# Social Science Docket

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As we come to grips with the effects and the aftermath of life in this era of mandatory testing legislation and accountability, we would have to agree that the real “mushroom cloud” is not the testing, but what the testing has done to us educators. The desire to force feed content through drill and kill type strategies has replaced those activities that once made social studies a magical endeavor that could give rise to not only understanding, but passion as well. We now seem to seek out and depend on those review books that can minimize the most interesting, confusing and messy historical events to a phrase or a cookbook like formula that will spell success on a test. Unfortunately, what has been sacrificed in this desire for simplicity is the drama of history, which when awakened in children, often made its way to dinner table conversations. Although there is no research to document the fact that test preparation driven instruction will be more effective in achieving high scores on state tests, teachers are part of the same equation that has afflicted their administrators -- get good scores or you may be gone.

Grant Wiggins (see Wiggins, Grant and McTighe, Jay. 1998. Understanding By Design. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. Merrill Prentice Hall) admonishes us at nearly every conference we attend that lousy instruction will not better prepare students for assessment. However, we see the time for exploring social studies units based understanding vanishing in the elementary school day. Instead of elementary schools being places of wonder, they are becoming mini-high schools with plenty of assigned minutes built in for test preparation. It doesn’t have to be this way. Analyzing this year’s test, I could not find one question that the students of my preservice teachers would not have been prepared for had they employed the series of essential questions prepared in our methods class over the past two years. In our class, each team of methods teachers owns and builds a different unit after discovering the big idea behind that unit. Once they have the big idea, they transform that idea into an essential question that will lead students to not only uncover the content, but to build their own understanding about the unit.

These questions were adapted and sometimes borrowed from a K-12 model of social studies in Oceanside, NY, but each team of preservice teachers adapted the question to make it their own. The model, pioneered by courageous teachers in Oceanside, including Dr. Andrea Libresco, now of Hofstra University, was awarded the New York State Council of Social Studies Program of Excellence Award in 1999. On the first night of our methods class, I often shock my students by sharing my belief that a good teacher is a good thief. My hope is that you will not be true to that belief by stealing or adapting this unit on the Revolution, but that it will inspire you to create your own unit built on understanding.

The Template for Understanding
Students begin with the template below to bring to life the facets of understanding by design enumerated by Grant Wiggins. When they begin the template is blank. The most frightening part of the task is that they start at the center of the template and work outward by studying history. Teachers must first understand what the big idea that is driving the unit is before they can teach the unit. Although this part of the process is messy and taxing, think of what it means when we teach a unit if you do not really know what it is that you want to students to understand. In this case, after struggling through a series of questions on the topic, the group came up with the understanding that the American Revolution might be looked at as failure of two groups to compromise over some specific issues of taxation with some bigger issues driving that failure to compromise. As it is in life, there is no one big idea that is correct. However, the big idea must be broad enough so that understanding of it can only be reached by covering all the required content. Once they find

### Essential Questions

- Does geography shape the way we live?
- Did the Native American culture contribute to our culture?
- Were the Native Americans worthy of our admiration?
- Did the explorers find something more valuable than gold or a route to the East?
- Could the American Revolution have been avoided?
- Did the new government solve the problems that caused the American Revolution?
- Did the Industrial Revolution create progress for all?
- Does local government make our lives better?
the driving idea, they turn that idea into a question known as the essential question. In this case, the question became: Could the American Revolution have been avoided? Not only did this question require that they know all the basic content, including the causes of the American Revolution, but it builds in an unparalleled passion for study of the Revolution. Students love a good fight and this question, by its very nature, leaves room for serious argument and division because there is no one right answer. The question also connects the topic to events going on in the world today. Can all wars, including our current war in Iraq, be viewed as failures to compromise?

Grant Wiggins tells us that if we understand a subject we can explain it, interpret it, apply our knowledge to other situations and view it from different perspectives. If students demonstrate mastery of these realms, then they can be said to understand that topic. The planning template we use requires that teachers create a series of experiences in each of the areas that would bring students to understandings of the topic. The template gives rise to the list of activities that follows it. Both the essential question and the list are shared with students on the first day of instruction. The purpose of the list and the essential question are twofold. They allow the students to know upfront where they are going. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the list allows those who might oppose an open-ended approach for political or educational reasons to see there is real rigor driving your unit.

The highlight of any unit based on understanding comes from work created by the students. In this case, the unit culminates in an emergency meeting of Parliament, called to avoid the larger issue of war. Students role-play the meeting acting out roles on both sides of the conflict and looking at the causes of the war from both perspectives. The larger understanding that students glean from this exercise is that wars may now be looked at through the lens of perspective. What must be included is a flyer to make the event come to life in the imagination of your students and an invitation for the parents to be involved in the educational process. If you are going to get off the test preparation bandwagon, you are going to need strong allies. There are no stronger allies than the parents of your children. Finally, if any performance is going to work, students are going to need the rubric below to clarify your expectations and drive their performance.

**Answering the Critics**

What goes unsaid in this piece is that you will have critics. The critics will come from places that may even surprise you. Some parents may question the rigor of your activity if it is not text driven. Others, surprisingly even colleagues, may question whether or not students should be wrestling with the questions of history. Some may even question your patriotism when you make American history an open question. The most frightening question of all will come from your supervisors who may ask: What about the test?

Our answer is to teach untraditionally and to assess traditionally. Document-based essays that have students answer a unit’s essential should satisfy critics. These essays and questions move students to the top of Bloom’s taxonomy by asking them to evaluate. Did the explorers find something more valuable than gold or a passage to East? Was the Industrial Revolution progress for all? In this unit, it was decided that students could not possibly determine whether the American Revolution could have been avoided, unless they first understood the causes of the revolution.

What goes unsaid in all of this is that this approach not only prepares students for the state assessment, it will better prepare them! Maybe more importantly, it will better prepare students to be questioning citizens who clearly evaluate the decisions and questions of their lives based on a careful collection and examination of information.
In January 2007, a year before the primary season would begin, a year and a half before the national conventions, and almost two years before the general election, Senator Hillary Clinton of New York declared her candidacy for the Democratic Party’s Presidential nomination. As the first woman, and first former “First Lady,” to have a serious chance of winning the nomination of a major political party and election, she was an immediate front-runner.

Senator Clinton’s initial announcement was on her website, Hillary for President, at http://www.hillaryclinton.com. The next day, she held a press conference at a community center in Manhattan that The New York Times described as “highly scripted political theater.” While Senator Clinton announced a new health insurance initiative, she held onto the hand of a 4-year-old girl from the local program that she apparently had just “bonded” with. The Senator told the assembled audience that she had decided to run for President because she was “worried about our country” and wanted to “put it back on the right course.”

What was surprising, once you sifted through the glitz and glitter of media coverage, was how little of what the Senator said was actually new. Her major policy recommendation at this campaign kick-off event was the extension and slight expansion of a 10-year-old federal program that provides health care coverage to children in families that earn too much money for Medicaid eligibility. In a nation with an estimated 45 million people without health insurance, this program covers four million children, or less than 1/10 of the uninsured. More visionary proposals, such as universal and single-paying national health insurance, were set aside by a very cautious politician, anxious to avoid alienating any conceivable voting block or source of financial support.

Senator Clinton started her Presidential election bid so early because the field was already crowded with candidates. Delay would have made it difficult for her to line up campaign contributions, endorsements, advisors, and campaign workers for an election campaign estimated to cost as much as five hundred million dollars. In the twenty-first century United States, only the rich, or those supported by the rich, can afford to run for elective office.

The Presidential election cycle provides teachers across the country with a highly motivating subject that focuses national media and student attention on social studies and historical topics. Teachers generally use student interest in presidential elections to examine the idea of multiple perspectives on major issues and the importance of research, analysis, and dialogue about current events and candidates. Some have their classes study obscure or confusing topics such as the Electoral College system or actively promote citizenship through voter registration drives.

**MTV-lite Version of News**

While all of these focal points can have educational value, I believe in the end they sell students short. Too often, students get an MTV-lite version of news coverage - quick blips, unsupported opinions, and lots of music. Little actual analysis of issues, voting patterns, or the role of media and money in campaigns takes place in the classroom. Candidates are viewed as celebrities and mock elections become popularity contests. Minor candidates and third party campaigns are almost always ignored. Not many students change their minds or deviate very far from the attitudes of their parents and peers.

Few teachers use the election campaigns to seriously explore with their students what is taking place in American society, and I suspect that those who do continually worry that they will be accused of partisanship or even unpatriotic behavior. Teachers, like Senator Clinton and the other Presidential candidates, end up being pushed to the middle where they act as if uncritical acceptance of compromise represents the best ideas our society has to offer. I fear that by focusing on the superficial, teachers contribute to the attitude that politics is entertainment and help place democracy in the United States at risk.

