boxcar?" *Educational Leadership* 54, No. 4 (December 1996/January 1997): 38-40.
5. Figures provided by the Georgia Council on Economic Education.
6. National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Washington, D.C.: NCSS, 1994).
7. G. Wiggins, "Practicing What We Preach in Designing Authentic Assessments," *Educational Leadership* 54, No. 4 (December 1996/January 1997): 18-25.

About the Author

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Revolutionary Women

Portraits of Life in the Thirteen Colonies

Mary E. Connor

A valuable skill for students of social studies is to be able to analyze and evaluate primary source material.¹ I have created a lesson plan that includes an overview of the social conditions of women who lived during the American Revolution, brief portraits of the lives of six women from that era, and primary source material drawn from their personal letters or publications.² Students are given the information below, and then asked to reflect on the commonality and diversity of life experience for women in that time and place.

Women's Lives, ca. 1776

In the late eighteenth century, most white women were married by the age of sixteen, usually to a farmer, and bore from five to ten children. Life was rigidly determined by gender. Men completed one set of chores, women another. Many girls did not attend school, but did work (including caring for younger brothers and sisters) around the house and farm. Women spun, sewed, cooked, baked, tended gardens and orchards, milked cows, butchered farm animals, cured meat, churned butter, made cheese, and worked in the fields at harvest time. They made most of the clothing and household items such as candles, blankets, and curtains. Especially on frontier farms, most of the household items were created by a woman's hands.

Daughters were expected to grow up to be "modest, retiring, chaste, and sweet;"³

women to obey their husbands; and men to be tender and loving to their wives. There were exceptions, however, to this general picture. One Virginian made note of women who fought back if taunted, went to cock-fights, and traveled around the countryside unchaperoned.

In the South, a wealthy young woman was considered a prize in marriage. Widows, especially wealthy ones, usually did not remain single very long. But even for the "aristocratic" white woman living a plantation, life was often physically demanding as she might oversee the preparation of meals and maintenance of the house, manage the activities of slaves, deliver babies, nurse the sick, and educate children, not to mention giving birth herself, often with little rest between pregnancies.

Conditions were the most difficult for slave women. Their marriages were not recognized as legal or important by their owners, and they could be sold away. Female slaves usually experienced harsh working conditions; pregnancies were frequent, maternity leaves unknown, and death during childbirth a common experience. Some exhausted mothers accidentally suffocated their babies because they fell asleep while nursing.⁴ Although their masters and owners must have known that hard physical labor was not good for pregnant or nursing mothers, such risks were often ignored so that a cash crop could be rapidly harvested.

Many immigrants came to America as indentured servants and were often not much better off than slaves, as they were

required to work for a master for a certain period, often in return for travel expenses, shelter, and food (or sustenance).

A woman's property and wages belonged to her husband. Only widows and the very few women who never married could own property and run their own business; such women paid taxes, but could not vote. Once married, a woman could not sue or be sued, make contracts, buy or sell property, or write a will. Her husband had all legal rights to the children. Divorces were difficult to obtain; a common reaction to an unbearable husband was to run away to another man or back to Mother. Despite some difficulties, it seems that a fair share of marriages were happy ones. Letters between husbands and wives reveal much warmth and tenderness.⁵ Widows without property who did not remarry often faced poverty. They congregated in cities to support themselves as midwives, teachers, laundresses, seamstresses, or servants. A woman with property might open a shop, inn, or boardinghouse.

During the American Revolution, women of every rank boycotted British-made cloth and tea. During the war, women did men's jobs and provided support in varied capacities. When the War of Independence was won, slaves were gradually freed in the North and education became more available to girls, but major changes in the rights of women followed only after suffrage was achieved in 1920.

Jane Franklin Mecom (1712-1794)

The daughter of a chandler (maker and seller of tallow, wax candles, and soap) and favorite sister of Benjamin Franklin, Jane was the youngest of seventeen children. Married at fifteen to the local saddler, Jane had twelve children, eleven of whom died while she was still alive.

Jane became her brother's favorite correspondent. For a quarter of a century, she gave birth to a new baby every other year. At age thirty, Jane took in lodgers, helped in her husband's shop, and cared for children and aging parents. Her husband died in 1765, but none of Jane's surviving children was able to support their aging mother. Her brother Benjamin tried to help by sending trading goods from England, where he was a representative of the thirteen colonies. The boxes arrived just as Bostonians decided to boycott British goods, so Jane was not able to sell them.⁶

When Jane was seventy, her granddaughter died in childbirth, and she was again the head of a household and the caretaker of four small children. By 1784, however, she was living comfortably in Ben's home in Boston, where she had the leisure to read and write until her death in 1794.

Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784)

A thin, sickly eight-year-old Phillis was brought to Boston on a slave ship from Africa. A white woman, Susanna Wheatley, took pity and bought the girl. Mary, the Wheatley's daughter, taught Phillis to read and write. Within sixteen months, Phillis spoke English and read the Bible. At the age of twelve, she knew Latin and Greek, was translating works of the Roman poet Ovid, and was writing her own poetry. She also studied geography, astronomy, and ancient history. Susanna took pride in Phillis' intelligence and protected her delicate health, but did not grant her freedom.

At seventeen, Phillis published a poem about George Whitefield, the leader of the "Great Awakening," a religious revival that was sweeping through the colonies. Only a week before he died, Whitefield had preached in Boston, where Phillis must have heard him. Wheatley's beautiful eulogy—printed in newspapers in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and London—led to publication of a book of poetry and finally to her emancipation in 1773. With the deaths of Susanna, John, and Mary

Wheatley, however, Phillis was on her own. She continued to write poetry and supported American independence. One of her most famous poems was "To His Excellency George Washington."

Since Phillis could not support herself, she married a free black, but he deserted her and their young child. To survive, Phillis took a job as a domestic servant. She was still able to publish several poems; one of them ("Liberty and Peace") is considered by many to be her best. Before it was printed, Phillis, who had been sickly all of her life, became seriously ill from an infection following childbirth and died at the young age of thirty-one.

Deborah Sampson (1760-1827)

Deborah Sampson was born to poor farmers. With the death or possible desertion of her father, she became an indentured servant. At twenty-two, finished



with her servitude and inspired by the Revolution, she dressed in men's clothing and enlisted in the militia, but was soon discovered. Not one to quit, she again enlisted under the assumed name of Robert Shirtliff and marched toward West Point, New York, with the Continental Army. She wrote to her mother that she had found agreeable employment in a "large but well-regulated family."⁷

Deborah was wounded at Tarrytown, New York. Determined to remain undetected, she extracted a musket ball from her thigh. She continued to serve, but contracted a fever and was taken to a hospital. The examining doctor was amazed to discover the soldier's gender, but told no one. Upon recovery, Deborah again served, became ill again, and was discharged.

Why did Deborah do such a risky thing? She might have viewed military service as a patriotic duty and an economic opportunity. She could receive a bonus and free land after the war. Also, she may have been drawn to the challenge and excitement of the war. She could not achieve any of these things, however, without pretending to be a man.

In 1784 Deborah married Benjamin Gannett. They bought a farm and had children, but her health was poor. After petitioning the General Court in Massachusetts, she eventually received back pay for her service as a soldier. In 1802, she donned a blue

and white uniform, carried a musket, and went on a speaking tour of New York and New England, telling about her adventures.

Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814)

Mercy Warren has been aptly described as "the foremost female intellectual in eighteenth century America."⁸ At her birth she entered a world of wealth, social status, and political power. Bright, highly energetic, charming, and ambitious, Mercy made the most of all of her gifts. Her youth was spent pursuing the established routines of domesticity. Although she had no formal education, her brother took note of his sister's brilliance and contributed significantly to her education.

In 1754 she married James Warren, merchant and politician, and moved to Plymouth, Massachusetts. They had five children. James was an intelligent partner who supported her intellectual interests. Yet she also had the energy to raise children and attend to household duties.

Throughout the 1770s, Mercy followed closely the political events in Boston. Her correspondents included John Adams, Samuel Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Elbridge Gerry, and Henry Knox. These men asked "her opinion in political matters, and acknowledge[d] the excellence of her judgment."⁹ Her letters reveal a remarkable clarity, perceptivity, and boldness.

For years Mercy wrote poetry, but not until 1772 did she publish. Her first work was a dramatic piece intended as propaganda against Governor Thomas Hutchinson, whom she depicted as willing to destroy the colony. In other plays, she attacked British officials and Loyalists.

In her seventies, she published her finest work, a three-volume set, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, which is considered by modern historians to be "the most complete account we have of the Revolution." Mercy remained strong and alert until her death at 87.



Eliza Lucas Pinckney (1722–1793)

The daughter of a career officer in the British army, Eliza was educated in England. When her father was ordered to the West Indies, Eliza managed his three plantations in South Carolina. She was just sixteen years old.

Eliza began a journal (which she called a “letterbook”) in which she recorded details of all aspects of daily life. For historians today, it represents “one of the most impressive documents of personal writings of an eighteenth century woman.”¹⁰ Eliza also sent informative letters to her father, brothers, and friends in England.

Commercial indigo (a blue dye made from the indigo plant) was in great demand, and in 1744, Eliza grew the first successful crop in the colonies and gave seeds to other planters. Within three years, South Carolina was exporting 100,000 pounds of indigo dye a year.

Eliza was a gifted musician, spoke several languages, taught her sister and slave children how to read, experimented with new plants, dealt with overseers, taught herself the law, and read so much of the classic works by Locke, Plutarch, and Virgil that an elderly lady in the neighborhood “prophesied that she would damage her brain.” She found most of her male contemporaries to be dull.

In 1744, Eliza married Charles Pinckney, a forty-five-year-old widower. She asked for God’s help

to be a good wife, mother, and mistress of servants. Eliza and Charles had three children: Charles Cotesworth, Harriot, and Thomas. When Eliza was thirty-five, her husband contracted malaria and died. This loss might have undone her, but she continued to manage the plantation and raise her children. During the Revolutionary War, one of their plantations burned to the ground, yet the family recovered and prospered.

Two of Eliza’s sons became leaders: Charles (junior) was a member of the Constitutional Convention and Thomas became governor of South Carolina. Because their work took them away from their homes, Eliza helped to manage their plantations as well as her own and looked after their wives and children. When Eliza died of cancer, George Washington served as one of her pallbearers.

Hannah Lee Corbin (1728–1782)

Constructed in 1738, Stratford Hall was the home of the prominent Lee family. It was the boyhood home of Declaration of Independence signers Richard Henry Lee and Francis Lightfoot Lee, and it was the birthplace of Robert E. Lee, who—in the next century—would be the commander in chief of the (Rebel) Confederate Army in the Civil War.

Hannah Lee was the daughter of the founder of Stratford Hall and sister to Richard and Francis. Her father was determined to give an excellent education

to all of his children, so Hannah, along with her brothers, studied history, law, literature, religion, and politics.

At twenty, she married her cousin, Gawin Corbin, and had one child. But Gawin died, and his will stated that if Hannah remarried or moved, she would forfeit the estate. Failing to appear in court for the settlement, she was fined, but refused to pay. Hannah continued to reveal her independent spirit. When the Great Awakening swept Virginia, she heard sermons of Baptist preachers and became a convert to a church that was illegal in that colony.

Shortly after Gawin’s death, she fell in love with Dr. Richard Hall. Since Gawin’s will prevented her from remarrying, she decided to live with Hall but remain unmarried. Hannah managed the plantation as a widow and had two children by Hall, which displeased some people. Baptists worshipped in their home, a practice that was dangerous at the time—Hannah could have been imprisoned or attacked by angry neighbors. When Richard died, Hannah continued to manage Gawin’s estate, but worried about paying off Hall’s heavy debts. She complained about the position of widows and single women and the fact that women were taxed, but could not vote. She was probably the first woman in Virginia to be vocal about women’s rights. In her final years, Hannah became obsessed with religion and feared for her soul in the afterlife.

Three Questions for Discussion with Middle School Students

- ▶ Life was difficult or challenging for women at the time of the American Revolution. Describe two challenges that women faced.
- ▶ Chose one specific woman and tell about one of her achievements or why you find her life story to be interesting or remarkable.
- ▶ Below are primary source materials from the lives of these six women. Select one of these sources (A through F) and describe how it relates to the woman and to aspects of life during the late 1700s. If the

author of the source is not the woman herself, identify the person.

A Challenge for High School Students

“The portraits of six colonial women chronicle the lives of exceptionally able and interesting women and reveal much about the female experience in the eighteenth century.”

- ▶ Assess the validity of this statement in a coherent essay of several paragraphs, integrating the background information, several of the portraits, and the primary sources which follow in this article. Avoid paraphrasing.

Identify any of the primary sources you mention at the end of a sentence (for example, “Doc. A.”).¹¹ 📄

Notes

1. National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Washington, D.C.: NCSS, 1994): 51.
2. The lesson “Revolutionary Women” was developed through a fellowship at the Monticello-Stratford Hall Summer Seminar for Teachers in 1999. To obtain information about the fellowship, send a query to shpedu@stratfordhall.org, visit www.stratfordhall.org, or call (804) 493-8572.
3. Jan Lewis, “Women and the American Revolution,” *OAH Magazine of History* (Summer 1994), 24.
4. Michael P. Johnson, “Smothered Slave Infants: Were Slave Mothers at Fault?” in Linda K. Kerber and Jane DeHart Mathews, eds., *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past* (New

Document A

"Whereas it appears to this Court that the said Deborah Gannet enlisted, under the name of Robert Shirliff . . . and did actually perform the duty of a soldier . . . for which she has received no compensation . . . it further appears that the said [soldier] exhibited an extraordinary instance of female heroism by discharging the duties of a faithful, gallant soldier, and at the same time preserving the virtue and chastity of her sex unsuspected and unblemished, and was discharged from the service with a fair and honorable character . . . The Treasurer (is) directed to issue his note to the said Deborah for the sum of thirty-four pounds. . . . Approved John Hancock" (1792)

Document B

"The virtuous and noble resolution of America's sons, in defiance of threatened desolation and misery from arbitrary despots, demands our highest regard. . . . And be it known unto Britain, even American daughters are politicians and patriots, and will aid the good work with their female efforts." *Mercy Warren (1774)*

Document C

"I think there was hardly Ever so unfortunate a Family. I am not willing to think it is all owing to misconduct. I have had some children that seemed to be doing well till they were taken off by Death. . . ." *Jane Franklin Mecom (late 1770s)*

Document D

"Your favor of the 26th of October did not reach my hands till the middle of December . . . I apologize for the delay. . . . I thank you most sincerely for your polite notice of me in the elegant lines you enclosed . . . If you should ever come to Cambridge, or near headquarters, I shall be happy to see a person so favored by the Muses, and to whom nature has been so liberal and beneficent in her dispensations." *George Washington (1776)*

Document E

"Item, I leave all my Estate both real and personal to my dear wife during her widowhood and continuance in this Country, allowing my daughter . . . out of my Estate a Genteel Education and maintenance at the discretion of my Executors hereafter mentioned; . . . if my wife marries again or leaves this County then and in that case, my will and desire is that my said wife shall be deprived of the bequest already made her. . . ." *From the will of Gawin Corbin (1750s)*

Document F

"If you will not laugh too immoderately at mee I'll Trust you with a Secrett. I have made two wills already! I know I have done no harm, for I con'd [learned] my lesson very perfectly, and know how to convey by will, Estates, Real and Personal But after all what can I do if a poor Creature lies a-dying, and their family takes it into their head that I can serve them." *Eliza Pinckney (1740s)*

- York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 111.
5. Edmund S. Morgan, "Colonial Women," in John H. Cary and Julius Weinberg, eds., *The Social Fabric: American Life from 1607 to the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), 68.
 6. Ann Firor Scott, "Self Portraits," in L. K. Kerber and J. DeH. Mathews, eds., *Women's America: Refocusing the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 68.
 7. Edith Patterson Meyer, *Petticoat Patriots of the American Revolution* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1976), 158.
 8. Lester Cohen, "Forward," in *Mercy Warren, History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*, Vol. 1 (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1988), xvi.
 9. Elizabeth F. Ellet, *Women of the American Revolution* (Williamstown, Mass.: Corner Publisher, 1980), 77.
 10. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), s.v. "Elizabeth Lucas Pinckney," by Elise Pinckney.
 11. This assignment is similar to the DBQ (Document-Based-Question) on the Advanced Placement U.S. History Exam. Another possible essay assignment could read, "There is not always a good historical record to show what life was like for a group of people in the past.

What, do you think, allowed historians to know about the women in this article? Using the information given in this assignment, explain what record or traces of a woman's life might have survived over the years. Give some examples.

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About the Author

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MYSTERIES OF ANCIENT EGYPT



1. Curse of the Pharaoh

Disturb the tomb and you'll die a painful death. Is the curse just hogwash?



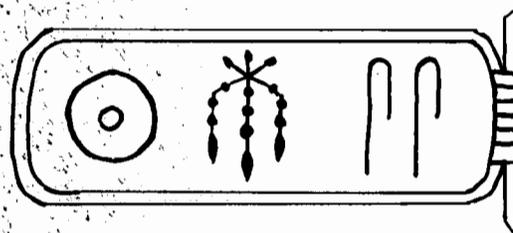
2. Riddle of the Sphinx

What was the Sphinx, and why might it be considered a harsh teacher?



3. Impossible Feat

How could the Egyptians have built the huge pyramids without power equipment, pulleys, or even wheels?



4. Unreadable Text

What does this script, found on a sarcophagus, mean? (Hints: It's a name, and one of the characters resembles a letter in our alphabet.)

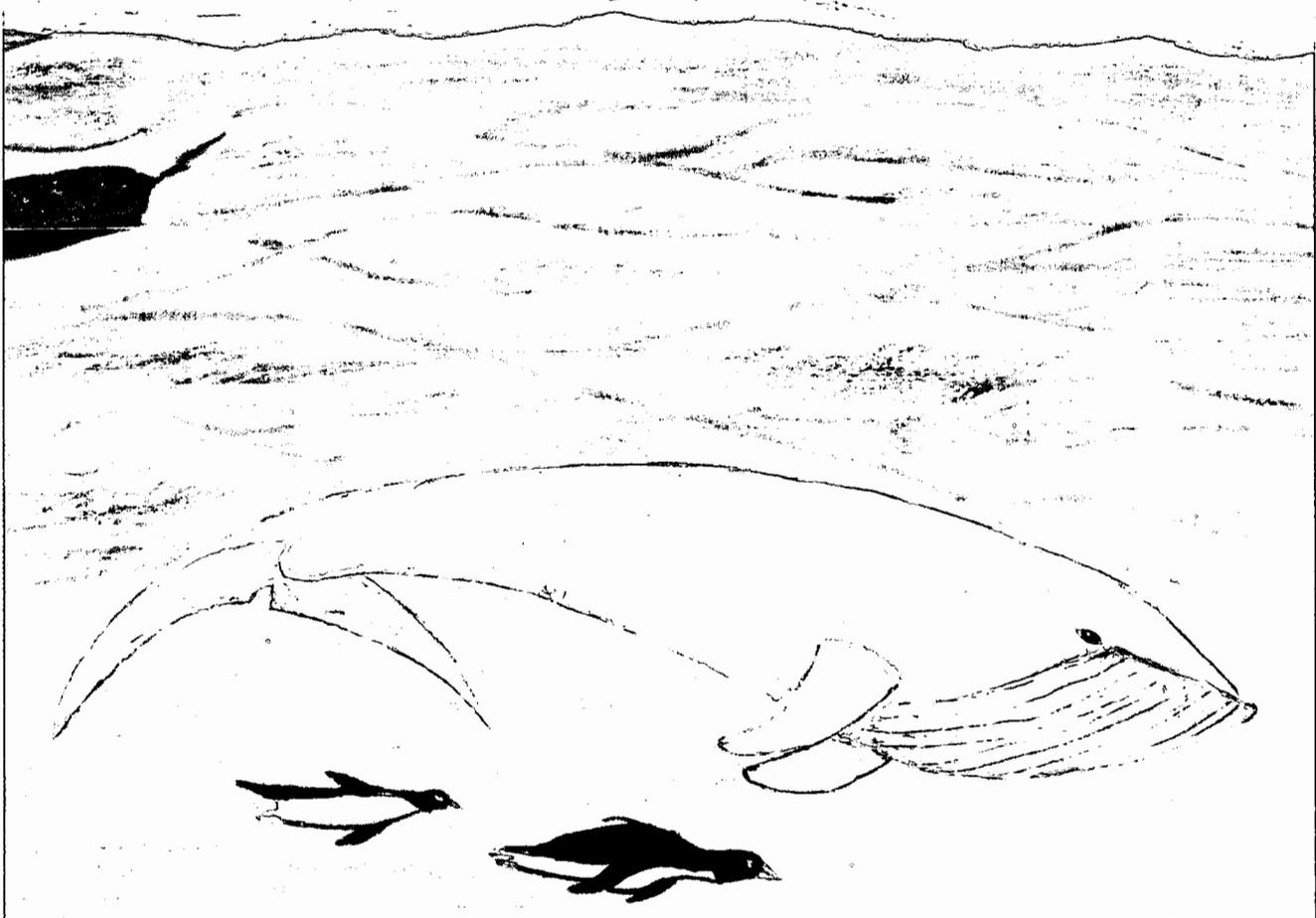


2
Let Me Explain: Students as Colonial History Docents
Linda L. Gesek

5
Take a Break: A Token Economy in the Fifth Grade
John M. Hail

8
The Real World: Community Speakers in the Classroom
Lindy G. Poling

11
Whales in Depth: An Interdisciplinary Study
Cynthia Szymanski Sunal, Gail Pritchard, and Dennis W. Sunal



"Let Me Explain" Students as Colonial History Docents

Linda L. Gesek

"Because tea was taxed and extremely expensive, it became a luxury item in colonial America. An 18th century home would include this lockable tea chest as a means of controlling how much and who used the tea. When sweetening their tea, colonial Americans often snipped a piece of sugar from this sugar loaf, placed it in the mouth behind the teeth and sipped their tea. If any sugar remained after the tea was consumed, it was replaced on the sugar loaf!"

Cara, a Montgomery High School Docent

Most everyone has met a docent, but students may not know this term. A *docent* is a guide who leads a group through a museum, gallery, or historic site, interpreting displays and answering questions. Students can put their knowledge of colonial history to work for their classmates, and possibly for their community, by practicing the skills of the docent.

Four Ways to Go

Of course, not every community has a museum or historic site that could be used as the base of a formal student docent program. And, even in a state rich with historic sites, not every child will be awarded a formal docent position. But the skills of the docent can be learned and practiced in any classroom, sparking students' interest in the historic period being taught. I would like to suggest four levels of involvement, and teachers can choose whichever level meets the resources at hand and matches the commitment, abilities, and grade level of the students:

1. Classroom Simulation

Students learn the meaning of the term docent. Then, after studying a period of history, the class simulates an historic exhibit. Students take turns being a

docent, explaining the use and meaning of "artifacts" on display (which the students have created) and answering questions from the "tour group" (classmates, students from another classroom, or parents). Period costumes can be constructed and worn.

2. Field Trip with an Adult Docent

After learning about a period of history and the work of the docent, students tour an historic site or museum under the direction of an actual docent.

Students are prepared to ask the docent questions about the displays and that era of history. After the tour, students have a chance to ask the docent questions specifically about his or her work. (For example, "How do you prepare for all the questions that people might ask?")

3. Field Trip with a Student Docent

Students rehearse (in the classroom) being docents at a local historic site or museum. The class will need either



On the steps of the Rockingham historic site, docents model period costumes.

notes and photographs from a recent visit or descriptions and photographs (preferably slides) as provided by the museum. Finally, the class visits the site or museum, with a tour (or part of the tour) conducted by student docents, as selected by the teacher.

4. Student Docents Guide the Public

Students receive extensive training on site. Then the curator of a museum or historic site selects a few students to be docents during special celebrations or events, or during visits by younger children.

In this article, I describe a docent program that leads to students being docents during special events four times a year—events that are open to the public. Many of the ideas and suggestions, however, are relevant to even the first level of “docent” involvement: a simulation in the classroom.

History Comes Alive

A docent program is one of the extracurricular activities provided at Montgomery High School in Skillman, New Jersey, through the Live Historians Club. As a part of the club, students learn the history of the Rockingham Headquarters of General George Washington during the latter part of the American Revolution. In 1783, while the Continental Congress was meeting at Nassau Hall in Princeton, Congress rented the Rockingham Mansion for Washington’s use. He remained in the house from August 23 until November 10 of that year and wrote his farewell orders to his soldiers during his stay. The Rockingham Mansion is now an Historic Site of the State of New Jersey.¹

Students are thrilled with the possibility of standing on “the other side of the museum rope” as docents. Prospective docents use the background information provided about the site and Washington’s stay as a springboard to a fascinating trip



Docents Cara Castellino, Ming Luke, and Megan Lintott perform 18th-century songs during a tour of the Rockingham Mansion.

through history. They learn about the house, the gardens, the toys, and the life-style of people in the 18th century. Gradually, they also learn about how larger events of the day intersected with the people in this particular spot. As their knowledge of the era grows, students become increasingly able to field ad hoc questions from adults and children.

We began the docent program by advertising in classes for students in grades 9 through 12 interested in drama, public speaking, or history. We organized a trip with these students to the Rockingham Historic Site and introduced them to the curator. Afterwards, we asked the students if it seemed important to them to pass on this heritage to future generations. If so, how could this experience become an integral part of the community and its children?

Some students were interested in being docents, so we invited an adult docent to construct a short script that a student could use in giving a ten to fifteen minute tour of the site to other students. With the curator’s permission, the students took slide photographs of some objects and rooms. Then they prepared a slide show and presented it

to the class, allowing for questions at any point. This activity established a core of knowledgeable students, while the presentation sparked the interest of a few more.

With additional training, approximately twenty students become docents, conducting tours of the Rockingham Mansion for the general public during four special events every year: Candlelight Christmas,



Docent Christina Logothetis dresses a child in colonial garb in the Children’s Museum.



Docent Alyssa Biber demonstrates wool carding during Children's Day in May

They learn to speak with authority to both students and adults on a topic they have studied. They provide a valuable service to the community. And they get interested in social studies content when history comes alive. 🌐

Notes

1. The Rockingham historic site is composed of three buildings: a nine room mansion house, a summer kitchen, and a former wash house now converted into the Children's Museum. The mansion served as the Revolutionary War Headquarters of General and Mrs. Washington between August and November of 1783. Recently, Rockingham was chosen for inclusion in the Save America's Treasures (SAT) Program, which is a partnership between the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Rockingham was included because of the need to safeguard it from the blasting effects of a local quarry. The relocation of Rockingham is one of only twelve projects in New Jersey and 438 nationally that have received the SAT designation. Rockingham Historic Site, 108 CR 518, RD#4, Princeton, NJ 08540. (609) 921-8835. E-mail: peggy@Rockingham.net. Website: www.Rockingham.net.
2. National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution can be found on the web at www.dar.org or by calling (202) 628-1776.
3. In 1994, the Rockingham Children's Museum won the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission Award for Historic Preservation. Website: www.co.somerset.nj.us.
4. I would like to thank Peggi Carlsen, Historic Preservation Specialist, Rockingham Historic Site, for her dedication, enthusiasm, and energy in the program design and coordination of the extensive educational programming at the Rockingham Children's Museum; Dawn Fairchild, former Regent of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Princeton (New Jersey) Chapter, for her extraordinary support of the period dress wardrobe available to the student docents (a collection that now includes several hundred pieces for both male and female docents); The Board of Trustees of the Rockingham Association, which supports the overall program as well as individual student docents through a paid internship program each summer; and all the Montgomery High School docents who have given so generously of their time, energy, and talents.

About the Author

Linda L. Gesek is a social studies teacher at Montgomery High School in Skillman, New Jersey. In 1996, she was named the National Outstanding Teacher of American History by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Washington's Birthday, Children's Day in May, and the annual third grade class trip (which more than 300 children enjoy). The docents dress in period costumes that are either sewn by parents or provided by the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.²

The Montgomery High School student docents are responsible for the program planning and staffing of all buildings on the site during the four annual events. These docents are stationed in each room and building to field questions and to present information to visitors about the house, General Washington, and 18th century living in general. More than 400 community members and visitors attend each event.

Interesting Outcomes

As docents, students strive toward perfection. No longer is their presentation done just for a letter grade. Parents, friends, neighbors, employers, future employers, and even the superintendent will see the presentation. Through this program, students who may not "fit into" regular

extracurricular activities find an important role. They improve their leadership and organizational skills as well as their public speaking abilities.

The docent program has fared well at Montgomery High School. Each year since its inception in 1992, approximately twenty high school students have become docents. The docent program also led to the founding of the Children's Museum at Rockingham, which students initiated, planned, organized, and created in 1993.³ This unique hands-on history museum is now an integral part of community life in the Skillman, Belle Mead, and Princeton area. Curator Peggi Carlsen invites student docents to lead some of the elementary school tours of the museum, which features toys, clothes and handicrafts of colonial children. More than 2,000 young students visit the museum annually. When history is presented to them by an "older" student, it takes on new meaning, and learning becomes fun for both age groups.

Docent programs have a lot to offer. Students gain poise and self-confidence.

TAKE A BREAK A TOKEN ECONOMY IN THE FIFTH GRADE

John M. Hail

HOW OFTEN are we interrupted in the middle of class to respond to a student's request to be excused for a drink or trip to the bathroom? Of course, teachers dislike denying a student's request, but we also know that when we say "yes" to one student, we must be prepared for the onslaught of requests from others. One day I decided to shift the decision-making burden away from me and place it on my fifth grade students by creating a token economy. Empowering my students in this manner allowed me to tackle the problem in a positive way-to teach without interruption and to implement an exciting method for teaching basic economic concepts.

Using a token economy in the classroom helps students realize a number of things about their economic world through first-hand experience. They learn to accept responsibility for their decisions. They learn to make choices in a setting where resources, such as time and money, are scarce. They learn that there are costs and benefits associated with every decision and that good decision-making makes their lives more enjoyable.

Preliminaries

In a token economy, students are faced with problems that require them to consciously make decisions that affect their well-being. As more complex problems are offered, the students' ability to make decisions develops

further. There are a few details to consider before implementing a token economy.

Tokens must be designed and methods for payments determined. My tokens were small pieces of construction paper that I signed. Fortunately for me, counterfeiting was not a problem. Old business cards make excellent tokens; they are portable, durable, and difficult to counterfeit.

Different denominations could be created for added convenience. My students were paid daily by a paymaster, which was an assigned classroom job.

I sent notes home describing the token economy to parents. Visits with parents about the system during open house and at conferences helped gain their support. Over the years, my students' parents were very supportive of the program and often expressed appreciation for this hands-on method for teaching economics.

Opening the Market

Tell your students that they will each earn one token a day for the rest of the year. The tokens will be used to buy things, services, and privileges in the classroom. However, the things they will purchase (at first) are not the things students typically want to buy, but do represent things they want and ask for nearly every day. Remind students to take care of their tokens so they are not stolen. My students usually kept most of their tokens at home and brought small amounts to school to spend. Theft was not a problem for us, but perhaps that is because

preventive measures were taken initially.