There is much that is serious about the presidency, presidential elections, and the national political climate, that social studies teachers should think about themselves and that they can incorporate into the curriculum. These include both historical and contemporary issues, as well as some very difficult questions.
Historical Issues

1. Can a system designed for a small, lightly populated, primarily agrarian country with semi-autonomous states effectively govern a centralized modern military and economic superpower? Does the expanding power of the modern Presidency threaten historical checks and balances between the different branches of government, checks and balances that have provided core protection for the rights of Americans?

2. Why were so many 19th century Presidents irrelevant, incompetent, or simply forgettable? Try this simple test. Name the Presidents between Andrew Jackson (number 7) and Abraham Lincoln (number 16) and those between Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt (number 26)? Why are they so unmemorable? The first era was one of sharp sectional division. The leading statesmen were in the Senate where crucial decisions were made. Webster, Clay, and Calhoun tended to obstruct each other's national ambitions. Presidents were elect-able compromise selections with few negatives rather than strong positives. As a candidate, Abraham Lincoln fit a similar profile. During the second era, capitalist industrial expansion reshaped the nation and the most memorable national figures were business leaders like Rockefeller, Carnegie, Vanderbilt, and Morgan. During the “Gilded Age,” Presidents and the presidency hardly rated as important.

3. Should Presidential indiscretions and disabilities be exposed to public view? Thomas Jefferson and Grover Cleveland fathered illegitimate children, Ulysses Grant and Warren Harding were probably alcoholics, and John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton were compulsive philanderers. Franklin D. Roosevelt ran for reelection while terminally ill and it is suspected that Ronald Reagan was already exhibiting signs of dementia when he was reelected President. Do inquiring minds have the right to know?

4. Do we remember Presidents for the wrong reasons? Andrew Jackson promoted democracy for White people at the expense of Blacks and Native Americans. Woodrow Wilson is credited with winning a war that his Secretary of State argued the United States did not have to enter. Harry Truman is remembered for tough decisions. However, were his decisions to authorize the nuclear attacks on Japan, start the Cold War, and attack domestic opponents as communists justified? Should our goal be to promote patriotism or analyze history?

5. Is Lord Acton’s statement that “power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely” an apt description of the 20th century American Presidency? The economy and the American people suffered because Herbert Hoover and Jimmy Carter were narrowly focused technocrats unable, or unwilling, to adjust to changing economic circumstances. Lyndon Johnson was brought down by his blind commitment to defeat “communists” in Vietnam in much the same way that the Bush Presidency has been seriously weakened by its unyielding campaign against supposed “terrorists” in Iraq and Afghanistan. Richard Nixon was forced to resign when he placed himself and the Presidency above the law and Bill Clinton faced removal from office for flaunting moral codes and lying about it under oath.

Contemporary Issues

1. Is the Presidential election system broken? Has the selection of a President become like American Idol or Survivor? Does the primary system as it is currently constituted produce the “best” candidates? Is the “best” candidate necessarily the best President?

2. Are we electing skilled and thoughtful leaders or the best-financed celebrity package? Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush were actors who looked Presidential, but were they? Democrats Jimmy Carter, Bill Dukakis, Bill Clinton, Al Gore and John Kerry campaigned as experienced managers and problem solvers. Can every problem be addressed by managerial fine-tuning?

3. Who does a President actually represent? It costs $500 million to mount a campaign. Does the President speak for the people as a whole, those who voted for the candidate, party loyalists, or his or her wealthy campaign contributors?

4. Is the Imperial Presidency, what conservative theorists call the “unitary executive,” a threat to constitutional checks and balances that are at the core of the American political system? Can the nation afford to rest all power to wage war in the hands of a single individual? Should one person’s religious views be able to prevent scientific research or limit access to birth control and sex education? Is the election of a “dictator” for a limited term of office the best way to preserve liberty and promote freedom?

5. How much ability to shape the national agenda does a President actually have? Are they agents of history or prisoners of powerful interest groups?
6. Are American voters, especially White male voters, trapped by their racial and ethnic bigotry? Does this leave a significant block of voters easily exploited by demagogues? Since the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s granted greater equality to African Americans, White male voters have increasingly voted as a block for Republican and conservative candidates.

7. Why do people with little chance of winning run for President? It seems as if every politician thinks they are three elections away from the Presidency (win a local and then a statewide election and you are ready to rumble). Does the system promote reason and experience or put a premium on arrogance and a gambling mentality? Does it encourage nasty attacks in an effort to bring down campaign leaders and to cut off other potential rivals? Is the system bringing out the best of the American people, or the worse?

8. Some Presidential elections mark major shifts in the national balance of power while others represent modest corrections brought about by reactions to excessive practices. The elections of 1828 (Andrew Jackson), 1860 (Abraham Lincoln), 1932 (Franklin Roosevelt), and 1968 (Richard Nixon) brought new coalitions to power along with new Presidents. However, the elections of 1840 (Harrison), 1884 (Cleveland), 1912 (Wilson), 1952 (Eisenhower) and 1976 (Carter) did not reverse national political trends. Will the 2008 election be a referendum on the Bush Presidency and the war in Iraq or a broader reappraisal of the role of government and the possibility of social justice in the United States?

Underlying Change

This last question is particularly important for the organization of a social studies-based United States history curriculum. Elections that signaled major shifts in political alignment also marked significant changes in economic and political relations within the country. Jackson’s election was the result of both a broad extension of the franchise to less affluent White male farmers and urban residents and of the expansion of the country westward. Lincoln was elected when the Democratic Party divided along regional lines over the future of slavery. The ascendency of the new Republican Party also was a response to an expanding role for the federal government in an industrializing nation. When the Republican Party failed to respond to economic crisis during the Great Depression, the Democrats, behind a New Deal philosophy championing activist government, were swept into power. This shift was made possible by a new national demographic as Eastern and Southern European immigrants and their children were increasingly eligible to vote and by the emergence of a powerful organized labor movement as a political force. Increasing conservative and Republican Party dominance in local and national politics since 1968 has paralleled the decline in labor union membership and influence as a global economy has shifted skilled industrial jobs overseas. Between 1983 and 2006, union membership declined from 20% of the workforce to 12%, undermining the Democratic Party’s voter base and its financial backing. While political controversy during this recent period has often been attributed to cultural differences and questions of values, it has certainly been intensified by economic competition between different racial and ethnic blocks, as well as between men and women, as working people have been affected by economic change.

Teaching Ideas

As teachers, there are many standard and effective classroom practices we can use to take advantage of student interest generated by Presidential elections. Have students study national maps, and chart poll numbers and election results. Organize a class blog. Design campaign posters, slogans, and songs. Collect current events articles. Write position papers, interview local candidates and the representatives of national candidates. Students also need to dig deeper, to question national assumptions, and their own beliefs, about the nature of the electoral system and the qualities of the candidates.

In the mean time, I still have not decide whom to support in 2008. So far I have narrowed it down to Martin Sheen from West Wing, Geena Davis of Commander in Chief, Harrison Ford heroic President in Air Force One, Michael Douglas, star of The American President, and Morgan Freeman’s character from Deep Impact. At least they all look Presidential.
Teaching about the Presidency and the 2008 Presidential Election - What are the problems?

President James Buchanan argued, “The ballot box is the surest arbiter of disputes among free men.” Yet at the end of his presidency, he patiently waited for his successor to take office while the nation dissolved into civil war. In his inaugural address, President Benjamin Harrison asked, “How shall those who practice election frauds recover that respect for the sanctity of the ballot which is the first condition and obligation of good citizenship?” The “Gilded Age” certainly did not find an answer. It is not clear the nation has one now, after disputed vote counts in Florida in 2000 and Ohio in 2004 twice gave George W. Bush the presidency. Despite these problems, or perhaps because of them, Presidential elections remain one of the most highly motivating topics in social studies classes. As teachers in the New York and New Jersey region prepare to discuss the 2008 Presidential race with their students, Social Science Docket asked them their views on problems teaching about both the election and the role of the Presidency. Because of the large number of responses, they are organized topically. In some cases, these are edited comments taken from much longer submissions.

The problem may be the failure of democracy in the United States.
Levi Anthony, President, ATSS, Information Technology High School, Queens, NY: I stress discussion of the concept of democracy and have students examine characteristics of democratic societies. Features should include a multi-party system, representative government, and a free press. I began addressing the 2008 Presidential election in my classes at the start of the spring 2007 semester. Elections are the cornerstones of democracy. We never hesitate to tell our students that we have the greatest democracy in the world with fair and free elections and where citizens have genuine choices between candidates. But we need to think more seriously about these statements before we pass them on to our students. Consider the following: One of the most meaningful contributions of citizens in a democracy is voting for a candidate of their choice. Yet, over 50 million people, about a third of the electorate, mainly the young and minorities, cannot vote because they are not registered. Iraq, despite its bloody chaos, has a higher percentage of registered voters than the U.S. Despite a slight increase in 2004 presidential elections, voter turnout continues to be abysmally low. At the state and local levels, sometimes the percentage of the electorate which votes drops to single digits. Do we have real choices in elections? Are our elections competitive? The 2006 Congressional elections were unusual. But the general pattern in these elections is the incredible lack of competition and lack of real meaningful choices for voters. In the 2004 elections, only 6% of House seats were considered competitive; more than 82% were won by landslides. In the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, experts predicted way in advance that the elections would be decided by two states – Florida and Ohio. And this is likely to be the case for 2008. In the majority of states we have no competition. We have a one-party system. These states are locked up by one party or the other. Thus, for the majority of citizens in the country, the presidential elections have been reduced to nothing more than a spectator sport. At the state and local levels, thousands of races had no candidates from one of the two major parties. We should examine with our students other ingredients of democracy – representative government, free and independent media etc. to see how accurate these statements are.