Explain that you want them to become better decision-makers and to do so you feel it is necessary to give them more opportunities to make decisions. Therefore, from now on, trips to the drinking fountain or restroom will no longer require permission from the teacher. Rather, unscheduled drinks of water and restroom breaks will now cost one token. Emphasize that there will still be many times during the day when bathroom breaks and drinks will be free. However, they have to pay if they choose not to wait until one of the scheduled breaks. Make sure it is understood that if they have no tokens but need to use the rest room, they can charge their break by writing an IOU. Obviously, we do not want students to suffer because they do not have a token. Finally, explain that pencil sharpening is also on the list of things the students can buy. Set aside two times a day for free sharpening, but other times will cost one token.

On creating a token economy of this nature, a scarcity problem immediately arises. After all, if a student chooses to use the restroom and get a drink of water at the same time, the cost is two tokens. Take time to discuss this dilemma. What are the alternatives? Would you borrow from a friend, wait until the next scheduled break, or perhaps cheat? This contrived scarcity problem provides an opportunity to discuss decision-making, as it relates to scarcity and planning. The token economy did not disrupt

Photo from The Stock Market. Photo illustration: A. Ladson

my classroom. Rather, students learned to quietly leave the room for their drink or bathroom break rather than disrupt a lesson. Rarely did a student have to write an IOU.

Auctions

One can inform students that other uses for their tokens—like auctions and paying rent—may, in the future, be part of the token economy, but I did not. Three weeks into the token economy exercise, I announced that we were going to have an auction using tokens as money. The thrifty students were all smiles, but those who had been regularly spending their tokens were usually upset. My response to them was rather unsympathetic. I reminded them that no one forced them to use their tokens for drinks or restroom breaks; those were free choices they made. Also, in a real economy, new expenses (or opportunities for income) may arise without warning.

For the first auction, I brought in some gum (which was not allowed in my classroom), a couple of candy bars, and a cold can of soda pop. Do not be concerned with having enough items for everyone since we are teaching the concept of scarcity! It is imperative, however, to sell items that are desirable. For example, when my students bought gum from me, they were permitted to chew it in our classroom (to be discarded when leaving); this was a real treat. In the ensuing weeks, expect big changes in behavior. The economic incentive of weekly auctions will prompt students to save their tokens and take better advantage of breaks.

The following week, after a second auction, compare the prices paid from weeks one and two. Did the prices for a given item rise or fall? Chart the changes and discuss why they occurred. We would expect prices to rise throughout the year as the money supply (tokens) increases with each passing day, which would illustrate the

concept of inflation (see box).

After conducting a few teacher-directed auctions, allow each student to bring one item to auction off (a book, small toy, colored marker, or the like). Auctioning items gives students the opportunity to practice speaking in front of the class and allows them to earn extra income. The weekly auctions gave my students more decision-making practice, greatly influenced their spending habits, and provided common experiences for classroom discussions about economics.

Rent

Later in the year, announce that students are going to be required to rent their desks. Charge them three tokens per week: one each for their desk, chair, and land. Students without enough tokens to pay their rent will have their weekly wages garnished. After six or eight weeks, raise the rent. Remember, each time you do something to affect the token economy you are providing additional opportunities for students to hone their decision-making skills.

On implementing rent, one critical decision to address is a policy for students who are absent. Will they be expected to pay rent? Working together, the class could determine fair policies for these situations. Solving these problems is an opportunity for group decision-making, which is another important skill for students living in a democratic society.

Insurance and Utilities

Some teachers like to sell insurance to provide protection from the “disaster of the week.” On Monday, explain to the students that they may choose to purchase insurance to protect them from a “disaster” that will occur on Friday. Allow them to buy insurance either with or without a deductible, the latter being more expensive. Define a deductible payment for the students. On

Friday, one student's name and a “disaster card” are randomly drawn. If the student has insurance, the coverage will pay all or most of the bill. However, if the student does not have insurance, he or she will have to pay the entire amount. For example, a disaster card might read, “You slip on the ice and break your ankle. Medical bills amount to 20 tokens. The insurance deductible is 2 tokens.” The student without insurance has to pay the entire amount.

This activity allows the teacher to present economic concepts in a realistic manner. Most students know very little about insurance, so they may seek the advice from their parents. Allow them a few days to do this, as it is a good way to draw the parents into the token system and help students better understand the insurance industry.

Another twist in this exercise is to require students to pay for utilities, such as water, sewer, electric, and gas services. After all, students benefit from having these utilities provided to them, so should they not be aware that these things have a cost? It is easiest to have the students pay their rent and utilities on a weekly basis. Whoever is responsible for determining the rate (teacher or student utility commission) needs to make sure the amount charged is not burdensome for the majority of the class.

Conclusion

Toward the end of the year, students can be asked to reflect on the token economy in a discussion or in writing. Can they define terms like scarcity, savings, price, inflation, insurance, rent, and utilities, and give examples of each from their experiences in the token economy?

One could also ask questions that touch on personal preferences values, and opinions, but these should be clearly labeled “not for credit.” For example, one could ask, “How interesting was this class-



room exercise? Did you think that the token economy was a fair way to regulate student breaks during class? Did you think it was fair for students to be charged for utilities? Do you have any suggestions for improving this token economy? That is, if you were the teacher, would you set it up differently?"

Implementing a token economy shifts some of the decision-making for routine events from the teacher to the student. Students have first-hand experience with economic terms such as scarcity, price, and inflation. They get to make decisions for themselves and then live with the consequences. This simple, yet effective method may work well for teachers looking for a way to incorporate economics into their daily lessons-and to give themselves a little bit of a break. 📄

Middle Level Teaching Resources National Council on Economic Education

The EconomicsAmerica web site has many resources for K-12 teachers. For those who want to start a classroom business, *The Community Publishing Company* is just the thing. Although it is written for fourth graders, there are many applications in the book that work for older as well as younger

students. The teacher's manual is \$34.95 and student workbooks are \$12.95 each. NCEE also publishes the *National Content Standards in Economics* and related lesson plans. On the web, go to www.economicsamerica.org and click on "Publications." Or call (212) 730-7007.

National Council for the Social Studies

The November/December 1998 issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner* had the theme "Economics in Elementary Schools." Many of the ideas therein could also be applied to the middle level. See also the section "Production, Distribution, and Consumption" in Mary E. Haas and Margaret A. Laughlin, eds., *Meeting the Standards: Social Studies Readings for K-6 Educators*, pages 163 to 182. These publications cost about \$7.50 and \$19.50, respectively, and can be ordered by calling (800) 683-0812 or by visiting the website at www.socialstudies.org.

Indiana Department of Education

Play Dough Economics is a hands-on curriculum guide appropriate for elementary and middle school teachers. It includes common sense instructions, suggestions, and hand-on learning ideas. The cost is

\$8.00. This, and other neat resources, can be ordered at www3.mgmt.purdue.edu/icee/currimat.htm or by calling (812) 256-8000.

University of Missouri-St. Louis Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Education.

CEEE offers curriculum materials for various grades. *The Gingerbread Man* is a 15-day curriculum that is appropriate for young students (first or second grades), but the contents are truly outstanding and many of the ideas can be modified for higher grades. It costs \$45. This and other resources are available at www.umsl.edu/~econed/ or by calling (314) 516-5248.

University of Nebraska at Omaha

EcEdWeb links to a wealth of educational resources for economics teachers at all levels, including K-12. Go to ecedweb.uno-maha.edu.

About the Author

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CHARTING INFLATION

The concept of inflation can be illustrated, using data generated by the students, as follows:

Week 1. Before the auction, count all the money in the economy (that is, all the tokens in the possession of students, whether in hand or at home). Place this number on a chart or graph. Also record the winning bid for several teacher-supplied items (for example, a whistle might sell for 5 tokens).

Week 2. Again, before the auction, count all the money in the economy. Because of the weekly allowance, there should be more currency in hand. Again, record the winning bid for identical items (a whistle might now sell for 7 tokens). If these numbers have not increased, increase the weekly allowance of tokens—or allow students to earn more of them by performing tasks—so that the conditions that cause inflation are in place.

Week 3. Repeat the same procedure. If the money supply has increased and the prices of all of the items have risen (a whistle now selling for 9 tokens, for example), the rise in prices may be described as inflation. One caveat: This exercise will work only if no other major changes have occurred in the economy or spending of the students, so do not hold other auctions or start charging for rent or utilities during these three weeks.

The Real World: Community

Lindy G. Poling

Since I was a child, I have loved the study of history, but as a young teacher, I quickly discovered that not all of my students shared my passion. So I began experimenting with different methods to make the learning of history more inviting. One of the most successful methods has proven to be inviting guest speakers into the classroom: veterans, elected officials, business people, authors, and parents. Guest speakers can motivate students to think more critically about their lessons, challenge them with inquiring questions, and affirm the importance of citizenship and good character. Speakers from the community also provide stories and personal perspectives that make the curriculum more interesting and understandable.¹ In this article, I will explain how the Community-in-the-Classroom (CIC) program works and describe the positive effects of CIC on student learning and character development.

Experiential Learning

Real-world examples can make the study of science, math, and social studies more inviting. Experiential learning is gaining favor across a number of disciplines as an effective way to organize curriculum and instruct students. For example, a large teacher-training program was initiated in 1999 in the Durham, North Carolina Public Schools to help math teachers "bring numbers to life" using experiential instructional methods. "If we can tie the mathematical idea to their own experience, [students will be] more likely to remember it," commented Durham math teacher Steve Unruhe.² He

uses measures of cholesterol content of various fast-food meals as data when he teaches statistical concepts such as mean and median. The Scientist-in-the-Classroom Program, underway in several counties in North Carolina, promotes the use of scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and other professionals as guest speakers.³

Why not use experiential learning in social studies classes? For more than two decades, I have investigated the benefits of experiential learning in my American History classes. I have found that not only are experiential instructional methods more stimulating, but they also help students become better critical thinkers. Students are challenged to think critically about major historical themes through special readings, classroom discussions, enlightening videos, and team-based research projects. As they delve into their chosen topics, I stress the need to gather complete information and to let facts guide their thinking, not emotion or conjecture. The fruits of each student or group inquiry are shared by all in classroom presentations. Toward the end of a unit of study, community speakers will join each class to give their special insight into this historical period, event, or societal issue (See box).

Preparation

Before having someone speak in your class, do some preliminary screening. This is especially important when someone volunteers his or her services without having been trained or sponsored by an organization you know. Discuss the person's background as it relates to the subject area and whether he or she has previously addressed

a school audience. If the person is unknown to you, it is appropriate to ask for a resume and a personal reference.

Perhaps your school has a staff member, such as a career development coordinator, who can help you recruit effective guest speakers. Many civic organizations like the nonpartisan League of Women Voters have recommended guest speakers or could help lead you to them.⁴

Identify classroom objectives and inform a speaker about what students have been studying relating to this topic and how long the presentation should be, including at least fifteen minutes for questions and answers. Assure the speaker that students and teachers will have carefully prepared questions as well as spontaneous questions. If your school district is making special efforts to teach important character traits, let the speaker know which traits are being emphasized (for example, respect, responsibility, kindness, good judgment, courage, and perseverance).

If your principal is wary of having a guest speaker on a sensitive topic, explain how you have prepared the class for critical analysis and familiarized your speaker with the classroom policy. Point out that the speaker is only one element of the materials your class will consider. Mention your careful question-and-answer plans. Be ready to consider inviting a second speaker who can offer a different point of view. In some schools, an administrator will occasionally sit in on classes with guest speakers.⁵

Students can begin preparing for a guest speaker months in advance. Those who view history as useless may feel spurred to apply themselves when they

Speakers in the Classroom



Vietnam veteran Carl Bimbo discusses his experience of war.

know that a guest speaker will be featured near the end of the unit of study. If the students have some familiarity with the topic to be covered by the speaker, they will be prepared to ask intelligent questions—and to weigh the speaker's answers against other sources of information.

As the day draws near, give students an outline of what will happen, and carefully explain how you would like the question-and-answer session to proceed. Give students a background sheet on the invited speaker, which could include a brief biography and source of expertise. Students should prepare questions that can be reviewed by the teacher and, possibly, forwarded to the speaker ahead of time. Return these questions to the students just before the visitor arrives. (This allows students to feel more comfortable asking questions in class. Spontaneous questions can also be encouraged.)

Good Morning, Vietnam

Students who view history as boring will be disarmed by the experience of having a Vietnam veteran, like Carl Bimbo, share pictures with the class of his lost buddies.⁶ The Vietnam Era is a bad memory for many Americans, but for this veteran and many others, there are important experiences that should not be forgotten. Although there may

be disagreement over the "lessons to be learned" from that war, a study of the era can encourage students to reflect on their own convictions and to become aware of the political and moral dimensions of foreign policy.⁷ In essence, Mr. Bimbo helps students better comprehend the true costs of war.

Brigadier General George B. Price has traveled all the way from Columbia, Maryland, to spend a full day with my students. He shows that we can discuss a controversial topic like the Vietnam Era with respect and with dignity, and he emphasizes how vital it is for each of us to participate in



General George B. Price emphasizes the responsibilities of citizenship.

the democratic process. A veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars, General Price delivers the message that we live in a peaceful and prosperous land because of the ultimate sacrifice that so many American men and women made to preserve our liberty and freedom.

In his presentation, General Price brings us into his world, explaining why he was willing to risk his life, and the lives of his soldiers, for his country. He challenges all of us to rethink generalizations we may believe relating to Vietnam. My students, visiting parents, and teachers were particularly moved when he stopped for a moment,

looked at his audience, and said, "Your challenge as Americans is to find the profits of peace." One student wrote, "General Price inspired me to believe we can do anything we put our minds to by being an example of a person who grew up in a segregated Mississippi and rose to become one of the nation's outstanding Brigadier Generals through a lot of hard work and perseverance. He is a man whom the entire world could benefit to hear."

Law and Order

Few units of study are more difficult to teach, or more important for our students to understand, than the U.S. Constitution. Rather than relying totally on my own knowledge, I invite Assistant District Attorney Shelley Desvousges into my class to describe the Constitution and the Bill of Rights as they are applied today. By arrangement, Ms. Desvousges entertains questions that had been carefully and critically developed by each student. Exciting discussions evolve and, as a result, my students no longer view the Constitution as a document written for the 1790s, but rather one that is relevant for 2000 and beyond.



Assistant D.A. Shelley Desvousges with Millbrook High School students.

Aftermath

Having parents and community speakers come into the classroom is not only a powerful tool for bringing history to life, but it is also effective in affirming the importance of good character and good citizenship. Visits by guest speakers frequently lead to student involvement in a variety of civic-oriented and career development activities. After a recent visit by State Senator Eric Reeves, an eleventh grader wrote, "You have definitely made an impact on the way I feel about politics and law. I believe this may be my new direction as I enter college in the next couple of years." Another student commented, "You captured my interest when you discussed why you chose politics. I remember you stating it was something you always had an interest in, and you enjoyed getting involved through various projects in high school and college, such as the soup kitchen and being the Chaplain's assistant. You confirmed my thoughts that it was important to get involved."

After the guest speaker's presentation, I write a letter of thanks to the speaker. I assign students to write letters (which will be graded) that discuss what they learned from the experience. With students' permission, I will send copies of the letters to the classroom visitor. I also invite students to consider writing articles about the experience for submitting to the PTA newsletter, school paper, or local newspaper.

Community Enthusiasm

One of the major conclusions of the report *Knowledge for a Nation of Learners: A Framework for Education Research* is that "families and communities must be more involved in education. Public schools should become, in spirit and in practice, more public."⁸ Public education seems to always be in the news, and I have found a high level of community interest in supporting teachers. As Tom Oxholm, the chairper-

son of the Wake County Business-Education Leadership Council (BELC) commented, "We are just waiting for the teachers to tell us what to do!"

I have been pleasantly surprised that busy professionals will devote half a day or more talking with students. Community members and parents are more than willing to support teachers with their time and other resources. For my popular elective course "The Lessons of Vietnam," parents, community members, and the Millbrook High School PTA have furnished books, video collections, and even funding that made it possible for me to participate in an educational study tour of Vietnam.⁹

There is another benefit to getting the "community" in the classroom. By linking community members directly with students and teachers, they become more understanding of the problems educators face. They might see crowded classrooms and become more concerned about the real effects of limited school funds on the overall quality of educational resources and programs.

Conclusion

By bringing well-informed guest speakers from the community into the classroom, we can encourage our students to assess multiple points of view and to think more creatively and critically about their course work. The questions that they prepare in advance, as well as the classroom discussions and follow-up reflective writings, promote higher-order critical thinking skills. And the social studies content students learn no longer seems like just "schooling"; it is part of the real world. ■

Notes

1. Stephen A. Janger, "Civic Apathy: Who Cares?" *Education Week* (March 18, 1998). (www.edweek.org/ew/1998/27janger.h17); Linda Torp and Sara Sage, *Problems as Possibilities* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998), 81; Olivia

Barker, "Vietnam's Echoes on the Home Front" *USA Today* (20 December, 1999): L2.

2. Jonathan Goldstein, "Math? No Problem!," *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC: September 9, 1999): 1B.
3. Laura Myers, "Education Research Must Make Lifelong Learning Its Goal, Report Says," *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC: December 17, 1996): 11A.
4. Find the League of Women Voters on the web at www.lwv.org, or call the LWV chapter in your state.
5. This section is adapted from Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, *Echoes from the Wall: History, Learning and Leadership Through the Lens of the Vietnam War Era* (1997): 77, which is available at www.teachvietnam.org or send a request by fax to (202) 393-0029.
6. Several organizations that provide speakers in many communities on the topic of the Vietnam War and can be found on page 82 of *Echoes from the Wall*.
7. Don Bakker, *The Limits of Power: The United States in Vietnam* (Providence, RI: Brown University, 1993), ii.
8. U.S. Department of Education, *Knowledge for a Nation of Learners: A Framework for Education Research* (Washington, DC: USDOE, 1996).
9. I would like to thank the Wake Education Partnership for providing financial resources to develop the Best Practices guide; the Millbrook High School PTA for its sponsorship of my travel-study program in Vietnam, "The Bridge Back;" and Wake County School Superintendent Dr. Jim Surratt, Associate Superintendent Dr. Bill McNeal, and my husband, Dr. Barclay Poling, for their support of the Community-in-the-Classroom program.

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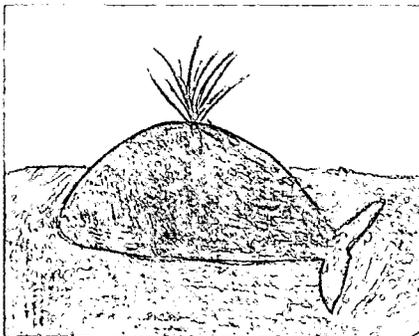
"Best Practices in a Community-in-the-Classroom (CIC) Social Studies Program Guide," provides details on the CIC methodology and gives practical suggestions for developing a network of community guest speakers. The guide is available free on the web at www.wcpss.net/community_in_the_classroom/ or in book form (\$5.00 black and white, \$34 with color) by writing to Lindy Poling, 2404 Weybridge Drive, Raleigh, NC 27615.

Whales in Depth: An Interdisciplinary Unit of Study

Cynthia Szymanski Sunal, Gail Pritchard, and Dennis W. Sunal

Mitsubishi Corporation and the Mexican government announced today they are scrapping plans to build a controversial salt plant on the pristine shores of a gray-whale breeding ground, handing a stunning victory to environmentalists who waged a five-year international battle to kill the project. —The Washington Post, March 3, 2000¹

For centuries, whales have been hunted for their oil, baleen, meat, and bones. Although it presents a large target, a whale is never easy to kill. Before the age of “factory fishing ships,” whales damaged and destroyed boats as they fled or tried to dislodge harpoons. Thus, in every human society that has hunted whales, the danger and the riches of the hunt have given rise to colorful traditions and legends. In the latter part of the 1900s, however, many people came to appreciate whales as social mammals with complex behaviors that include elaborate vocal communication and global navigation. Today, whale watching is preferred by many people to the whale hunt.



Toothed whales have one blowhole. Art by Courtney Lee, fifth grade, Englewood Elementary School, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Middle school students find whales intriguing because of their size and intelligent behaviors. Teachers can use the theme of whales to draw students into social studies. Topics include the history of whaling in America, the importance of the hunt in different cultures and economies, and international efforts to conserve whales and marine ecosystems. Each of these topics addresses a specific social studies standard.²

The theme of whales can also be used to integrate various disciplines. In science class, students can study the whale's life cycle, social behavior, and evolution from land-dwelling mammals. In math class, students can use ratios to compare the relative sizes of different species, investigate the means by which a whale's weight is measured, and calculate how much food whales eat. In music class, students can listen to recordings of *whalesong*, the sounds made by whales, describe the moods that it evokes, and listen to musical compositions that it has inspired. In language arts and reading, students can read some of the many trade books about whales, write brief reports, and communicate with students in other nations at websites set up for this purpose. In art class, students can answer the question “What would you like to show someone about whales now that you have studied them?” through various artistic forms. These might include making murals, collages, imitation scrimshaw, posters, illustrations (for their reports), or even bumper stickers.

Basic Biology

About 55 million years ago, the wolf-like, land-dwelling ancestors of whales began to

search and hunt for food in water.³ Over thousands of generations, the cetacean lineage adapted to a watery environment and lost the ability to move and live on land. Today, scientists divide these air-breathing mammals into two groups. Baleen whales have no teeth and two blowholes. They strain their food from the water through baleen, whale-bone filters that are like fringed brushes that descend from the upper jaws. Baleen whales eat plankton, krill (a small shrimp-like animal), and small fish. Toothed whales, which have only one blowhole, eat mostly fish and squid. Baleen whales include the right, gray, blue, humpback, and minke. Toothed whales include the killer (or orca), pilot, and sperm whales. In addition, dolphins are small, toothed whales.

A thick layer of blubber (fat) under a whale's skin insulates whales in cold water and provides stored energy. Whales have soft, porous bones that help store food reserves as oil. The tail flukes propel and steer, while pectoral fins enable whales to twist and turn. The frontal lobes of the brain (associated with intelligence) are large. The head is about a third of the entire body mass.

Whales use sound for finding food (echo location), communicating with other whales, and navigating. In 1967, it was discovered that humpback whales sing and repeat long phrases, whalesong, to each other. “Songs contain from two to nine themes and are strung together without pauses, so that a long singing session is an exuberant, uninterrupted river of sound that can flow on for twenty-four hours or longer.”⁴

The social lives of some species of whale are very complex. Scientists are using words like “culture,” “dialect,” and “cere-

On the cover: Along the Antarctic coast, baleen whales hunt for krill.
Art by Lindsey Knowles, eighth grade, Hillcrest Middle School, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.



William W. Rossiter, Cetacean Society International

This gray whale's open mouth is not a threat. She's playing with whale watchers. The yellowish baleen sifts food from the water. Laguna San Ignacio, Baja California Sur, Mexico.

mony" to describe the rich social and cognitive behaviors of wild orcas, for example. Groups of whales, called *pods*, often contain many whales that are related to each other (that is, they make up a family group). Members of a humpback pod may communicate with each other across hundreds of miles, although it is not yet known what they are saying.

Whales reproduce rather slowly (unlike fish, which often lay hundreds of eggs). A mature female blue whale, for example, might give birth to one calf every



William W. Rossiter, Cetacean Society International

This female orca whale is breaching, a behavior that is little understood. Young, energetic whales are most likely to breach. Puget Sound (Salish Sea), Washington State.

two or three years following a twelve-month gestation. The rate of survival of whale calves in their first year of life has been estimated to be only 40 to 50%. Thus, if a species of whale is brought to the brink of extinction, it can be hard to recover.

Whaling Economies

Whaling was a major, profitable industry in the 1800s. In South Australia, for example, the exportation of whale products established a strong economic base. Whale oil was used for cooking oil, margarine, soap, candles, fuel, and hundreds of other uses. Before plastic was invented, baleen was used in corsets, umbrellas, buggy whips, and hair brushes. Ground up whale bones were used as fertilizer and in making bone china.⁵ By the late 1800s, over-hunting had greatly reduced whale populations. As many as eight ships could be seen chasing one whale. Billowing dresses and corsets were going out of fashion, so the demand for whale bones and baleen fell. By 1900, the scarcity of whales had forced the industry into decline, but some commercial whaling continued. South Australia, for example, did not close its last whaling station until 1978.

In Japan, people ate whale meat because it was relatively cheap. During

World War II, the seas around Japan were heavily fished, and chickens and beef cattle were scarce. Whale meat became a common dish, and one whale provided lots of food rather inexpensively. The generation that grew up right after the war remembers whale meat as the food of its childhood and adolescence.⁶

Regulation of Whaling

Whales live in or travel through international waters. By the 1940s, it became clear that, if whales were to be conserved as a global resource, the whaling nations would have to get together to regulate whaling. In 1946, the International Whaling Commission first placed quotas that limited how many of the large whales could be killed by ships from each of the whaling nations.⁷ In 1986, the commission placed a "global moratorium" on whaling, but there was a "loophole" in the agreement—a clause allowed Japan and Norway to kill some whales for "research purposes." These nations have argued that limited whaling could continue without driving any species of whale to extinction. Other nations, such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom, have stated that a total, permanent moratorium should be declared, but the debate goes on.

In 1994, southern oceans were declared a sanctuary for whales by the International Whaling Commission. Japan, however, has five ships in the southern ocean that caught 3,767 whales between 1994 and 1998 for purported research purposes. The whale meat thus obtained may be resold on the commercial market. A new vessel, the *Yuskin Maru*, was described by its builder as a symbol of the restarting of commercial whaling.⁸ In 1999, Norwegian whalers were given a quota of 753 minke whales by their government, an increase from the 1998 quota of 671. Also, members of the Makah tribe

in the state of Washington have been attempting to revive their tradition of whaling (called "aboriginal subsistence whaling" by the commission). They have a quota of four gray whales a year over a five-year period.⁹

Conserving Marine Mammals

Today, pollution, not hunting, is probably the number one threat to whale survival. Agricultural and industrial chemicals are concentrated in their body fat. In 1982, biologists found that belugas in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence had ingested so many chemicals that their dead bodies had to be treated as toxic waste.¹⁰ Exploration and drilling for petroleum can contaminate coastal waters. Other problems include overfishing, which can wreck entire ecosystems, depriving whale populations of food. Whales eat plastic (bags, pellets, cups, and other junk) thinking it is jellyfish or squid, which can be fatal. They also become entangled in fishing nets, ropes, and other equipment. There is even some evidence that low-frequency sounds used for communication between military submarines might be harming whales.¹¹

The last decade saw several victories for whale conservation, including the 1992 United Nation's ban on drift nets in the open ocean.¹² These nets were miles-long, nearly invisible curtains that scooped up everything larger than the nets' woven holes, including marine mammals. The passage of the U.S. The International Dolphin Conservation Program Act in 1997 was a partial victory. This law, while imperfect, has greatly reduced the number of dolphins killed in purse seine nets in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.¹³ These nets are used to encircle dolphins in order to catch tuna that sometimes swim in groups below dolphin pods. Dolphins can drown in the nets, rather than escaping, if the equipment is not handled properly. The tuna vessels of cooperating

countries post observers on vessels who certify that dolphins have not been killed or severely injured during the hunt. Finally, the U.S. Clean Water Act of 1977 has also gone a long way in reducing pollution in coastal areas, where many species of whale feed and live.

Educational Resources

There are many resources available (see pages M14-M15) for teachers who wish to put together a unit of study (or an integrated curriculum) with whales as the theme. We have taught lessons on this theme to elementary and middle school students and have found that it grabs their attention. Resources that are made available in the classroom and school library then entice students to investigate more carefully the many social studies topics related to marine mammals.

Many extension activities and follow-up lessons are possible. Students can investigate how their community disposes of pollutants such as plastic bags. They can contact their state extension service to obtain information on agricultural and industrial pollutants in local bodies of water including streams and lakes. Such research should help students begin to understand the complex nature of issues related to marine pollution and the challenges of eliminating or reducing pollutants.

Students can investigate the cultural and economic roots of whaling in a given society and the current economics of whaling, as well as the recent history of conservation policy. Quota enforcement and poaching are interesting topics. Finally, the growing market for all types of seafood and the efficiency of modern fishing techniques threaten many marine species.

The theme of whales raises many questions, challenging students to explore a wide range of science, technology, and policy issues. Just knowing about the biology of



William W. Rossiter, CSI

This gray whale is "spy hopping," bringing her eye to the surface for a good look at the small boat and even smaller people. Laguna San Ignacio, Baja California Sur, Mexico.

whales will not be enough to preserve the various species—an interdisciplinary approach is required. For example, a five-year struggle between environmentalists, the Mexican government, and Mitsubishi Corporation finally ended with an agreement to create a sanctuary for gray whales off the coast of Mexico (see the opening quote). Brokering such an international agreement calls for a certain kind of savvy, the kind that can only be achieved by serious students of social studies. 🌐

Notes

1. John W. Anderson, "Environmentalists Persuade Mexico to Save the Whales," *Washington Post* (March 3, 2000): A30; See also the websites www.savebajawhales.com/ and www.nrdc.org/nrdc/.
2. These standards incorporate many opportunities for the study of whales, the culture of whaling, the whaling industry, and international attempts at conservation. The theme of whales can address these strands: I, Culture; VI, Power, Authority, and Governance; VII, Production, Distribution, and Consumption; and VIII, Science, Technology, and Society. National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994).
3. *Know Your Whales* at www.webmedia.com.au/whales/whales2.html.
4. Roger Payne, *Among Whales*. New York: Scribner, 1995, 114.
5. *Whale Information Network* at www.webmedia.com.au/whales/whales3.html. Sponsored by the South Australian Whale Centre.
6. Interview with Alisa Stamper, Buyer, Honda Trading Seafood Department (Torrance, California, September 1999).
7. The International Whaling Commission home page is at ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/iwcoffice/. Current information on the whaling moratorium and related issues is available from the Great Whales Foundation,

Box 6847, Malibu, CA 90264. (800) 421-WAVE.
Website: elfi.com/gwfNews6.html.

8. *The Watery World of Whales: Whales on the Net* at whales.magna.com.au/index.html.
9. *Ibid.*; Also see Bruce E. Larson, "The Makah: Exploring Public Issues During a Structured Classroom Discussion," *Social Studies & the Young Learner* 10, no. 1 9 September/October 1997): 10-13.
10. Richard C. Connor and Dawn M. Peterson, *The Lives of Whales and Dolphins* (New York:

Henry Holt, 1994), 215.