Lauren Borruso, Howitt Middle School, Farmingdale, NY: Democracy has been on a downward spiral in this country for some time and I am as guilty as everyone else. I confess that when I come home from work and turn on the television, 9 times out of 10, I turn on something as mindless as America Idol, no matter what else is on. When Ryan Seacrest announced that 63.5 million votes were cast in the Season 5 finale and a record 580 million votes were cast during the entire season, a red light should have gone off in our heads. I know I can barely convince my own friends and neighbors to go out and vote in favor of the school budget every year so I can keep my job and our educational system doesn’t collapse. On the final night when the “American Idol” is declared and the judges are asked if “America got it right,” the answer is almost always yes. How do we know we have the right
American Idol? We hear them sing a few songs, dance around a little, and vote them off based on a bad note or a rough song choice. We have no way of foreseeing how many records they will sell or how successful their career as a singer in the real entertainment business will be. Unfortunately, politics in the “MTV generation” has become similar to American Idol. We get a few minutes to hear the candidates and their opinions because that’s about all the time our attention spans and the media allow. And almost always, the candidates play it safe, afraid of taking a risk and upsetting any of their loyal fans, as do the many Idol contestants. They are counting on their appearance or background to be the distinctive quality that singles them out from the flood of contestants. I fear this is not enough. Maybe we should leave the choice of the next president up to Simon Cowell. At least he’s brutally honest.

The problem is the American people, their knowledge and expectations.

Meryl Landau, JHS 194, Queens, NY: When I teach about the Electoral College I have students debate whether or not the system has become outdated. Most students argue in favor of getting rid of the electoral system. They argue that the system does not represent public opinion and that people are much more educated now about the government so it is unnecessary. Last year, I gave students a ten-question quiz about the 2006 Senate race in New York. Not one of them got more than four correct. I asked the class if someone who knows so little about a candidate’s platform should be allowed to directly vote for the president. They did not have much to say except for a few who protested that it was an unfair test. Most Americans do not know what they are voting for other than a name, a political party, or a single issue, and are not capable of an educated choice. President Bush represents the average American person, someone who is quick to make a decision without thinking of the consequences of his actions.

Nazia Khan, IS 125, Queens, NY: I find it is easier to make other life decisions than it is to decide which candidate to support for President. Every candidate claims their vision for the future is the best and that they will do all they can for the American people. As elementary as it may seem, the most important factor when people make their decisions may end up being a candidate’s likeability as a person. There are just some people who are easier to like than others. As Americans we have done this for years and we continue to do this everyday. I do not believe it to be wrong because it is natural to gravitate towards someone who is just naturally nice. Personally, I like the fact that Senator Barack Obama is family-oriented and wants to change the values of the country. I understand that politically this will not solve the problems the country is facing. However is it wrong to believe in someone who stands for values and faith?

The problem is Americans do not appreciate what we have.

Kellyann Dooley, West Hempstead (NY) High School: Our goal as teachers should be to promote patriotism as well as analyze history. That means we need to teach the good that former Presidents have done for our great nation as well as to expose their indiscretions. We must keep in mind that a president is voted into office and...
above all else represents the American people. While the Executive branch of our government was designed for a small agrarian nation, it has grown with the needs of the state and effectively governs a modern superpower. The expansion of presidential power has occurred over many decades and has more often than not been born out of necessity caused by economic downturn, global warfare, or threats from abroad. While I often use Lord Acton’s infamous quote on power and corruption, it’s not an accurate description of the 20th-century American Presidency. Presidents take, create, and use power with the consent of the American public and Congress. The current election system does have a few “kinks” in it, but I believe the Electoral College does work. The primary system does produce the best candidates, but these candidates do not always make the best presidents.

The problem is how we teach.

Steve Schockow, Dake JHS, Rochester, NY: I teach middle school U.S history. The primary campaign will be interesting but we will really focus on the election in fall 2008 when it will be current. In class, I focus on the electoral process and the campaign issues such as war, health care, taxes, and the budget. While I am in general a supporter of the Republican Party, my views do not come into play in the classroom. Students always ask me “What’s your party?” I reply, “It doesn’t make any difference what my party is, your choices are up to you.” I give them information and facts, but they make their own decision. My views on the election don’t come into it. In class we look at historical controversies and current conflicts. We might discuss the reasons for President Bush’s approval rating, but I am careful not to offer my position.

Anne Kane East High School, Rochester, NY: I am a teacher and an activist. As a teacher, I try and let students see both sides of the story or the issue and present it to them in a neutral way. When asked my opinion I do offer it as part of the discussion. However, sometimes I will play devil’s advocate and voice the opposite of what I think to generate controversy and discussion. Teenagers love to argue about controversial issues. I am the advisor to the Model United Nations and some of my students first became critical of the war in Iraq through their participation there. They joined with me in anti-war protests here in Rochester and are active on their own with different local groups. However, I have not taken students to Washington DC because of logistical issues.

Michael-Paul Wombaker, Andes (NY) Central School: Current events is important in all grades, but especially in classes like 11th grade U.S History and Government class, as well as Participation in Government for the seniors. I teach 12th grade P.I.G. and Economics. Usually I teach economics in the fall and P.I.G. in the spring, though I make sure to flip-flop them during presidential election years. In an election year P.I.G. class, we focus mainly on the differences between the candidates with attention to their platforms with a little bit on the background of the candidates mixed in. I always draw historical comparisons between current political parties and political parties in the past. In upper level course such as P.I.G., we focus intensively on issues in the election. In the past, we've discussed such issues as the war in Iraq, abortion, the death-penalty, stem-cell research, and even charges of corruption and campaign finance reform. P.I.G. lends itself to a focus on current events and ways that students can get involved in the election. I always try to remain neutral during student discussions, but sometimes my point of view comes across a little bit, and the students know that I will offer my opinions if I am asked. Though I choose to focus the class on particular issues, I allow students to arrive at their own conclusions and hope they continue once they have left my classroom.

Cindy Ettenhuber, Hightstown High School, East Windsor, NJ: Presidential elections provide an excellent opportunity for evaluating, and possibly critiquing, our method for selecting a President. I believe it is my responsibility as a social studies teacher to encourage students to investigate topics from a variety of viewpoints and make judgments based on the information collected from as many sources as possible. This is especially important when endorsing a Presidential candidate or political party. I also intend to use the election to focus on the debate over the viability of the Electoral College. Teachers need to be facilitators in class and should not use political debates as opportunities to stand on a proverbial soapbox and preach about the candidate and political party they endorse. Our goal is to produce well-educated and informed citizens. We must challenge students to critically analyze the direction our country is moving.
in and to consider the measures that will allow it to realize their vision of what the United States should become.

Jenny Wing, T.C. Armstrong Middle School, Wayne Center, NY: I focus on how the election process works. I use the presidential campaign to review the Electoral College because students have a hard time understanding it. We also discuss the major candidates and some of the issues. Personally, I share my opinions in class. My students all know I am registered as a voter and I encourage them to go home and talk to their parents and find out their parents' opinions as well. I think there are a lot of people out there with some good ideas and I teach my students that they need to be informed. They can't believe everything they read or hear. A major goal in my class is for students to learn that they can express their opinions and still get along with people who disagree with them. I have a lot of concerns about the future of the country. The war in Iraq is on everybody's mind. I also worry about the No Child Left Behind Act and the future of education. I am not a big fan of the Bush administration. I am excited that Hillary Clinton, a woman, has thrown her hat into the campaign for president.

MaryAnn Savino, Central School, East Brunswick, NJ: In my fifth grade classroom we talk about what an election means, both the primary election and the general election. My students are ten and eleven years old. By the 2016 election, which is not so distant in the future, they will be voting for President of the United States. Many already have older siblings in the eleventh and twelfth grade that will be eligible to vote in 2008. A major point of emphasis in my class is the meaning of citizenship and the importance of voting. I stress looking at the candidates in both parties to understand their platforms. We have a bulletin board showing their positions on issues in the United States and on the U.S. relationship with other countries. Students researched the issues looking at Time for Kids, The New York Times, and Newsweek. I asked students if they could vote today what would be the key issues for them. Generally they were very concerned with national security and whether our borders are safe. Another important issue was health insurance. We talked in class about how these issues affect them. I ask them if there were only two candidates, where would you stand. Most of my students, after listening to each others arguments, made their decisions based on the issues. Although some identified with their parents' views, others totally disagree with them. Most of my students felt positively about Senators Obama and Clinton. They were not impressed with the positions taken by any of the Republican candidates so far.

Katharine Murawski, H.B. Thompson M.S., Syosset, NY: Michael Schudson writes in The Good Citizen: a History of American Civic Life, “voting is not only an act of civic engagement but of cognitive challenge.” He claims “political education comes to most people not only from history textbooks or recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance in school but from the presence and practice of political institutions themselves.” Students do not actually participate in the election process until they are eighteen. Do school elections give them enough practice so that they can later fulfill their obligations as citizens? I think the answer can be seen when comparing voter turnout of presidential elections to American Idol. The electoral process and the systematic assessments of presidential candidates need to be addressed to a much greater extent within the classroom.

Ann Carlock, Eastside High School, Paterson, NJ: I am not afraid to present my views in class. Students are intuitive and our views come across anyway. It is when we try to cover up what we think that we subtly present propaganda. I start with an activity I found in Scholastic magazine. I ask students, “What kind of party animal are you?” and we construct a chart comparing their ideas with ideas held by most Democrats and most Republicans. Then I press them to consider a range of issues. I play “devil’s advocate” when necessary to challenge students to support their positions. For me, the most important issue in the upcoming presidential election is the war in Iraq. It is rapidly turning into another Vietnam. In his book Incoherent Empire, sociologist Michael Mann argues that America’s new imperialism is bringing disaster to the U.S. and the world. The United States has spent a long time digging itself into a hole creating new enemies. We are still digging it and we need to stop. Among the candidates, I am definitely leaning towards Hillary Clinton. I think she is a strong woman with a good handle on international relations. She originally supported going the war in Iraq, as did I, but nobody
can forecast all developments in advance. A leader has to be able to adapt to changing circumstances. Because of the need for flexibility, I look at the personal qualities of presidential candidates as well as their ideas. Everything about them counts - appearance, demeanor, manner, rhetoric, even how they come across on television. Style is one of the things that made FDR a great president. He made people feel safe. While George Bush does not, Hillary has that quality.

Kristin Joseph, Merrick Avenue Middle School, Merrick, NY: Students who repeatedly get the abbreviated watered-down versions of politics and who are scarcely engaged in the political processes will, more than likely, grow up to be the non-voting, apathetic adults. Despite the need for teachers to attack the presidency issue, there are several factors that make it difficult. Teachers today are faced with a different generation of students. No longer do kids go home, do homework, run around outside until dark, and then sit down to a family dinner and a movie. Teachers now compete for their student’s attention with Nintendo Wii, PSPs and MySpace. The typical student is faced with a variety of home conflicts that interfere with their desire to be politically engaged. It is harder to capture a student’s attention with a few passionate and motivating words about the political situation in our country. There is also the ever-present issue of state testing. I can think of a dozen ways I would love to teach the presidency in engaging and fun activities. Unfortunately, there just is not the time to do it when students face a standardized test. The pressure to have students do well on these tests for a new teacher like myself is overwhelming.

Jacqueline Ford, Malverne (NY) High School: In 2004, I had my eighth grade class write a detailed job-description for the President of the United States. To formulate specific qualifications, they responded to a short questionnaire. What personality traits are important? What previous experience should a U.S. president have? What three issues should be the most important to the President? Students also made newspaper advertisements describing their ideal candidate. I plan to use a similar approach in 2008. The candidates I find of particular interest are the frontrunners, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, John McCain, and Rudolph Giuliani. However, I have tremendous respect for candidates who do not indulge in nuanced campaign jargon, so I will introduce students to United States Representative Dennis Kucinich. I do not agree with much of what this Ohio politician has to say and with a very meager campaign fund, he is a long-shot to become the Democratic Party’s Presidential candidate. Kucinich rarely refrains from addressing hard-hitting issues or from criticizing his political opponents. He always offers his audience an abundance of information to digest, even if you dislike his commentary.

Erin O’Brien, T.C. Armstrong Middle School, Wayne Center, NY: I teach seventh grade and any time we can bring in current events, it’s perfect. With all of the pressure to prepare students for exams, we do not have a lot of time. However, with history, we are really doing students a disservice if we do not examine contemporary issues. I am not afraid to present my views during discussions with students because in social studies we are teaching critical thinking. I think it is important for students to see that their teachers have views that are informed by research and careful analysis. When we present our views in this way we are modeling citizenship for them.

Suzy Mellen, H.B. Thompson M.S., Syosset, NY: When a teacher does not include his or her views in class discussions, what message is sent to students about the importance of taking a stand on vital issues? A Paul Krugman op-ed piece in The New York Times said the major problem with many of the current presidential candidates is that they do not voice clear opinions. For example, Barack Obama claims that “partisanship is why ‘we can’t tackle the big problems that demand solutions.” I agree with Krugman. We need “political leaders willing to tackle the big problems despite bitter partisan opposition.” If teachers are afraid to offer their opinions for examination because they will be accused of partisanship or unpatriotic behavior, students will never be willing to formulate and openly express controversial ideas.

Tara Wade, Charlotte High School, Rochester, NY: I’m a first year teacher. I teach 12th grade Participation in Government and 7th grade United States History. In the 12th grade class we just finished working on a class project looking at the candidates that are running for president in 2008. Students had to find out background information about the candidates, the parties, and the
Their assignment was to use media creatively to design an advertisement to get people to elect the candidate of their choice. I am very non-biased when I teach this kind of subject, because you don’t want to get in anyone’s way. But I had students write an essay on what they think will happen if a woman or a person of color became president. I also added how they would feel if the next president was homosexual. In my classroom, everyone has the freedom of speech to say his or her opinion. But they do not have the right to put down other races, genders, or beliefs. I did share my predictions on the election with the class. In the 7th grade they are just completing looking at the three branches of government. These students are also talking about what would happen if a woman were elected president. Topics like Halliburton’s role in Iraq and the firing of federal attorneys by the Attorney General have not come up in discussion, but every now and then a student brings up the issue of the war. May main concern is just bringing in more current events so students will know what is going on.

John Deserto, Spencerport-Cosgrove MS, Spencerport, NY: In 7th grade, I focus on the constitutional aspects of the presidential campaign because they are most directly related to the curriculum. I do not address political issues that much because what gets said in class often gets reported at home in a way that distorts its meaning. I have been called into the superintendent’s office too many times for that. I try to keep the discussion in class general, saying some people feel one way and other people feel another way. I find students usually repeat the views they hear around the dinner table from their parents. We are learning about the Constitution right now and I will bring up what Congress and the President want to happen and we will use their disagreements to talk about checks and balances.

Dan O’Hara, East High School, Rochester, NY: In world history classes I cover the presidential elections by focusing on United States involvement in foreign affairs. In economics, we examine how one party is a proponent of more government and the way additional government responsibilities add to expenses and taxes. The other party has generally been on the side of less taxation and more private entrepreneurship. Of course, the current administration has gone against the classic conservative model. They have cut the tax rates, but they still spend quite a bit and they are borrowing money just as the Roosevelt administration did when it tried to spend its way out of the Great Depression. Students usually are against taxes. But they are also usually very much in favor of spending more money on schools, hospitals, and roads. This conflict in their thinking is a nice way of helping them think about the choices in the election. They have to consider what the candidates and the parties are saying about our community resources and our collective resources as a nation, and the need to prioritize. I believe my responsibility, as a teacher, is to be neutral rather than critical. We talk about the American economic system and I make students aware of the problems and the possibilities of corruption, but I generally avoid specific issues. Students are already aware that there are “fat cats” who take advantages of the rules. The more skeptical students recognize that the system can be gamed by affluent people using their connection and their networks.

Tanya Di Mambro, Calhoun High School, Merrick, NY: Before I vote, I create criteria to judge each of the presidential hopefuls in order to determine who could be the next great president. The criteria vary from one election to the next because our country and our people need different things at different times. On that note, here are the criteria that I am using for this upcoming election. A great president is one who acts in accordance with his/her oath to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.” A great president should improve education and health care in the United States. A great president is one who will repair our economy so that our country thrives. A great president is one who will improve security within the United States. A great president is one who does not shed the blood of American citizens in pointless wars. A great president is one who will repair our economy so that our country thrives. A great president is one who will improve security within the United States. A great president is one who will not spend all of his/her time meddling in other countries’ affairs. Based on these criteria, it is unfortunate, but I do not really want to vote for any of the potential 2008 presidential candidates.

Randy La Bella, Sachem (NY) Middle School: In my studies of American history I only know of a handful of men who I consider to be great presidents, and the
majority of them come from the same family, the Roosevelts. This country needs and deserves somebody who will actually change our country for the better, and not be so concerned about approval ratings or if the NRA will pull their campaign contributions if assault weapons are banned. It is estimated that the campaign for president this time will cost a candidate over five hundred million dollars. Unfortunately, this means the successful candidate already possesses more money than I will ever see in my lifetime, must compromise enough of their integrity and moral obligation to the country in order to come up with even more money, sound the best at not taking a stand on so-called “hot topics,” and have fewer less desirable qualities than the person they are running against.