11. Rick Weiss, "Whales Become Stranded after U.S. Naval Exercise" *Washington Post* (March 22, 2000): A12.
12. The United Nations ban on drift nets is described on the web at www.un.org/Depts/los/los_mr1.htm#LSPDNF
13. Search on "purse seine nets" at the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society website [www.wdcs.org/customers/wdcs2/news/feed.nsf/\\$\\$Search?OpenForm](http://www.wdcs.org/customers/wdcs2/news/feed.nsf/$$Search?OpenForm)

About the Authors

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Resources for Teachers and Students

There are many resources available to help students explore the natural history of whales and related social and political issues. Three media that we have used successfully with elementary and middle school students are trade books, audiobooks and music tapes, and websites.

Books

Archambault, John. *The Birth of a Whale*. Silver Burdett, 1996.

Illustrated by Janet Skiles. A poem with watercolor pictures.

Callenbach, Earnest. *Humphrey: The Wayward Whale*. New York: Heydey Books, 1986. Illustrated by Christine Leefeldt.

Humphrey, a humpback whale, swam into San Francisco Bay and continued inland for 70 miles. He was led back to the sea by the hard work of concerned people. Based on an actual event.

Connor, Richard C. and Dawn M. Peterson, *The Lives of Whales and Dolphins*. New York: Henry Holt, 1994. Teachers could use this as a reference book. It is from the American Museum of Natural History.

D'Vincent, Cynthia. *The Whale Family Book (The Animal Family Series)*. New York: North South Books, 1998. Traces the wanderings of humpback whales from their migration from calving grounds near the Hawaiian Islands to summer feeding grounds in the northern Pacific Ocean.

Esbensen, Barbara J. *Baby Whales Drink Milk*. New York: Harper Collins Children's Books, 1994. Illustrated by Lambert Davis. The lives of young humpback whales are described and compared with those of other mammals.

Geistdoerfer, Patrick. *Undersea Giants*. New York: Young Discovery Library, 1989. Illustrated by Joele Boucher. Whales and other marine mammals are introduced.

Gourley, Catherine. *Hunting Neptune's Giants: True Stories of American Whaling*. Boston, MA: Millbrook, 1995. Based on the collection of the Mystic Seaport Museum. Grades 7-8.

Hanze, Frissen. *Yann and the Whale*. New York: Kane Miller Book

Publishing, 1997. A whale calf rescues a young boy out on a whaling hunt. The boy decides not to hunt and kill the calf's mother.

Iwago, Mitsuaki. *Mitsuaki Iwago's Whales*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1994. Photographs of humpback whales in southeastern Alaska, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Bonin Islands. There is no text with the pictures.

Matero, Robert. *Birth of a Humpback Whale*. New York: Atheneum, 1996. A whale is born near the Hawaiian Islands. Grades 7-8.

McGovern, Ann. *Little Whale*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1979. Illustrated by John Hamburger. The life story of this whale includes being hunted.

Murphy, Jim. *Gone a Whaling: The Lure of the Sea and the Hunt for the Great Whale*. New York: Clarion Books, 1998. Journal entries and letters describe whaling and whalers. Grades 7-8.

Payne, Roger. *Among Whales*. New York: Scribner, 1995. Contains a fine index for fact-finding and detailed background for teachers. Grades 9-12.

Ryder, Joanne and Michael Rothman. *Winter Whale (Just for a Day Book)*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company Library, 1991. A child metamorphoses into a whale and swims about.

Weller, Francis W. *I Wonder If I'll See a Whale*. New York: Putnam & Grosset, 1991. Illustrated by Ted Lewin. A whale watching experience as told by a young girl.

Audiobooks and Music Tapes

Martin, Rafe. *Ghostly Tales of Japan*, includes "Kogi: A Story for the Whales." New York: Yellow Moon Press, 1993.

Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick* (abridged), read by Charleton Heston, Keir Dullea, and George Rose. New York: Caedmon Audio Cassette, 1998.

Siegel, Robert. *Whalesong*, read by Don West. New York: Listening Library, 1998. Read in the "voice" of a male humpback whale born in the Pacific Ocean near the Hawaiian Islands. He describes living in the upper layers of the sea, migrating across oceans, and encountering whalers.

Winter, Paul. *Whales Alive*. with Paul Halley. BMG/Living Music, 1998. "Duets" of whalesong with saxophone or organ. Leonard Nimoy reads poetry about whales. Also by Paul Winter, *Songs of the Humpback Whale*.

Websites

Some websites are composed specifically for children, while others are most appropriate for teachers and specialists. Many express concern about attempts to revive large-scale commercial whaling. The selection of sites below gives some indication of the type and range of resources available for investigating the theme of whales. There are many more excellent sites. Have fun searching and surfing.

American Cetacean Society at www.acsonline.org

Founded in 1967, ACS claims to be the oldest whale conservation group in the world. Check out the free fact sheets and the glossary and anatomy web pages.

Cetacean Society International at elfnet1a.elfi.com/csigallery.html. CSI has a memorable photo gallery of over twenty species of whales with educational captions. CSI provided the photos in this article.

SeaWorld/Busch Gardens Animal Resources at www.seaworld.org/infobook.html. See the "Fast Facts," "Just for Fun" activities, games, songs, teacher resources, and links to pages about specific whale species and other sea dwellers.

South Australian Whale Center at www.webmedia.com.au/whales/whales2.html. This website has fact sheets as well as information on all known whale species on a downloadable hypercard stack. An in-progress encyclopedia (that is useable now) will contain information on 77 species, including many photographs.

SWIM at www.ssec.org/idis/cohasset/TblCnt.htm

A team of seventh grade teachers at Cohasset Middle High School, Cohasset, Massachusetts, created this website for their interdisciplinary unit on whaling. It is highly informative and

useful. SWIM stands for Studying Whales in Middle School.

Virtual Whales at www.cs.sfu.ca/research/projects/Whales

Enjoy three-dimensional animation and sound describing the feeding of humpback whales, as well as many graphics, links to whalesong samples, and movies of whales. Sponsored by Simon Fraser University.

Whalenet at whale.wheelock.edu/. Whalenet, an excellent interactive educational website on whales and marine research, is sponsored by Wheelock College in Boston, with support from the National Science Foundation. View some of the resources for "Students" before going to the "Teachers" page, which has research help and other resources, including lesson plans.

Whales in Danger at whales.magna.com.au/home.html

This organization's website is a bit cluttered, but it presents news about whales around the world and the latest on who is still hunting (or trying to hunt) whales. Links include the "Watery World of Whales," "Whale Art," and a "Kid's Corner."

Whales at www.teleport.com/~dleahy/themes/whales.htm

Virtual tours for grades 2 and above including movies, whalesong, and a slide show make this a flashy website. Interdisciplinary, free lesson plans and work sheets about whales and the ocean for all grade levels. Sponsored by Connecting Students.

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society at www.wdcs.org/wdcs2/conserves/edu.html. A free, detailed cross-curricula education package "Journey Under the Sea: Getting to Know Orcas and Other Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises" is available. The archival "News Search" is a fine source of reports on related current events.

Whales: The Tales of the Whales at www.williston.k12.vt.us/houses/lighth/whales.htm. This is an example of a website built and maintained by students.

Zoomwhales at www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/whales/. An online hypertext book allows the reader to explore whales through a variety of options, with "Info Sheets" and "Printouts" available. The site is sponsored by Disney.

Answers to *The Literary Whale* (on the back cover)

I. **Keiko** (aka Willy), in the movie *Free Willy*

II. **Baby Beluga**, in the song of the same name

III. **Behemoth** (aka Leviathan), in the *Book of Jonah*

IV. **Vishnu**, in the *Vedas*

V. **Boris**, in the picture book *Amos & Boris*

VI. **Moby Dick**, in the book of the same name

The Literary Whale

by Steven S. Lapham

Can you guess, from the hints provided, the names of these famous (or infamous) whales and the books, songs, or motion pictures in which they were immortalized?

I. His "jailers" wish to set him free.

As we go to press, this orca whale (who starred in a movie about returning a whale to the wild) is in a watery pen off the shore of the remote Westman Islands of Iceland. His caretakers were hoping that, by now, he might have regained the skills needed to live in the wild (and thus find his long-lost mother), but such reacclimatization may happen only in the movies. The estimated cost so far of this Hollywood star's Icelandic retirement? A cool \$2 million. For more information, surf to whales.magna.com.au/index.html.

II. Raffi sings her to sleep.

These small whales are known as "sea canaries" because their vocalizations include musical chirps, twitters, and trills. Already a children's music star, Raffi had another hit in 1980 when he sang "Way down yonder where the dolphins play/Where they dive and splash all day/The waves roll in and the waves roll out/See the water squirting out of your spout" in the album named after this whale.

III. He provided a free ride.

Things were looking pretty dark for a prophet, but he was patient and emerged unscathed after being trapped inside this beast for three days, according to a short book in the *Old Testament*.

Modern illustrators depict this water-loving mammal as a whale, but the author may have been referring to a hippopotamus.

IV. He transmogrified.

When it was time to recreate the world once again, this clever Hindu deity changed himself into a whale and retrieved the sacred scriptures from the bottom of the ocean.

V. He was glad he'd saved a mouse.

Author and illustrator William Steig tells of a whale who rescues a mouse, Amos, who was lost at sea. Years later, when this whale is beached by a storm, Amos returns the favor with the help of a couple of cooperative elephants.

VI. He ate the captain's leg.

Captain Ahab (played by Patrick Stewart in a recent video) is obsessed with revenge after a painful encounter with this albino sperm whale. Parts of this tome read like a technical manual of whaling in the 1800s, but it is also poetic. In the chapter "The Honor and Glory of Whaling," Herman Melville writes, "There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method." Could this statement apply to teaching social studies as well?

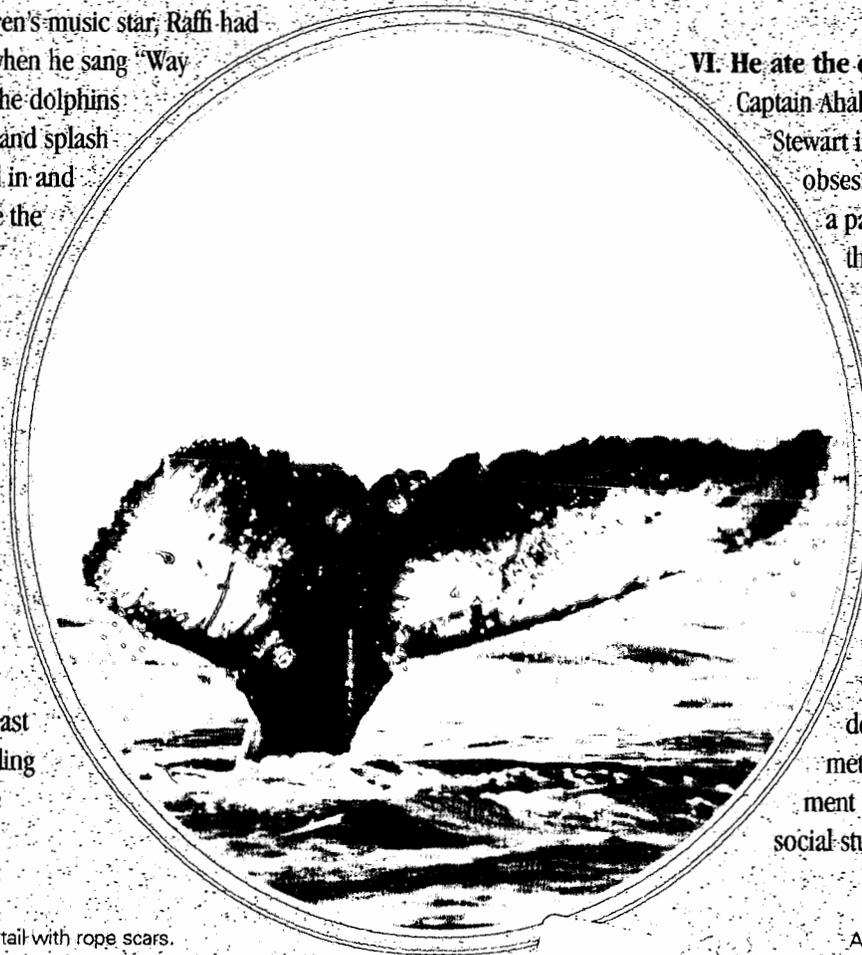


Photo: Humpback whale tail with rope scars. North of Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

William W. Rossifer, Cetacean Society International. Photo illustration: A. Ladson.

Answers are on page M15.



■ ● ■

Middle Level Learning

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4
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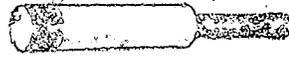
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LOOKOUT POINT



The Character of Their Content

Tedd Levy

"The schools ain't what they used to be and never was."—Will Rogers

Educational news accounts have been filled with reports about inadequate textbooks. Much of this criticism is prompted by yet another report from the American Textbook Council on the sad quality of history textbooks.

Social studies textbooks are not alone. In a recent review of widely used science textbooks for middle school, the American Association for the Advancement of Science could not find one that was satisfactory. They found that the textbooks cover too many topics and don't develop any of them well. The ten top-selling high school biology textbooks "do little to help students understand scientific advances that are changing people's lives."

Controversy over the content of textbooks has long plagued public education in general and history and social studies in particular. As early as 1830, Samuel Read Hall, an educational innovator from New England, wrote "many of the school-books in common use in the country, have been, and still are, entirely unfit for use. Many of the books are not adapted to the capacity of children, or do not present a satisfactory view of the subjects on which they treat."

Nineteenth-century textbooks were clear on civic virtues. They promoted love of country, love of God, duty to parents, thrift, honesty, and hard work. These characteristics were designed to encourage youngsters to support the accumulation of property, the certainty of progress, and the perfection of the United States. Schoolbooks were meant to train the child's character. One suspects that many of today's critics would welcome a return of these strong narratives, simpler days, and "triumphalism" of America's story. However attractive as these days seem, we live in more sophisticated and complicated times—one only needs to visit a classroom to see the challenge. It will no longer do to have textbooks only reflect the legends of a romanticized and fantasized monocultural past.

Since 1988, the American Textbook Council has offered a consistent critique of what it views as distasteful, distorted, or harmful history textbooks. Its latest report, "History Textbooks at the New Century," again focuses on what is viewed as an overemphasis on multiculturalism: "Multiculturalism gives every indication of seeking to alter the basic way in which children see the past," the report states. "The new history textbooks are helping to erase—if not national memory—then juvenile appreciation of the nation's achievements. Many of them are assaulting Western Civilization's integrity, record, and character. They are also propagating a strange new master narrative involving feminism and civil rights."

The main casualty of multiculturalism, the report concludes is the "triumphalism" of the old American history—establishment of responsible government, development of a national economy, extension of democracy to blacks and women, influence in world affairs, a rising standard of living for most if not all." Gilbert T. Sewall, director of ATC, complains that content is increasingly deformed by identity politics and group pieties. In the May 31 issue of *Education Week*, he wrote that "publishers should produce cheaper books that are more text-centered, simpler in design, and more honest in content" and recommends that educators consider purchasing older textbooks that have "more detailed, trustworthy narratives than new social studies offerings." A publisher's representative stated that publishers are responding to what educators say they need. Sewall, he said, is "railing against the fact that texts have more color and graphics, a lot more multiculturalism; balanced representation of racial and ethnic groups."

Controversy over content will continue. It should include the knowledgeable but often absent voice of teachers. The political use of history, however, has a long and less than honorable history. Increasingly, national politicians are joining this discussion and seeking to influence or control the content of the social studies curriculum.

The most infamous case in recent times involved one of the most thoughtfully developed social studies programs—*Man: A Course of*

Study. Attacked by then-Congressman John Conlan (R-AZ), it marked the end of public support for the "new social studies" and has all but disappeared from nation's schools.