Heather Maselli, Mepham High School, Bellmore, NY: I am concerned that candidates for President are being promoted for the wrong reasons and have not talked about the real issues. Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama would make history if either were elected president. But is the election of a woman or an African American a sufficient reason to select, or reject, a candidate? Rudolph Giuliani was mayor of New York when the Twin Towers were attacked in 2001. The newspapers have compared a showdown between Clinton and Giuliani with a subway series in baseball. Despite my love for baseball, the outcome of a sporting event is much less significant in my life than a presidential election. The winner of the World Series or a Subway Series may rule the entertainment world, but should not run our country.

The problem is the media.
Eric Sorenson, Comsewogue (NY) High School: With massive media coverage, presidential elections seem to have degenerated into a contest over who looks better on television or who can persuade the public to accept what are essentially misleading accounts of their political ideas. Kennedy powdered his nose to beat out Nixon and Bill Clinton swayed the youth vote by a quick spin on the saxophone. People feel disenfranchised by the media circus and do not believe their voices will be heard. The ideal candidate for president should be truthful, open to scrutiny, and have evidence to back up his words. He or she must possess integrity, be very organized, and very thoughtful. Even more important, they should be willing to admit their mistakes and rectify situations. But can such a person get elected?

Kimberly Cahill, High School for Public Service-Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY: In the past, I have not taken a strong position on politics. I have difficulty getting interested, even though I try to. Partially, this is because the media, to generate interest and sell advertising, tries to promote conflict between candidates and makes coverage of indiscretions the center of attention. We only get small bits and pieces of real information before we turn to the horoscope in the newspaper or change the television channel. As human beings we are attracted to drama, sex, and lies. We cannot help it. We have been exposed to this most of our lives and do not really know how to look past what the media tells us.

The problem is the electoral system.
Alison Kelly: We live in an age of celebrity. Our current president played the role of a celebrity when he gave his “mission accomplished” speech in 2003. His handlers arranged for an aircraft carrier where he spoke from to be turned so that the setting sun would best illuminate the deck of the ship and the people who stood on it. I am hard pressed to find a more concrete example of “reality” television. I expect a quality “Hollywood” show from any Presidential candidate spending hundreds of millions of dollars on their campaign. With all that money being spent, it seems that the Presidency will go to the highest bidder. It truly is the wealthiest people in our society or those who know the wealthiest people who are making the decisions about how the rest of us will live.

April McCarthy: The American public is tired of money-dominated “Big Business” politics that fattens its own pockets at the expense of the middle-class and working poor. The financial earnings of the middle and working class continue to shrink, while the corporate profit margin expands. The people want their needs to be addressed at the forefront and they want an end to the incessant war-mongering and domestic neglect exemplified in the current administration. Money for education and health care is sacrificed for the sole purpose of perpetuating the military industrial complex. Approximately 47 million people are not covered by health insurance, an insurance that is heavily privatized. The very planet on which we live moans as global warming, due to oil dependency and deforestation, threatens it and every one of its inhabitants. The United States presidency is the most
powerful position in the world. We cannot afford to have it occupied by someone who pussyfoots around the issues and/or blatantly violates the civil liberties and rights of the people. The president must possess strong moral conviction, character, political prowess, and have a backbone. The next president cannot bow to the interests of the wealthy or lobbying groups and be afraid to stand up to big business. He or she must be someone devoted to political and social reform and be an advocate for the middle class and the working poor.

Richard Markert, Dumont (NJ) High School: For my students, the main issue in the upcoming Presidential election is probably foreign policy, although immigration is another issue they read about or hear about in the news. Taxes are also a big issue in my town and they hear their parents’ complaining about the high taxes. To the extent that all politics is ultimately local, this is an issue that will influence their views on the election. Right now in class we are focusing on the debates and then we will look at the primaries. New Jersey’s primary is scheduled for February 5, 2008. Many students do not understand the primaries or the caucus system so this election gives us an opportunity to look at the entire process. I try to keep discussion about the issues and the candidates on an even keel without expressing support for one side or another. In U.S. history we are covering the late ninecentury and the political stalemate that led to the formation the Populist Party. Many students are wondering if, with the nation so sharply divided between the red and blue states, it is not time to start a new political party today.

The problem is American society.
Theron Grinage, Hempstead (NY) Middle School: In the era of technology and the globalization of big business, candidate agendas reflect the vested interests of corporation and special interest groups that provide them with financing to run their campaigns. Americans must think critically about those elected in to office and see beyond the smile, fancy résumé, and family ties. I am just not convinced this will happen.

Annalesea Williams-Barker, Director of Social Studies (Central Office), Paterson, NJ: I am very concerned about the issue of fairness, in the nation, the electoral process and the classroom. A major issue in the presidential campaign will be how the government will budget resources and manage taxes to improve conditions for the common man and not just the wealthy. During the last two elections, there was tremendous concern that all votes were not counted. I am particularly sensitive to this because I am African American. People must have confidence that the electoral process has integrity and that after the election is over, the needs of all people will be considered, even if their party lost. My concern for fairness carries over into my approach to teaching. I believe teachers must always be balanced and allow students to make their own informed decisions. I present the views of Republicans and Democrats and even some third party perspectives. While I will share my opinion if it improves discussion, the keys, for me, are hearing different voices and supporting views with documentation. Our goal is to have students become more civic minded. They have to learn how to have a positive impact on their communities and society.

Michael Pezone, Law, Government, and Community Service Magnet High School, Queens, NY: The U.S., the world's wealthiest nation, has the greatest inequities of wealth among industrialized societies. The political system, nominally democratic, mediates conflicts between competing capitalist groupings without threatening the system of capitalism itself. James Madison theorized this long ago in Federalist #10. While the Republican and Democratic parties represent the interests of big business, there is no viable, progressive political party in the United States. Author Gore Vidal quipped that the U.S. has a “one party system with two right wings.” All this raises important questions for students and teachers. Are capitalism and democracy compatible? What factors have prevented the emergence of a modern, progressive, anti-capitalist party? Why did the Democratic Party transform from the party of liberal Franklin Roosevelt to the party of conservative Bill Clinton? What economic and political interests have been served by the development of an “imperial presidency” and the increasingly unchecked power of the executive? If a political system dominated by big business loses legitimacy, will it be replaced by democracy or fascism?
Activities for Elementary Students That Are Anything But Elementary
by Andrea S. Libresco

Parallel to instruction at the secondary level, effective election instruction at the elementary level addresses essential questions, is ongoing, employs a variety of sources, results in students knowing where to find reliable sources and how to assess their legitimacy, has students grapple with their peers with complex issues, connects to historical issues, and encourages students to make deliberative, informed judgments and act on those judgments. In other words, effective election instruction is effective citizenship instruction; moreover, effective election instruction can and ought to be the centerpiece of the elementary curriculum from September through November.

What to do in the intermediate grades

Keep curriculum and instruction focused around essential questions:
- How can we find accurate information about the candidates?
- Is the media coverage more about substance or horse race?
- Who votes and who doesn’t, and what are the implications?
- Does everyone’s vote count equally?
- What affects people’s political views?
- What role does money play in elections and governing?
- What issues are/should be most important in 2008?
- How similar/different are the parties’ platforms?
- Should we watch political ads?
- What role do/should third parties play?
- How important are the non-presidential races?
- How do we get candidates to follow through on their campaign promises?

Explore the characteristics of democracy vs. dictatorship.
- Consider the word, “democracy” (the people rule). Discuss the Thomas Paine quote, “In the Old World, the king is the law; in the New World, the law is king.” Discuss the “social contract” between rulers and ruled by examining Declaration of Independence language, “consent of the governed,” and “right of rebellion.”
- Discuss the importance of being an informed voter.
- Discuss the extent to which U.S. democracy has historically allowed all citizens to vote. Create an illustrated timeline of voting rights.
- Discuss the importance of reliable voting systems – revisit Florida election and start collecting articles about potential voting problems this year.

Detail the nature of the job and assess the candidates’ abilities to do it.
- Notice what U.S. leader wears (civilian garb) and is addressed as (Mr. President) vs. other countries (military uniform, Generalissimo, Your Highness, etc.)
- Detail the roles of the president by examining the newspaper. Be sure to discuss the role of the president in appointing Supreme Court justices FOR LIFE, as well as the age of the current justices.
- Infer what qualities are needed in a president based on the roles.
- Research the biographies and records of the candidates. Check multiple sources where questions have been raised about the facts of their backgrounds.

Research the issues. Assess reliability of data, claims and counterclaims.
- Brainstorm issues that ought to be the focus of a presidential race.
- Read newspapers, magazines to see if these issues are discussed, and how well they are covered.
- Decide where you stand on the issues. Google “political spectrum tests.”
- Research where the candidates stand on the issues. Avoid examining too many.
- Research where the candidates’ parties stand on the issues. Read the Democratic and Republican platforms. Chart the areas of difference.