Conservative education officials from the Reagan era (William Bennett, Lynne Cheney, Chester Finn, and Diane Ravitch) with easy access to financial support and the national media have spoken forcefully, continually, and very critically about public education and particularly the content of U.S. history. Prompted by such criticism, the U. S. Senate condemned the original History Standards for not giving enough attention to the great figures of the past and too much to minorities. This involvement by some Congressmen continues, as demonstrated this past summer by Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) who introduced a resolution decrying the sad state of knowledge of history among college students and calling for required history courses in the nation's elite universities.

Interestingly, Lieberman is a board member of the organization (headed by Lynne Cheney) that sponsored the survey that led to the resolution.

Notwithstanding their five-pound and fifty-dollar characteristics, the better U.S. history textbooks are designed for learning about our country's past—the people, ideas, and events that have shaped the nation. It is crucial for citizens of a democracy to know this history—the best and the worst of it—because in a society as diverse as the United States, history provides the values that unify it. Our social cohesion is based not on a common ethnic heritage or religion, but on a vision of opportunity, freedom, equality, and justice. When Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963, he dreamed of a day when his children would be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. Too often, this is the content that has been missing from our textbooks. Publishers won't reduce the greatness of America's story by including the stories of more of those who made it great. Critics need less fear of the present, more hope for the future.

About the Author

Tedd Levy, a middle school teacher for many years and now an educational consultant, was president of the National Council for the Social Studies in 1998-99.

Foreword

In 1997, the people of Ireland and of Irish descent around the world observed the 150th anniversary of the worst year (1847) of the Great Irish Famine, a catastrophe precipitated by a fungus that first destroyed the potato harvest of 1845 and led to mass starvation and emigration through 1849. To commemorate that anniversary, the New York State Legislature voted that study of the famine in Ireland be included in the state's human rights curriculum along with the study of slavery in the Americas and the European Holocaust. A team of scholars centered at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, are composing a set of interdisciplinary lessons, units of study, and projects on the Great Irish Famine for grades 4 through 12.¹ The lessons emphasize the complexity of history by presenting multiple perspectives on the causes of the famine and the many related events that followed.² *Middle Level Learning* features some of these materials (for grades 5-8) in this issue. Teachers can organize these lessons and activities to suit their needs. For example, some teachers begin with a description of notable Irish Americans,



while others start with a discussion of the Columbian exchange and the lowly potato as an agent of historic change.

The lessons in this issue are based on material prepared for the New York State Great Irish Famine curriculum guide. The principal authors and editors are Maureen Murphy and Alan Singer of Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York. Contributing authors and editors include Maureen McCann Miletta of Hofstra University and Judith Y. Singer of Long Island University in Brooklyn, New York.

The Great Irish Famine provides teachers with a case history for exploring areas of social studies such as history, culture, economics, public policy, civics, ethics, religion, and demographics. The famine caused a peak in Irish immigration to America that changed the course of our history. Perhaps the most compelling reason to study the Great Irish Famine is that hunger and homelessness are still with us. The lessons of the Great Irish Famine have a claim on our fundamental humanity; they remind us that we have an opportunity to help our neighbors when similar disasters strike.

Notes

1. For more information about the Great Irish Famine Curriculum Project, contact Maureen Murphy by e-mail at catmom@hofstra.edu, visit the website www.geocities.com/hsse_geo, or call (516) 463-6775.
2. Parts of these lessons were field tested in New York state by students in Cecelia Goodman's fifth grade class at PS 197 in Brooklyn; Rachel Gaglione's middle school classes at IS 119 in Queens; Jennie Chacko's, Adeola Tella's, and Michael Maiglow's middle school classes at IS 292 in Brooklyn; Cheryl Smith's middle school classes in Hicksville; and Lynda Costello's and Stephanie Hunte's middle school classes in Uniondale. In follow-up discussion sessions, students explained that they were most interested in changes in Ireland during the last 200 years, the causes of famine, whether famine is still a threat today, and how some people managed to survive under horrible circumstances. Jewella Lynch, a teacher in the Roosevelt School District; Jennifer Debler, a teacher in the Baldwin School District; and James Hughes, an assistant teacher in the Uniondale, New York, School District also reviewed the material.



On the Cover:

Irish Famine immigrants arrive in Boston.
Boston Irish Famine Memorial Project

Top photo: Alan Singer. Bottom: Boston Irish Famine Memorial Project. Photo illustration: A. Ladson



Top: Irish Famine Memorial on Dublin's dock
Above: Boston Irish Famine Memorial Project

A Brief History of the Potato in Ireland

A New Food

The potato probably arrived in Ireland by accident.¹ In 1588, a great fleet of ships, sent out by Spain to conquer England, was defeated by the British navy. Some of the retreating Spanish Armada tried to get home by sailing around the northern tip of Scotland, but were damaged by storms. Some of these ships were wrecked along the Irish coast. The crews were killed or captured by the Irish, who took what they found on board. This booty probably included potatoes, which Spanish explorers had brought back from the New World. Once their initial suspicions (such as "Is this plant poisonous?") were overcome, Irish farmers planted this new crop along the Irish coast, where it grew very well. Soon the Irish of all ranks were eating potatoes, and it became the preferred food of the common man.

The potato arrived in an hour of need in Irish history. In the twelfth century, Pope Adrian IV, the only English pope, gave control of Ireland to King Henry II of England. In the sixteenth century Irish revolts against English rule were brutally crushed by the armies of Queen Elizabeth I. In this long

war, casualties were high and the homes of wealthy and poor alike were destroyed. The countryside, with its grain crops and cattle, was ruined. Just as that terrible war ended, the potato reached the hands of hungry Irish peasants.

The potato has many advantages as a food crop. First, it is a high-yield crop: potatoes produce more pounds of food per acre than any other crop. A single acre of land produced enough potatoes to supply an Irish family with ten pounds of potatoes a day for a whole year (enough to keep six people pretty well fed).

Second, potatoes are easy to plant and easier to harvest than a grain crop. To plant a yard with potatoes, all a poor farmer needs are a spade and a few potatoes from last year's crop: he cuts the potatoes into chunks, with a bud (or "eye") on each chunk, and places them in the soil. In about four months, if the weather is moderate, each eye will grow into a potato plant, with a big cluster of potatoes hanging on the roots. Grains have to be cut and threshed. Potato trenches can be dug on a hillside, where no plow could go. Drain some land at the edge of a bog, or clear some rocky soil, and potatoes can even be planted there.

Third, potatoes are easy to prepare for eating. Grains, like wheat or corn, usually have to be hulled and milled before they can be digested by humans. One can simply boil potatoes in an iron pot over an open fireplace. Potatoes can be used as animal feed: cows, pigs, and cattle can eat small or damaged produce. Also, the potato happens

to be a very nutritious food. It is mostly water and carbohydrates (children need carbohydrates like starch and sugar for energy and for their growing bodies), but it also provides important vitamins and minerals. For example, one potato contains 50% of the U.S. recommended daily allowance of vitamin C.

On the other hand, the potato as a crop has a few disadvantages. First, the advantages themselves created a problem, because peasants came to rely on the potato exclusively. If there was a failure of the potato crop, there was no other food to fall back on. For example, flood or late frost had destroyed potato crops, leading to smaller famines in Ireland before 1846. To be fair, it should be said that reliance on a single crop for survival was not unique to the Irish. In other cultures and climates, people have grown and depended on one crop for survival; for example Russians grew mostly wheat, Asian peoples grew rice, and several South American cultures depended on maize.

Second, before the invention of refrigerators, there was no good way to store potatoes for periods of more than a few months (unlike grain, which can be stored in dry rooms or silos for years). Peasants would dig a pit, fill it with potatoes, and cover them with moss or leaves as protection from frost and rain, but the potatoes were still vulnerable to mold. This method kept potatoes for only one season, and thus there was no way to bank food for use in hard times.

Finally, the fact that potatoes gave such



"Here and There; or Emigration a Remedy," 1848

a high yield tempted landlords to subdivide plots again and again to bring in more rent. As a result, Irish families were forced to survive on less and less land. Economically, it was a formula that could only bring disaster in the long run.

During the 1700s the population of Ireland grew rapidly, largely as a result of more food being available thanks to the potato, which replaced oats as the main subsistence crop. From 1701 to 1801 (at which point England forced a union of Ireland with Great Britain), the population of Ireland doubled, reaching nearly 5,000,000.

Poverty Still

Although the potato diet allowed population growth, the vast majority of people remained very poor. After being defeated by the British, the Irish became a nation of tenants on their own lands. The rent for a small plot of land for a potato patch, even a small patch on swampy bog, was very high. Most people had no money, so part of their harvest always went to the landlord. People also had to give a share of their potatoes to the Anglican (Protestant) Church of England, a tithe (tax) they bitterly resented because most of the Irish were Roman Catholics.

The potato needs little in the way of cultivation, so preparing the ground, sowing, and harvesting the crop takes only three months. Thus, for much of the year, peasants had little to do, no way to earn money, and no food reserve if stored potatoes ran out before the next harvest. With no public education available, often kicked off the land for inability to pay rent, hanging on the edge of starvation, many of the Irish sank into apathy. Squatters built shacks alongside roads and grew potatoes on scraps of land. Many people were driven to commit small crimes so they would go to prison, where at least they would be fed. Alcoholism and drunkenness became a

major problem. Workhouses in the cities provided labor and food, but these were usually overcrowded and unsanitary, and they were overwhelmed in famine years. Several British commissions studied the "situation of the Irish" and made recommendations to the government for reform, but enormous changes in agriculture and economic policy would have been needed to lift the Irish out of poverty, and this did not happen. In 1845, the Devon Commission concluded that the Irish people's "sufferings were greater than [that which] the people of any other country in Europe had to sustain" and recommended moderate reforms. But such reforms were not implemented by the British.

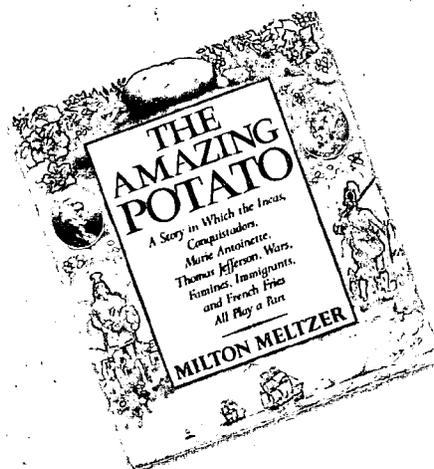
Blight and Famine

Problems with the Irish potato crop were first reported in the *Dublin Evening Post* on September 9, 1845. Overnight, healthy green fields of potato plants turned black and there was an overpowering, sickening sweet smell. Potatoes were rotting underground. At first, the cause of the crop failure was unknown. Some people believed it was punishment from God or was caused by excess dampness. The blight, however, was the result of a fungus known as *Phytophthora infestans*, which probably arrived in Europe from North America. There had been similar potato crop failures on the east coast of the United States in 1842 and 1843. The blight spread quickly through Holland and Belgium, arriving in Ireland in 1845, when it destroyed 30% of the potato crop. In 1846, 1848, and 1849, nearly the entire potato crop failed.² Although the blight did not strike in 1847 (possibly due to weather conditions), people starved because they had eaten any unspoiled "seed potatoes" during the terrible winter of 1846-47. The British government decided not to provide replacement

seed potatoes in 1847.³

The first official government response to the potato blight was to estimate damage to the crop. Police reported crop losses weekly. Experts also investigated the situation and suggested possible "remedies," which were wishful thinking. At first, British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel purchased American Indian corn to help feed the hungry, and he set up small-scale public work relief projects. Later, the government and private charities set up food kitchens where they distributed soup, but such efforts were quickly overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem.

The situation for the Irish worsened when Peel and his supporters were replaced by a new government headed by Lord John Russell. Like most leading British thinkers and government officials at that time, he believed in *laissez-faire* economics. This theory held that government involvement in the economy (like aid to the hungry) would only increase problems like scarcity in the long run. *Laissez-faire* (lay-say fair) is a French phrase that means "leave it alone"; in other words, let market forces determine supply and price, with no government help or intervention. Thus, the British exported grain and livestock from Ireland to England (to pay for rent, tithing, and taxes) while the Irish people were dying from hunger and famine-related diseases.



Harper Collins

There was also strong sentiment in England that Ireland was responsible for its own troubles and that local resources had to be used for relief. The influential newspaper *The Times of London* blamed "Irish character" for hardship in Ireland. An editorial in September 1846 charged that "the Irish peasant had tasted of famine and found that it was good," because he or she preferred "relief over labour." Because of sentiments like these, hungry and helpless people were discouraged from seeking what little assistance was available in the workhouses and from charity.

Most families tried to survive the loss of the potato crop by selling their livestock, household possessions, and even their clothing, and waiting for conditions to improve. There were some food riots and a brief and unsuccessful rebellion against British rule in July, 1848. Eventually, as the blight returned again and again, many starving Irish families were forced to leave their homeland on ships bound for foreign shores.

Between 1841 and 1851, one Irish person out of four disappeared from the island. The official population declined from 8,175,124 to 6,552,385 between 1841 and 1851, a loss of more than 1.6 million people due to famine related deaths and emigration (which is a low estimate, as the



Alan Singer

Potato plants with blue fungicide

population was expected to increase over this period by a million or so).⁴ At least 500,000 people were evicted from their homes because they were unable to pay rent on their small farms. Historians estimate that as many as one million people may have died from hunger and disease during the Great Famine.

Irish emigrants traveled to England, Canada, Australia, and the United States. Famine immigrants crowded into Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. By the 1850 United States census, there were 961,719 Irish-born residents. This was 42.8% of the country's foreign-born population.

As for the potato? By 1900, fungus-resistant hybrids were being bred by plant

scientists, and chemists were experimenting with fungicides, but such technology was developed too late for Ireland and its people.

Notes

1. The major source for this section is M. Meltzer's *The Amazing Potato* (New York, HarperCollins, 1992), 40-46.
2. Major sources for this section are Maureen Murphy, Maureen McCann Miletta, and Alan Singer, "The Great Irish Famine (1845-52): An Historical Introduction," *Time & Place, The Newsletter of the New York State Council for the Social Studies* 30, no. 3 (February 2000): 9-14; Peter Grey, *The Irish Famine* (New York: Abrams, 1995); Noel Kissane, *The Irish Famine, A Documentary History* (Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995), 172.
3. Cecil Woodham Smith, *The Great Hunger* (New York, Harper & Row, 1962), 147 and 286.
4. Cecil Woodham Smith, *ibid.*, 411.

Questions

1. What year did the potato probably first arrive in Ireland?
2. Who brought the potato to Ireland?
3. Why did the Irish begin eating potatoes?
4. What happened when Ireland rebelled against England rule?
5. Do you think the potato would have become so important without these other events? Why or why not?
6. Describe some of the advantages of the potato as a food crop.
7. What were some disadvantages to the potato as a food crop?
8. Why is the potato considered to be a healthy food?
9. Were the Irish a unique society in their reliance on a single crop for their survival?
10. Why did the Irish remain poor despite an abundance of potatoes?
11. Why were many Irish upset by the tax they had to pay to the Anglican Church?
12. What was the potato blight?
13. Why did the British government take limited steps in response to the food shortage?
14. What happened to the population of Ireland during the famine years?
15. How did the Great Irish Famine affect the population of the United States?
16. In your opinion, was the potato really an "amazing food"? Explain your answer.

Traces of the Written Record

Two primary sources of historical information about the Great Irish Famine are newspaper articles and personal letters and diaries of the time. The Great Irish Famine occurred when the industrial revolution was young and the British Empire was near the height of its colonial powers. The famine challenged the British government, international humanitarian organizations, and other philanthropic groups to provide aid to massive numbers of poor Irish, many living in remote areas, who were suffering from starvation and famine-related diseases. The degree to which people outside of Ireland responded to the crisis continues to draw praise and condemnation more than a century later.

Newspaper Accounts

There was discussion and debate about the Irish famine in newspapers and magazines in Ireland and Great Britain. The text below is from contemporary newspaper articles.¹

"No Apprehension"

The Dublin Evening Post,
September 9, 1845

"We have made rather an ample report of a matter of great importance indeed, namely, the failure of the potato crop—very extensively in the United States, to a great extent in Flanders and France, and to an appreciable amount in England. We have heard something of the kind in our own country—especially along the coast—but we believe that no apprehension whatever is entertained even of a partial failure of the potato crop in Ireland."

"The Potato Disease"

The Illustrated London News,
October 18, 1845

"Accounts received from different parts of Ireland show that the disease in the potato crop is extending far and wide, and causing great alarm among poor farmers. Letters from landlords describe the misery of the poor people around them, and urge speedy intervention on the part of the Government to discover the extent of the calamity, and provide wholesome food as a substitute for the lost potatoes."



Soldiers ejected families and destroyed cottages, 1848

"Emigration"

Galway Mercury, reprinted in *The Freeman's Journal*, April 1, 1846

"The tide of emigration from this port has fairly set in for the season. Already over twelve vessels are about to take their departure from our port, all of them having their full complement of passengers, for various places on the shores of the New World."

"Exportation of Food"

The Waterford Freeman, an Irish paper, October 3, 1846

"When famine is spreading its pall over the land, and death is visiting the poor man's cabin, it is not meet that the food of millions should be shipped from our shores. It is indispensably necessary that grain should remain in the country while scarcity is apprehended. Will not a starving population become justly indignant when whole fleets, laden with the produce of our soil, are unfurling their sails and steering from our harbours, while the cry of hunger is ringing in their ears?"

"Famine and Starvation in the County of Cork"

The Illustrated London News,
January 16, 1847

"In the parish of Kilmoe, fourteen died on Sunday; three of these were buried in coffins, eleven were buried without other covering than the rags they wore when alive. And one gentleman, a good and charitable man, speaking of this case, says—'The distress is so appalling [horrible], that we must throw away all feelings of delicacy'; and another says—'I would rather give 1 shilling to a starving man than 4 shilling 6 pence for a coffin.' One hundred and forty have died in the Skibbereen Workhouse in one month; eight have died in one day! The chairman of the Relief states that 15,000 persons in that wide district are poor; of this 5,000 are entirely dependent on charity."

"Evictions of Peasantry in Ireland"

The Illustrated London News,
December 16, 1848

"A large change is taking place in Ireland. The increase of emigration and the eviction of poor tenant farmers, will, in the course of a short time, end the complaint that there are too many people in Ireland. But this revolution is accompanied by an amount of human misery that is absolutely horrible . . . Whole districts are cleared . . . The ditch side, the dripping rain, and the cold sleet are the covering of the wretched outcast the

Illustrated London News

moment the cabin is tumbled over him. The most fertile land in the world in this noble county is now thrown out of tillage. No spade, no plough goes near them. There are no symptoms of life within their borders.”

A Personal Diary

As potato crops failed, farmers were not able to pay their rent, because other cash crops (such as grains) were not sufficient to both feed their families and cover rent and other expenses. Thus, many landowners went bankrupt. These journal entries describe conditions in Ireland in the fall of 1847 and the following winter. Their author, Elizabeth Smith, was the wife of a landowner in the County of Wicklow, Ireland.²

October 10, 1847. Little in the papers but failures. Cattle dealers in Dublin have gone and caused immense distress. Not

an offer for a beast of any sort at any of the late fairs.

John Robinson has lost seven thousand pounds by bad debts, trusting people who have failed to pay . . . He hopes to recover about half this sum when the affairs of some of these firms are wound up.

October 17, 1847. The winter prospects look very gloomy. The destitution is expected to be wider spread than last year, for the very poor will be very nearly as ill off, while the classes above which then relieved them...are in serious difficulties. No money anywhere; the little hoards of cash and goods all spent and nothing to replace wither.

The ministry says the land must support the people on it. Half the country having been left untilled for want of means to crop it, while a million of money was squandered in destroying the roads, much

of it finding its way into pockets full enough before.³

The Queen has ordered the begging box to go round all the English churches for us! Sir J. Burgoyne, head of the Poor Law Commission writes to the *Times* newspaper to entreat charitable subscriptions for the starving districts. Mr. Trevelyan, the Secretary to the Treasury, sends this precious emanation forth to the public with some little agenda of his own to the same tune. One would suppose stones were scarce in Ireland and her rivers dry when no one hoots such drivellers out of the country.

We want no charity. We want a paternal government to look a little after our interests, to legislate for us fairly, to spend what we should have properly among us, to teach us, and to keep a tight rein over idleness, recklessness, apathy. It is plain these people can't do it.

October 17, 1847. Every newspaper brings large additions to the long list of bankrupts; the whole mercantile world is affected by the pressure on the money market. Banks have failed everywhere. Manufacturers, traders, brokers. We can sell nothing, and though a bountiful harvest has filled the country with cheap provisions, no one can buy.

Questions and Investigations

1. Do these newspaper accounts and excerpts from a personal diary seem to be credible sources of historical information? Why or why not?
2. Are these sources in agreement with each other with regard to what was happening in Ireland?
3. Do the reporters from the *Illustrated London News* seem sympathetic to the Irish? What words or phrases do they use that indicate their sentiment?
4. In your opinion, was it the responsibility of the British government in 1845-49 to stop the suffering of the poor in Ireland? Explain your view.
5. Why would Elizabeth Smith write in her journal that “prospects look very gloomy”?
6. According to these journal entries, who was being hurt by events during the Great Irish Famine?
7. Elizabeth Smith says that the Irish do not want charity. What does she feel they do need?
8. If you were a member of the British government, what plans would you propose to address the hardship caused by the potato blight? Explain the reasons for your answer.

Background photo: Traditional stone wall on the Aran Islands.

Notes

1. Many of these newspaper articles and cartoons are available at “Views of the Famine,” a website at vassun.vassar.edu/~sttaylor/FAMINE/, created by Steven J. Taylor, Associate Director, Instructional Media Services, Vassar College. See also Noel Kissane’s *The Irish Famine, A Documentary History* (Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995).
2. David Thomson and Moyra McGusty, eds., *The Irish Journals of Elizabeth Smith, 1840-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 157-158.
3. Many public works projects were badly planned and organized, or left half-finished, leaving roads worse than they had been before—which may be why the author says work crews were “destroying” the roads.

THE DELICIOUS, NUTRITIOUS PRATIE

POTATOES HAVE A REPUTATION as a fattening food among health conscious Americans, but this is an unfair stereotype.¹ The bad rap arises from the way potatoes are usually prepared, either cooked with fat or smothered in it. French-frying sliced potatoes in oil adds 200 “empty calories” (energy provided by fat with no other nutrients) to a typical serving. Adding a single tablespoon of butter or sour cream to a medium-sized baked potato doubles its calories.

Seasoned only with non-caloric spices or low-calorie dressings, a potato can be nutritious as well as delicious. The potato itself has fewer calories than many of the foods people turn to when trying to lose weight. A medium-sized potato weighing 5 ounces that has been baked, boiled, or steamed contains about 100 calories, less than a 1/2-cup serving of creamed cottage cheese, a 3-ounce hamburger, a cup of plain yogurt, or an 8-ounce glass of orange juice. Potatoes are relatively low in calories because they contain almost no fat. Most of the potato’s calories come from carbohydrates (mostly starch). The potato is 78% water by weight (water has no calories). Potatoes also contain dietary fiber (especially if eaten with the skin),

providing the bulk that helps dieters satisfy their hunger. In an experiment at an American college, students lived on a 1,000-calorie-a-day potato diet. With belly-filling potatoes included in every meal and snack, the students lost an average of 14 pounds in 8 weeks.²

Potatoes are nutritious because they contain carbohydrates

like starch and sugar (which we need for energy and growth), vitamins (essential chemicals that our bodies need in small amounts), and minerals. The largest concentration of vitamins and minerals is found in the skin and just beneath it, so potatoes are most nutritious when eaten skin and all, or cooked with the skin on and peeled afterward. Potatoes do not contain a lot of protein, but if they are eaten with a dairy product (some milk, cheese, or yogurt), the meal can provide adequate protein, which is the stuff that muscles are made of (and that growing children need especially). Table 1 provides a breakdown of the nutrition in a potato, what you get as percentages of U.S. Recommended Daily Allowances (USRDA) for various essential nutrients.



Rows of healthy potato plants on the Aran Islands

Alan Singer

Table 1. Nutrients in a Potato (5 ounces, 100 calories)

Nutrient	% USRDA	Nutrient	% USRDA	Nutrient	% USRDA
Protein	6	Iron	10	Magnesium	8
Vitamin C	35	Vitamin B6	20	Zinc	4
Thiamin	4	Folacin	8	Copper	10
Riboflavin	2	Phosphorus	8	Iodine	15
Niacin	10				

Questions

1. Why do potatoes have a reputation as an unhealthy food?
2. How many calories are in a medium-sized potato?
3. Why are potatoes so low in calories?
4. Potatoes provide 10% or more of which daily requirements?
5. How should one cook a potato to get the most food value from it?
6. Why are potatoes considered a nutrient bargain?
7. In your opinion, should young people be discouraged from eating French-fried potatoes and potato chips because they are cooked in oil? Explain your views.

Boxty Pancakes

Boxty Pancakes are a traditional Irish potato pancake served on the eve of All Saints' Day, All Hallows' Eve. Boxty can also be baked as a kind of potato bread. Boxty can be served with a low-calorie spread, like unsweetened applesauce or nonfat, flavored yogurt.³

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb. potatoes (5 medium potatoes)
- 1 onion
- 4 cups flour
- 1/4 cup melted butter or margarine
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- Milk or water (about 1/2 cup)
- Dash of salt and pepper

Steps

1. Peel the potatoes.
2. Boil two of the potatoes for 20 minutes (until soft) and then mash them.
3. Grate the other potatoes and the onion. Drain liquid.
4. Mix the grated potatoes and onion, mashed potatoes, flour, salt, pepper, melted butter or margarine, and baking soda.
5. Add just enough water or milk to make a thick batter that will still pour.
6. Lightly oil a frying pan, using just enough so that the boxty will not stick.
7. Heat the oil, then spoon the mixture on the pan. Cook both sides over moderate heat. Serve immediately.



A potato dinner in County Kerry, 1846

Pictorial Times

Other Activities

1. Use cookbooks and science books to learn more about potatoes. Then develop an advertising campaign with posters, slogans, songs, and stories encouraging people to eat low-fat potato recipes.
2. Prepare a research report that describes the importance of the nutrients provided by the potato.
3. Design a poster that illustrates the nutritional value of the potato. Decorate the border with a printed design that has been carved from a potato.
4. Try other traditional Irish dishes using potatoes. Look up Colcannon, for example (see note 3).
5. Create an illustrated recipe book including potato recipes from around the world.
6. Collect international folk tales where potatoes are a part of the story.

Notes

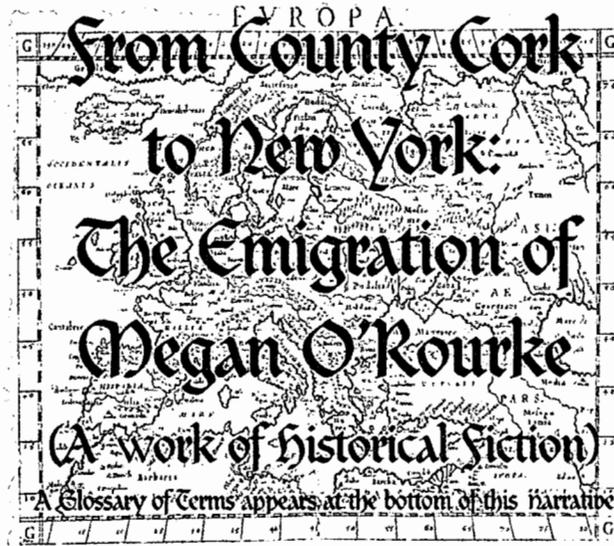
1. A major source for this section is the chapter "Please Pass the Potatoes" in *Jane Brody's Good Food Book* (New York: Norton, 1987), 29-37.
2. A study by Hans Fisher of Rutgers University, cited by Jane Brody, p. 31.
3. This is a variation on a traditional recipe. Many recipes can be found in Theodora Fitzgibbon's *A Taste of Ireland in Food and Pictures* (London: Pan Books, 1995).

Dhia dhuit! My name is Megan O'Rourke. This is the story of how I came to America.

In the winter of 1846 I turned thirteen. My family was Da, Mammy, my younger brothers Danny and Michael, and my baby sister Peggy. Our home was near Ballincollig, a village in the Lee valley not far from Cork city. We lived in a one-room cabin with a thatched roof, with three neighboring cabins all huddled together at a crossroads. Fields of potatoes, praties we called them, and grain surrounded our village.

My friends and I went to a hedge school, meeting outdoors in fine weather by the hedge along the side of the road, where we learned to read and write. Our teacher Mr. Kelly also taught us some Latin and our numbers. The older children learned a little Greek.

As the eldest child, I had many responsibilities. I took care of the little ones in the family. I also went for water to cook our praties and for washing. I stoked the fire and boiled water in a big black pot. I did not mind the hard work. All children my age were working hard. But we had spe-



cial days that brought us all together. My girlfriends and I danced at the crossroads on many a Friday evening. We put an old wooden door on the ground and made it clatter with our feet. The boys played a game called hurling, with sticks carved of ash wood, a ball, and a goal. On the feast of St. Brigit we would go to the abbey at Owens to a pattern.

Da was paid eight pence a day when he worked in the big fields, but he wasn't needed every day. We had a small patch where we raised oats and potatoes. We sold the oats to pay for the rent and for a bit of cash for clothes and such. In the old days,

we Irish owned our land, but by 1800 most of our land was owned by English landlords. Many did not even live in Ireland, but relied on an Irish estate manager to collect the rent.

Potatoes are good for you and my family ate a lot of them, about a stone of potatoes a day after a good harvest. We boiled the praties in the big black pot, and fed the skins to the pigs. When I was small, Betsy, our cow, gave us milk for making

buttermilk to have with our praties. Sometimes Ma added a little fish to our colcannon for flavor. The landlords owned the rights to fish in the rivers, so we had to be sly about catching them.

We thought our treatment by the English was unfair. When the English Parliament made Ireland part of the United Kingdom in 1800, they said Ireland was an equal part of the kingdom. But we felt like a colony. The United States belonged to England, too, not so long ago. Many Irish people wanted an independent Ireland, just like the people in America had their own country. Irish men and women who had

Alan Singer



Stone farm houses built beside a canal near Tullamore



Elderly farmer stacks peat near Tullamore

- Abbey – a church that is part of a religious community
- Blight – a disease caused by a fungus that destroyed potatoes
- Bog – damp lowlands not useful for farming

- Colcannon – potato and cabbage soup
- Gombeen men – Merchants who lent money at an exorbitant rate
- Gorta mór – great hunger
- Dhia dhuit – hello

gone to America fought in the American Revolutionary War. Many who stayed fought in the Irish rising in 1798. The English won that awful fight, and Ireland became but a part and parcel of the United Kingdom.