Check out my website
http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/andrea_s_libresco.
Click on “web links” and scroll down to “2008 Elections” for multiple websites.
• Excerpt the debates for students, focusing on clear differences in policy positions and different facts given. Have students fact-check (www.factcheck.org) disputes and elucidate the reasoning behind the policy disputes.

• Decide, based on reliable data, which candidate best matches your own views.

Decipher and create commentary.

• Op-ed pieces require reading strategies: predicting subject matter, chunking information, accessing prior knowledge, using context clues, etc. Ultimately, students should create their own op-ed pieces – can be letters to the editor, essays, video commentaries, etc.

• Political cartoon analysis and creation: symbols, meaning (refer to particular current event or issue), cartoonist’s message (give evidence from the cartoon).

Put it all together.

• Have students create DBQs on the candidates, using quotes, speeches, statistics on the economy, data on the Iraq war, etc.

• Have students compare and evaluate the DBQs for accuracy, omissions of important issues, etc.

• Vote in the national mock election and in an upper grades election.

Prepare for election night.

• Map the Electoral College and the swing states.

• Baseball analogy helps explain winner-take-all system. You can score more runs overall in the playoffs, but unless you win each game, you don’t win the overall series.

Keep following events post-election.

• Analyze election results and statistics. How was turnout compared to previous elections? How did turnout vary according to race, class, gender, education, etc.? For whom did various types of people (race, class, gender, region) vote? Why do you think the candidates appealed to those constituencies?

• Analyze the fairness and accuracy of election results.

• Hold the president-elect’s feet to the fire. Are the Cabinet appointments in keeping with campaign promises? Are the first acts in keeping with promises?

What to do (and what not to do) in the primary grades

Naturally, primary teachers want their students to be involved in elections, too; however, they cannot be involved in the same ways as their intermediate counterparts. In fact, it is possible to send exactly the wrong message about voting with an overly ambitious activity. For example, having primary students cast votes for president without really being able to understand the issues sends the message that voting is not an informed judgment; rather, it is just a fun activity. It is also important to avoid the trap of having students vote on something like their favorite flavor of ice cream because such an activity also suggests to students that voting is mere “taste” or preference, rather than the result of research on the candidates and issues. Primary children can still be involved in all sorts of ways during the election – exploring and voting on an issue on their school or community level, simulating voting in a booth, and expressing views on the school issue through the school announcements and posters – just involved in ways that they can understand.

Recommended Elementary Books for an Election Unit

*D is for Democracy: A Citizen’s Alphabet* by Elissa Grodin and Vitor Jahasz. Excellent, thoughtful book emphasizes the importance of asking questions in a democracy, and the purpose of taxes, among other things. *The Day Gogo Went to Vote* by Eleanor Batezat Sisulu. Terrific book about the first election following the end of apartheid when the narrator's grandmother goes to vote – beautiful pictures and story. *My Teacher for President* by Kay Winters and Denise Brunkus. A second grader who has been learning about the president's job, thinks that his teacher would be the perfect candidate, given her qualifications. Delightful and amusing. *Vote* by Eileen Christelow. Accessible introduction to voting through a mayoral election in which the mother of a young, African American girl is one of the candidates, while two humorous dogs provide commentary on the action. *We the People* (elementary level), Center for Civic Education. Excellent soft cover text on how U.S. government was formed and works. *Woodrow for President: A Tail of Voting, Campaigns, and Elections* by Peter W. Barnes, Cheryl Shaw Barnes. Mouse.
running for president, told in rhyme is only okay. *You Want Women to Vote, Lizzie Stanton?* by Jean Fritz, Dyanne Disalvo-Ryan. I generally like Jean Fritz, but this one about this iconic suffragist is only okay.

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**Public Attitudes about the 2008 Presidential Campaign**


**Instructions:** Students in the class should answer the question from the Associated Press-Ipsos Poll on public attitudes about the 2008 presidential campaign. Create a chart showing student responses and compare student responses with the Associated Press-Ipsos Poll results. Because it calls for open-ended responses and participants can give more than one answer, the total number of responses can be more than 100%.

In general, what would you say are the most important qualities or characteristics you look for in a candidate for president?

A. **STRONG CHARACTER, 55%**

- Honesty/trustworthy/truthful, 41%
- Integrity/good character, 14%
- Morality/ethics, 6%
- Follows through/does what they say they will do, 4%
- Faith/believes in God, 4%
- Dependable/reliable, 1%
- Loyalty/patriotism, 1%
- All other strong character mentions, 1%

B. **STAND ON SPECIFIC ISSUES, 33%**

- Ability to make the economy stronger, 10%
- Concerns with health care, 8%
- Concerns about the war/getting out of Iraq, 7%
- Concerns for social issues (like hunger, crime, affordable housing), 6%
- Concerns for education, 5%
- Concerns for domestic issues, 5%
- Anti-abortion, pro-life, 4%
- Concerns with immigration, 3%
- Concerns with the environment, 3%
- Concerns about security/protection, 3%
- Concerns for the elderly/social security, 2%
- Concerns for terrorism, 2%
- Making country less reliant on oil, 1%

C. **LEADERSHIP, 21%**

- Leadership, 10%
- Strong, 5%
- Ability to make decisions, 2%
- Ability to solve problems, 2%
- Good communication, 2%
- Vision/clear plan, 2%
- Confidence/belief in themselves, 1%
- Ability to handle crisis, 1%
- All other leadership quality mentions, 1%

D. **EXPERIENCE, 14%**

- Foreign policy/international relationships, 7%
- Experience, 5%
- Good track record/past results, 3%
- Military service, 1%
- Political background, 1%
- All other experience mentions, 1%

E. **COMPASSION/CONSIDERATE, 13%**

- Concerns for the common person/middle class, 6%
- Caring/compassionate, 3%
- Concerns for family, 2%
- Ability to listen, 1%
- All other compassion/considerate mentions, 1%

F. **OTHER ANSWERS**

- Intelligence/Knowledge/Common Sense, 11%
- Ability To Do Job Right/Good/Responsible, 4%
- Conservative, 2%
- Ability To Work With Others/Bipartisan, 1%
- Other, 24%
- Nothing/Don't know
Presidents from George Washington to George Bush have been sharply scrutinized by the general public and have been subject to the judgments of historians about their ability to govern the nation. In May 2007, breaking with tradition, former President Jimmy Carter called George W. Bush’s presidency the “worst in history.”

During the 20th century numerous efforts have been made to formally evaluate the presidents. The first attempt was by Arthur Schlesinger Sr. in 1948, who followed up with another survey in 1962. In the early 1980s, two new polls were conducted, once again using historians. In 1992, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. repeated his father’s 1962 poll. In 1999, C-Span had the public participate in ranking the presidents. The Federalist Society and Wall Street Journal conducted the latest poll that ranked the Presidents in 2000. This poll differentiated between Republican and Democrat leaning respondents. Academics, especially historians, tend to rate strong presidential leadership highly and favor active federal government intervention in social and economic issues, while the Federalist Society and Wall Street Journal are conservative organizations that generally do not support active government intervention.

The 11 Best U.S. Presidents: October 2000 Survey of Scholars in History, Politics, and Law
Co-Sponsors: Federalist Society & Wall Street Journal
http://www.opinionjournal.com/hail/rankings.html
1. George Washington
2. Abraham Lincoln
3. Franklin Roosevelt
4. Thomas Jefferson
5. Theodore Roosevelt
6. Andrew Jackson
7. Harry Truman
8. Ronald Reagan
9. Dwight Eisenhower
10. James Polk
11. Woodrow Wilson

Although the polls used different criteria and the number of people polled varied, the results have been remarkably consistent. Schlesinger Sr. asked respondents to place the presidents into five categories: great, near great, average, below average and failure.

For older presidents, whose actions have been evaluated and criticized the longest, Lincoln, Washington, and Franklin D. Roosevelt consistently rank in the “great” category and Buchanan, Harding, and Pierce as failures. However, the standing of more recent Presidents seems to rise and fall with each new evaluation.

One example of the impact of time is the ranking of President Eisenhower. In the 1962 poll done just as Eisenhower had left office, he was ranked 22nd, and was in the Average category. In later polls he moved into the Above Average group and in the 2000 was considered a “Near Great.” Evaluations of the Eisenhower Presidency have improved as he has received credit for supporting school integration in Little Rock, Arkansas, and for his challenge to an emerging “military-industrial’ complex.

Another President whose ability has been ranked differently with different polls is Ronald Reagan. In the 2000 poll, which was conducted by conservative groups, he was ranked in the Near Great category. In previous polls, he was considered average. Reagan’s reputation was also helped by the collapse of the Soviet Union after the completion of his time in office.

While it is still too early to rank the Presidency of George W. Bush, he has definitely fared badly in public opinion polls and in evaluations by historians. In May 2007, a CBS/New York Times survey showed that 63% of the public disapproved of his performance. In an earlier survey, 81% of over four hundred historians rated Bush’s presidency a failure.

Ranking Presidents by secondary school students can be a tool for debating the impact of a president on a time period and for comparative analysis across time periods. The consistency within different polls about which presidents are great and which are failures not only suggests impartiality within academia but also opens the door for the possibility that the way history is taught in schools creates legends of some presidents and ignores the abilities of others. What seem to guide the evaluation of presidents in the “Great” category are their actions in a time of crisis. Thus circumstances, rather than ability, become the deciding factor in the evaluations.
The Presidency: A Comparative Analysis
by Lauren Borruso and Laura Carnevale

As Americans evaluate the contenders in the 2008 Presidential election, it is useful to analyze the qualities that defined past presidencies. As historians and teachers, it is our obligation to help students identify criteria they can use to objectively assess the performance of past presidents.

Historically, presidential popularity is influenced by many factors, both foreign and domestic, and including events outside their control. In polls, the past American presidents consistently ranked in the top five are Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, and Harry Truman. In a majority of polls, the top ten presidents were in office during times of war or major crisis. Presidential rankings may depend more on outside events than on the qualities that people bring to the office.

There are four major areas in which a president can be “graded” or assessed: Economic policies, domestic/social policies, foreign/military policies and moral/ethical practices. How a president performs in one or all of these areas usually determines how they will be remembered. Presidents who were very successful in one or two of these areas are remembered for these accomplishments, although an extremely ineffective policy in another area can cancel out these efforts in the public mind. Sometimes a president’s general performance is forgotten because of the magnitude of their “success” or “failure” in other areas. Richard Nixon’s presidency will probably always be associated with Watergate. Lyndon Johnson’s civil rights record gets less attention than the unpopular Vietnam War.

If presidents should be remembered as “great” because of efforts to defend the nation and challenge traditional ways of doing things, all of the “top five” ranked presidents fit the bill. Students should realize, however, that they needed the opportunity, such as a crisis or war, to demonstrate their leadership ability. Would a Millard Fillmore have been able to face the same challenges that a Lincoln or Truman faced? We will never know.

Our evaluation of presidents is also influenced by contemporary national concerns. During the New Deal, Andrew Jackson was seen as an earlier version of Franklin Roosevelt and received high marks. However, in decades since the Civil Rights movement, new concern for equality and diversity has led to a reexamination of Jackson’s attitude toward African Americans and Native Americans and a reevaluation of his presidency. Students should recognize that reevaluation is an essential aspect of the study of history. Involving them in this process should be our goal for students.

Crucial ideas to focus on as students evaluate past presidents and current candidates include:
1. This is an analysis based on a range of factors, not a popularity poll.
2. Views about a president’s performance change as conditions change and as we learn new information.
3. The short-term and long-term impact of a president can be evaluated differently.
4. Presidents should be evaluated on their response to events, not necessarily the magnitude of the events.
5. Students need to examine the historical context of a presidency.
Teaching About the 2000 Presidential Election
by Kristin Joseph

In 2000, the result of the United States presidential election between Vice-President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush left the country questioning whether the electoral system really works. For the first time since 1884, the candidate with the largest popular vote failed to win the electoral vote and the election. Among the disputes were the controversial butterfly ballots of Palm Beach County, accusations of voter discrimination, the ethical actions of the media in reporting exit poll results, the role of third parties, actions by Florida officials, and ultimately, the decision by the United States Supreme Court to award the election to George W. Bush instead of ordering a recount. Eight years later, this election offers social studies classes the opportunity to examine the American electoral system in all of its detail and with all of its potential and flaws.

### 2000 Presidential Election Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Vote %</th>
<th>Electoral Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gore (Dem)</td>
<td>50,996,116</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush (Rep)</td>
<td>50,456,169</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3,874,040</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2000 presidential race was expected to be one of the closest in United States history, but no one anticipated what would happen. As election night unfolded, and the closeness of the race became apparent, Florida was the focus of national attention. The results in that state would decide the next President of the United States.

The first problem to emerge was whether the media had behaved unethically by predicting a winner, Al Gore, while people in the western part of the state were still voting. Did people refrain from voting because they thought the election was already decided?

The sharpest dispute, and the one that eventually led to demands for a recount and intervention by the United States Supreme Court, was the design of the ballot in different Florida counties. In Palm Beach County a “butterfly ballot” was supposed to assist the county’s large elderly population. However, the design was so confusing that thousands of people who thought they were voting for Al Gore actually cast their ballots for an independent candidate, Pat Buchanan.

Other counties reported problems with what became known as “hanging chads.” A chad is a tiny piece of paper similar to what is removed by a hole-puncher. Some counties used machines that counted paper ballots where voters removed the “chad” next to the name of the desired candidate. However, many of the machines were outdated and poorly maintained and thousands of votes were thrown out on election night because the chads had not been completely removed and could not be processed by the machines. Visual inspection of these ballots forced officials to ascertain voter intent. However in the highly charged atmosphere at the time this was virtually impossible.

As the results from Florida received greater scrutiny, other issues emerged. There were reports that election officials, based on their political affiliation, discarded or changed ballots. An allegation was made that in Martin County, poll officials were told to “fix” voter registration cards and absentee ballots with...
missing minor information, but only for Republican voters. In Volusia County, one polling place worker went home for the evening with a stack of over 800 uncounted ballots in the backseat of his car.

African-Americans in Palm Beach County, who were more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate, charged that they were turned away from polling places due to inaccurate voter registration records even though they had voted in prior elections. Haitian-Americans in Miami argued that there were no Creole interpreters available, preventing them from equal participation in democracy. Even more disturbing to some was a Florida law disenfranchising people who had been convicted of felonies from voting. It prevented tens of thousands of otherwise eligible voters from participating in the election, and disproportionately eliminated African American voters likely to support Al Gore.

**Final Certified Vote for Florida**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Vote %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>2,912,790</td>
<td>48.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>2,912,253</td>
<td>48.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nader</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>97,421</td>
<td>1.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchanan</td>
<td>Reform</td>
<td>17,412</td>
<td>.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browne</td>
<td>Libertarian</td>
<td>16,102</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the controversy, Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris, an appointee of George Bush’s brother, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, certified the Republican candidate as the winner of the state’s twenty-five electoral votes. This gave Bush a total of 271 electoral votes and the election.

Both candidates and political parties turned to the courts for redress. Al Gore and the Democrats argued the irregularities justified a manual recount. Gore declared “I would not want to win the presidency by a few votes cast in error or misrepresented or not counted, and I don’t think Governor Bush wants that either. While time is important, it is even more important that every vote is counted and counted accurately.”

George Bush and the Republicans disputed the validity of manual recounts and argued that Gore’s protest was an act of desperation. The Florida Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Gore campaign and ordered that the long, arduous recount begin. However, the United States Supreme Court overturned this decision by a 5-4 decision that appeared to be along straight “party lines.” According to the Court’s majority, the Florida recount was unconstitutional because a valid recount could not be completed by the state’s December 12 deadline. Many believed that the Supreme Court intervened too soon and the integrity of the Court was called into question. Justice John Paul Stevens wrote in dissent, “Although we may never know with complete certainty the identity of the winner of this year's Presidential election, the identity of the loser is perfectly clear. It is the Nation's confidence in the judge as an impartial guardian of the rule of law.”

In his year-end report to Congress, Chief Justice William Rehnquist argued that, “This presidential election . . . tested our constitutional system in ways it has never been tested before. The . . . courts . . . became involved in a way that one hopes will seldom, if ever, be necessary in the future.”

**Presidential Election Teaching Ideas**

There are many effective classroom practices to take advantage of student interest generated by Presidential elections. Students need to dig deeper, to question national assumptions and their own beliefs, about the nature of the electoral system and the qualities of the candidates. Be sure to include less well-known candidates running in the primaries and representatives of minor parties in the general election.

- Collect current events articles on questions such as “What is the responsibility of government?” or on specific topics such as health care and education.
- Write position papers on issues.
- Develop “help wanted” advertisements that identify qualifications expected in candidates for public office.
- Develop questions and then interview local candidates and the representatives of national candidates about the issues and the broader theme of governmental responsibility.
- Study national maps and learn about “Blue” and “Red” states.
- Research and write “campaign profiles” or mini-biographies for the candidates.
- Chart poll numbers and election results.
- Organize a class “blog” to discuss issues and candidates on-line.
- Design campaign posters, slogans, t-shirts, and songs that promote positions and candidates.
- Create political cartoons that challenge assumptions about candidates and issues.
In June 2003, President Bush stated that “The United States is committed to the worldwide elimination of torture and we are leading this fight by example.” A year later, as the United States entered its second year of war in Iraq, news reports detailed abuses by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib. The Bush administration immediately declared this the work of a few bad apples, but subsequent discoveries, only rarely reported in the American televised media, revealed that the Secretary of Defense (among others in the administration) had been directly involved in defining acceptable forms of imprisonment and interrogation. Around the same time, more reports of potentially criminal activity surfaced. The practice of “extraordinary rendition” was briefly reported in mainstream circles when a German citizen, Khaled El-Masri, brought a suit against the CIA for his seizure and subsequent torture. The International Red Cross and several journalists identified the physiological damage being done by American (and British) weapons using depleted uranium. By that time, the U.S. government was denying due process rights to thousands of prisoners taken in the “war on terror” on the basis of then White House Counsel (later Attorney-General) Alberto Gonzalez’s arguments that these individuals fell outside the scope of international agreements since they were “enemy combatants,” rather than prisoners of war.