Even before the great hunger, what we call the *górta mór*, life was hard. People would go hungry while they waited for the praties to grow. Some years the crop wasn't very good and that meant people had to sell their possessions just to buy food.

Sometimes Da walked to the big farms in County Tipperary to work during the harvest to make a little extra money. Because of our hard work, my family always got by somehow. We also knew that even if one harvest was small, the praties would come back the next year and everything would be all right.

But starting in the fall of 1845 things were not all right. The praties rotted in the ground with a horrible smell. Fields of potatoes grew black overnight. Those we had stored under some peat rotted, too. It was the blight. That fall, we did our best to survive. We searched the fields for the few potatoes that had not been ruined by the blight. My Da sold Betsy, so at least we had money to pay rent. Mammy went to town and sold some of our household goods. All winter Da and Mammy worried because there was not enough money for both food and rent. Times were so hard we had to eat the seed potatoes we were saving to plant in the spring. Da had to buy seed potatoes to sow for the 1846

crop. We planted them, as we always did, on St. Patrick's Day.

As the summer came to Ballincollig, we all hoped for a good harvest. The fields were green again, and everyone was hopeful. Then the blight returned, and field after field turned black. People cried, "Heaven protect us!" A second hungry summer meant famine. There were other crops to be harvested, like oats and barley, but they belonged to the landlord. Grain became more and more expensive. Some shopkeepers took advantage of the food shortage to raise their prices. Others gave us credit at a very high price. We called them "gombeen" men, and the people hated them.

Some yellow corn came from America. We heard the English government had bought it for the Irish. The corn was dry and hard as rock and there was no mill hereabouts to grind it. We tried boiling some, but it was still hard and hurt the stomach. Finally, Da had to sell our new crop of oats to get money to pay our rent. People sold everything they had to buy food and pay rent.

There was some government work on

the roads for the poorest men, but they said Da was too well off to get the work. Next door, the baby boy died of fever, with all the women keening over him. Soon so many were dying that people grew silent. No longer did villagers gather to honor the dead with a proper mourning and funeral. The *górta mór* had begun.

As if we weren't suffering enough, the winter of 1846-47 was the worst I ever saw. There were icy rains and high winds. We rarely have snow in Ireland, but that winter it snowed, too. We were cold and hungry, but we were better off than some of our neighbors, because we had put aside a little money for hard times. Not one of us was sick. Most important, we were together.

Some landlords reduced the rent or gave people more time to pay because of the famine. Some landowners became poor themselves when they helped tenants by creating work or by buying food. When families could not pay the rent, they were put out of their houses by soldiers. We saw a family stand in the yard while soldiers set fire to the thatched roof and then knocked down the old stone walls. Families tried to

find shelter at the edge of a bog or in a ditch along the road. People wandered the countryside begging. We were lucky. Our landlord put off our rent, hoping we could pay after the next good harvest.

Even while the Irish were hungry and starving, boatloads of food were leaving Ireland. The grain that we paid as rent was sold overseas by the land-

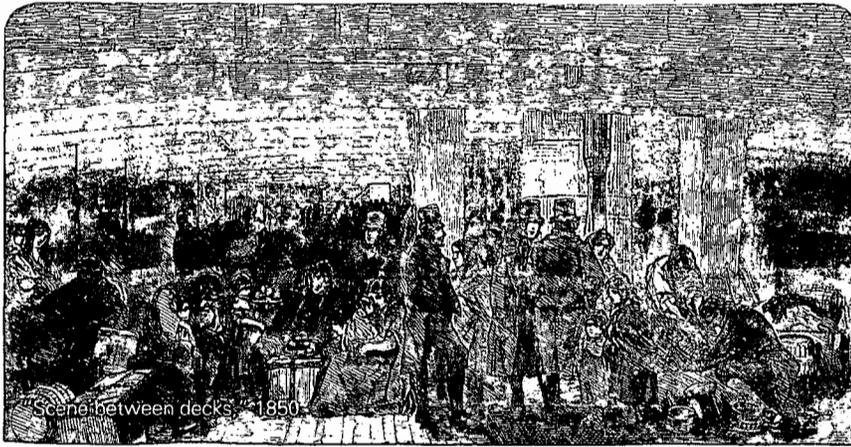


Famine-era workhouse in Athlone

Alan Singer

Keening = crying
Parliament = the legislature of England
Pattern = a gathering to say prayers and then celebrate
Praeties = potatoes

Quaker = a member of the spiritual Society of Friends, a Protestant Christian group, founded in England, with influential members at the time in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia



lords and their agents. In some towns there were riots when people attacked shops or wagons that were taking our grain to ships bound for England. The lad next door took a few bags of oats from a cart traveling on the Cork road. He was arrested and imprisoned at Spike Island until he was sent to some far-off place called Van Diemen's Land in Australia.

The English and their newspapers liked to tell the Irish people that Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. But when famine came, they told us that it was up to us to take care of ourselves. Fortunately, there were good people who reached our little village. English Quakers opened a soup kitchen, which helped us survive the coming winter. A Quaker woman told me that American Quakers had organized a relief campaign. School children sent their pennies. Even the prisoners at Sing Sing in New York state gave money. The Choctaw Indians of Oklahoma, who had their own story of sorrow and suffering, collected money and sent it to Ireland. I thought America must be a wonderful place.

In the spring of 1847, the only relief that the English government offered to the desperate Irish was the poorhouse. There were poorhouses built before the famine in every district in Ireland. They were for the

old, the sick, and the mentally disabled. They were almost like jails. When the famine came, they grew overcrowded, and disease spread quickly among the residents. The worst thing about the poorhouses was that families were separated when they entered. Men lived in one wing, women in another, and children in a third. Mammy said we would never go to the poorhouse. Whatever happened, she said, we would always stay together.

That spring we were desperate because we'd eaten the seed potatoes that we usually saved for the next year's planting. The English refused to provide "seed potatoes," even though this meant famine for sure. When Da heard there was to be no seed potatoes, he made a decision—we would leave our beloved Ireland. We would go to America. Our neighbors were talking about leaving for places like Quebec or St. John's in Canada, or Australia, or England. We were afraid that we would never see each other again. The night before the O'Rourke family left Ballincollig, people held an "American Wake," the women crying on each other's shoulders, the men talking quietly beside the wall.

Early the next morning, the whole family walked into Cork, our luggage in handcart. There Da sold a few tools, pots, and

pans. Then we walked twelve miles further to Queenstown harbour, where we bought passage for New York aboard *The Merchant*. We stood on the deck watching the coast of Ireland slip away. Someone sang "*Táim ag imeacht thar sáile*," "I'm going over the sea." Mammy cried, but we children were too excited to be sad.

Our journey of 3,000 miles took three weeks. *The Merchant* was poorly equipped to carry people. It brought lumber from Canada to England, and its owner was glad to fill up the ship with Irish who could pay for the return voyage west. When we got out into the Atlantic and were forced to stay below deck, the trip became a nightmare. At first, we were all seasick. We ate hard biscuits and drank water stored in barrels. There was no water for washing and no sanitation for 200 passengers. I would have given cattle more care than what we got. People sickened living in those crowded quarters. Ship fever spread from family to family. Mammy and Peggy caught the fever. Mammy got so weak that we thought she would die, but she awoke in the morning with her fever broken. Beside her, our little Peggy was silent. She did not move at all.

There was no Catholic priest with us on that coffin ship, so there could be no funeral. We wrapped little Peggy in a sheet. The captain said a prayer and then buried



"First night in America," 1850

Rising – an uprising or insurrection against British rule of Ireland
Ship fever – typhus, which is caused by a bacteria, spread by lice and fleas, and is very contagious

Stone – an English or Irish measure equal to 14 pounds
Táim ag imeacht thar sáile – "I'm going over the sea," often spoken when people left Ireland to live in another land

her at sea. Our little Peggy was so young and innocent, we knew her soul went right to heaven. There were many others who did not survive the trip. Maybe ten. I did not care to count.

Finally, on a gray morning, we arrived in New York at a pier in the East River. There were so many ships, and we had never seen so many people, all of them milling about. I'd thought Cork was big, but New York City seemed endless. We were starved and dirty and grieving, so I cannot explain the sudden hope that sprang into my heart when we first saw that sooty skyline.

Officials came aboard and looked at Mammy. They decided she was getting better and could leave the ship. I later learned that many people who had come to Canada arrived with fever and were kept in fever

sheds on an island in the St. Lawrence River.

Da has found us a place to live near where our ship landed, a neighborhood called the Five Points. It is full of people like ourselves—poor Irish men and women, children running about, all looking to make a new life. Every building is crowded to bursting. As summer comes on, it gets hot. Da has found work as a laborer on the docks. He works long days lifting heavy boxes and barrels, crates swinging over his head, but he is already saving pennies toward better living quarters.

Outside of Five Points, people aren't very friendly to us. They say the Irish live in shacks with their pigs, have too many wild children. They say we were dirty. Well, we are doing the best we can. We will show New Yorkers what fine citizens the Irish will

be when we have a chance to work, to go to school, and make our own lives.

We have heard that the Irish in New Orleans have it much harder. The work on a canal there is very dangerous and there is a lot of disease. In Philadelphia, people have fought the Irish in the streets, and in Boston there are signs saying "NO IRISH NEED APPLY." We've talked about moving west, where the skies are big and open, but Da says we have the best chance in New York, so here we'll stay. Maybe when I'm grown up I'll go out west.

Often I miss the Irish land... the wind from the sea mixed with the smell of a peat fire, but I'm glad we came to America. In Ireland in 1847 there was no hope. Here, at least, there is hope.

Questions

1. What was the O'Rourke home like in Ireland?
2. What was life like for Megan in Ireland?
3. What was the blight, and when did it first appear?
4. What did people do to survive the hard times?
5. Why were many Irish angry at the English?
6. What was the trip like to the United States?
7. How were the Irish treated when they arrived in the United States and Canada?

Activities

1. **Class Discussion:** Has anyone here ever moved to a new home? Why do people move? Was anyone here born in another country? Do you have parents, grandparents, or friends who were born in another country? Why is it sometimes very hard to move?
2. **Writing Assignment:** Imagine the year is 1847 and you are an immigrant from Ireland. Write a letter to family and friends left behind in Ireland. In your letter, explain whether you think they should move to the United States (see sidebar).
3. **Class Debate:** Should the British have donated grain, exported from Ireland for taxes and rent during the famine, to the hungry Irish? Role play the views that might have been taken by an Irish tenant farmer, an English landlord, a Canadian ship captain, and an American Quaker.

4. **Art Project:** Create dioramas based on the story "The O'Rourke Family Comes to America."

5. **Further Reading:** Read and discuss adolescent literature (see page 15) about the Great Irish Famine.

A Letter Home Student Historical Fiction

Dear Beloved Friend,

How is everything in my old beloved Ireland? Oh, how I do miss home. I remember every little thing that I loved so dearly. I miss the pure and fresh air and the green valleys. Make sure you speak to my mammy and papia about me because I know how much they worry about me.

During the voyage to America, there was much suffering. Many of the passengers got very sick with fever. When we arrived we had to be placed in quarantine.

New York City is nothing like Ireland. It is much busier and the American people are not friendly. They hate all Irish immigrants. The good news is that there is no potato famine here. There is enough to eat.

Uncle Keith made arrangements for me to work for the railroad. The Americans pay us two wages that provide us with barely enough to live.

The employers only think how they can get the most work for the lowest pay. Our living conditions aren't any better. The Irish live in worse housing than goats and sheep.

They call us drunken fiends and wretched, filthy, bestial looking Irish. It gets harder and harder to ignore the comments. Americans want Irishmen to get us to fight.

My dear beloved friend, please do not tell my parents of these hardships. I do not want them to worry or for them to come here themselves. I will send food, clothing, and other items home.

Until we meet again, Daniel O'Brien

* a.k.a Grace Cho, a student in the seventh grade class of Cheryl Smith, Hicksville Middle School, Hicksville, New York

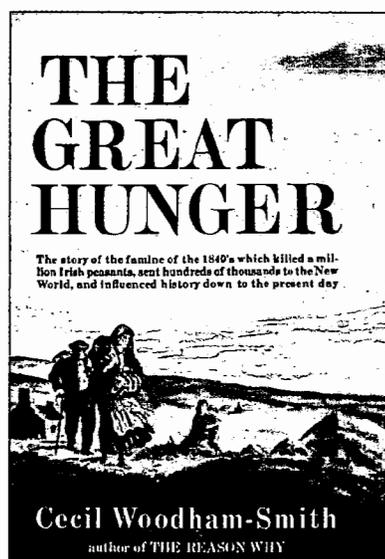
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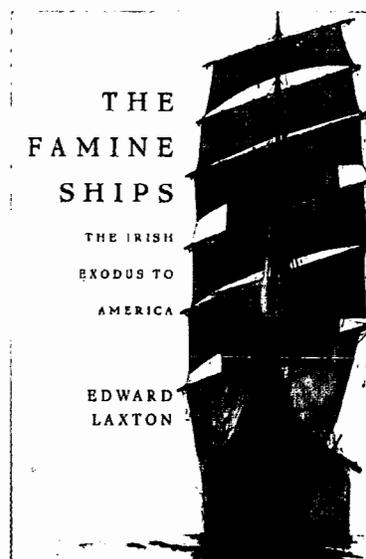
ANSWERS to "IRISH CURIOS & CAMEOS"

(on the back cover)

- I. Henry Ford
- II. Limerick
- III. Charles C. Boycott
- IV. The Irish Elk
- V. Mary Harris Jones
(a.k.a. Mother Jones)
- VI. A fork

In the next issue of
Middle Level Learning, the Irish
Famine series continues with:

- Life and Work in America
- Notable Irish Americans of the 1800s



IRISH CURIOS & CAMEOS

STEVEN S. LAPHAM

Can you guess the answers to these riddles of Ireland from the hints provided on this page? Try your luck.

I. William and his entire family left the tenanted farm at Ballinascarty, Ireland, in 1847, the worst year of the famine, and sailed to America. His mother did not survive the journey, probably succumbing to typhoid fever. William eventually bought a farm in Michigan and raised a family. He had a son, Henry, who was 12 years old when he fell off a horse. While recuperating from the fall, Henry set up a small machine shop in one of the farm buildings and began tinkering with small engines. As an adult, he pioneered mass production and became a millionaire. Who was this entrepreneur and industrialist?

II. A form of poetry with a galloping meter and a rhyme scheme—A, A, B, B, A—was invented by Edward Lear and named after this county. For example,

There was an Old Man in a tree
Who was horribly bored by a Bee
When they said, "Does it buzz?"
He replied, "Yes, it does!"
"It's a regular brute of a Bee!"

What is the name of this Irish county?

III. A rent rebellion by Irish tenant farmers on Achill Island against this landlord's agent became synonymous with protests in which consumers refuse to purchase a product. What was the land agent's name?

IV. The *Megaloceros* roamed throughout Europe 12,000 years ago. Well-preserved fossils, with antlers spanning up to 12 feet, have been found in the peat bogs of Ireland. What is the common name of this extinct beast?

V. Born in 1830 near County Cork, Mary emigrated to Canada, then to the United States. Her husband died of yellow fever in 1867, and her home burned in the Chicago fire of 1871. She became a labor organizer, leading coal miners in strikes in Virginia, West Virginia, and Colorado.

At age 89, she was arrested for her part in a walkout at a steel plant. What was her name?

VI. A connoisseur would never use a knife to open a baked potato. The blade flattens the surface and alters the desired fluffy texture. Instead, he would press the ends of the potato together to open and "blossom" it—after cutting a dotted line with a utensil. What is this utensil?



Cliffs of Moher

Answers on Page 15

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