Entering the 2005-2006 school year, I was fortunate to have a particularly strong class of seniors in my Advanced Placement U.S. Government and Politics class. They had all received high scores on the AP U.S. History exam and displayed a keen interest in politics in general and the ongoing war in particular. I assigned these students to read Censored 2005 over the summer, an annual report on the top twenty-five “censored” news stories (those generally ignored by the mainstream news media). This book and our subsequent examination of media bias led to heated discussions on the accuracy of news reporting, how citizens can discern facts from arguments, how to know whether to believe what one reads, sees, and hears, and exactly what defines a quality source.

At the end of their junior year, these students indicated a desire for some kind of trial format lesson in the AP Government course. When I suggested the possibility of a war crimes trial, they reacted with vigorous assent and excitement. Deciding on this project, however, was the easy part; creating a workable process that would necessitate documentary research, maintain interest and involve every student was a logistical challenge.

Consistent with AP Goals
Any activity that motivates college-bound seniors to spend hours and hours outside of class studying and researching the details of international agreements and American policy is worthwhile. The six units suggested for the AP Government curriculum by the College Board include one on the making of public policy, another on the role and powers of the Executive Branch, and a third on civil rights and liberties. This exercise encompassed aspects from all three of these units. Students read about current events, researched documentary evidence, and structured formal presentations to develop and support powerful and convincing arguments.

The main purpose of any high school government course is to help young people develop into active and involved citizens. The informed citizen of the 21st century must have the tools and the skills to make sense of the 24-hour-a-day media blitz of contradictory commentary that too often blends opinion with fact. Some critics of this exercise have suggested that a debate would have been less controversial, and while that might be true, the trial format is more an “authentic assessment” and therefore more compelling.
to students who are quite used to debating in class. Moreover, it is difficult to ensure that all students work and participate in a debate to an equivalent degree. The trial was a motivating force that required every student to pull his/her own weight. It ensured that students would be advancing societal and curricular goals by requiring them to investigate and assess contradictory documentary sources as well as informed (and uninformed) commentary in an attempt to develop sustainable arguments on the guilt or innocence of our nation’s Chief Executive.

Initial Preparations

Initially, the class of 27 students divided into four groups: a defense team (3-4 students), a prosecution team (3-4 students), the defendant, President Bush (1 student), and witnesses (remaining students). Since we were already aware that the U.S. (and President Bush) had been accused and tried for war crimes by various organizations around the world, we studied the charges that these groups made against him and spent time in class identifying all the possible “charges” that appeared worthy of further investigation. After several days of discussion we decided on two general categories in order to start the process: “abuse of prisoners” and “overall effects of war on civilians.” We then discussed possible venues in which to hold the trial. A U.S. Senate impeachment setting was discussed but almost immediately rejected due to our conclusion that international war crimes would not equate to “high crimes and misdemeanors” as defined in the Constitution. Eventually, an international court was decided on since we wanted to examine the larger scope of international agreements that the U.S. had signed. We also hoped that the further we were from “reality” the more likely observers would see this for what it was - an academic exercise. We knew, of course, that the U.S. government rejected the jurisdiction of an “International Court of Justice,” but since the actual George Bush was not on trial and would face no consequences from the verdict - it really didn’t matter. The forum decided on was merely the means to an end.

At this point in the process, most of the students on the Defense and Prosecution teams began researching potentially relevant international laws and agreements. It was important to us that we find agreements both signed and ratified by the United States. Even though most international courts do not require ratification to be charged, my students argued that it would hurt the credibility of our exercise if we did not have a firm basis for the charges. Both teams agreed that the 1949 Geneva Accords would form the legal basis for the charges (it was signed and ratified by the United States) as well as the UN Convention against Torture. Both teams of attorneys studied and selected the relevant portions of these documents and identified specific charges.

At the same time, those students who opted to serve as witnesses were split into two teams. Those who wished to work for the defense sat with one of the defense attorneys and those who wished to work for the prosecution sat with one of the prosecuting attorneys to research potential witnesses. Witnesses would be real-life people involved in the events serving as the basis for the trial. Students were instructed to locate at least 10 witnesses for each side. Crucial in this process was that enough information be available for students to precisely role-play the witnesses.

Assembling a Witness List

After several days, the entire class assembled to narrow the list of witnesses to the exact number needed (the number of remaining students). Once accomplished, these students selected the witness that they wanted to “role-play.” This process was amended once or twice (even after students were assigned) to make corrections for better witnesses – but a cut-off date was also agreed upon. The final witness list for the Prosecution included those injured in the Iraqi War and the War on Terror (such as Hachemi Abdullah, a victim of cluster bombing), U.S. personnel (such as Ian Fishback, a U.S. Army Captain who allegedly witnessed torture at Guantanamo Bay) and critics of U.S. actions (such as Michael Ratner, an international human rights attorney). For the Defense, witnesses included the President, Vice-President, National Security Advisor, and Attorney General, as well as other involved administration officials (such as John Yoo, the deputy AG who argued that the Geneva Accords did not apply), and experts such as Dr. Michael Bailey, who testified on the effects of Depleted Uranium.

With the detailed charges and relevant portions of international law agreed upon by both teams of attorneys, the defense and prosecution teams worked to develop arguments that could be used to make their cases. This involved considerable research regarding the Geneva Accords, and group brainstorming about
the case and the witnesses. For the Prosecution, this required considering ways to directly connect the President to the alleged crimes. For the Defense this entailed coming up with ways to distance the President from possible crimes and/or arguing that there were never any “crimes” committed.

At the same time, the student-witnesses researched the witness each was going to become for the trial. Their specific assignment was to write a two-page summary of the scope of the witness’s knowledge and his/her importance to the case. This was a critical piece to the assignment because it would create a “universe of knowledge” for both teams, which would enable the Prosecution and Defense to prepare direct and cross-examinations for each witness. The attorneys had to read and analyze the summaries in order to determine how the witnesses would be used to prove their case. I suggested they work at first as teams to connect each witness to the particular attorney who would be conducting his/her questioning. After that, the attorneys would be able to interview witnesses for clarification and further questioning.

While this was being done by the attorneys, the witnesses were working on “getting into the role” of the person they were representing by finding out more information and trying to “become” that person. It was necessary to understand more about the personality and character of the witness - whether he/she would be willing to testify, whether he/she would be secretive, possibly hostile, warm or disarming. We wanted this to be as realistic as possible, but we agreed that no one should try to use an accent or speak with the mannerisms of the person being represented since that might be construed as disrespectful.

**Pulling It All Together**

At this point the exercise was a few days from launch. The attorneys were deciding what order to call their witnesses and what specific questions to ask in order to make their respective cases. I enlisted several staff members to serve as judges for this exercise. I then sent a letter detailing this exercise to the entire school staff, inviting others to watch the proceedings (my Supervisor and the Principal had been informed at the start of the process). After that I developed the trial methodology and presented it to the students. Both teams were given 100 minutes of question time, excluding opening and closing statement, which they could allocate as they thought best. I expected that the trial would last five days.

Several students were concerned that a verdict might polarize the school and be misinterpreted by anyone who watched only part of the trial. After discussing this, a majority of the students favored sealing the verdict. While this decision has been since derided as naïve, I still believe it would have worked in the absence of a media firestorm. While the verdict would be academically irrelevant (as my students agreed), it had the virtue of being a motivating force (each side wanted to “win”). I realized that a sealed verdict would eventually be “leaked,” but without any confirmation from me or the judges, no one would ever know for sure, and rumors would exist on both sides. Additionally, had the entire process been confined to a school exercise, as it was intended, it is likely that the question of the verdict would have died out soon after the trial ended. At the point that we decided to seal the verdict, we stopped referring to the exercise as a “trial” and started calling it a “hearing” - which was more accurate at that point since there would be no announced verdict.

After the second day of this exercise I received a call from the *Daily Record*, a local newspaper which had in its possession a copy of the letter I sent to the staff. The next day our exercise appeared in the *Drudge Report* (http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,186793,00.html) as a “War Crimes Trial” and we were fielding calls from several news organizations and reporters. Most of the Board of Education, my Principal, Social Studies District Supervisor, Superindentent, Personnel Director and Assistant Superintendent for Instruction supported the class in the firestorm that followed. These individuals were aware of the balanced nature of the exercise. One concern was the “packaging” of the activity as a “war crimes trial” since these were charged words that obviously inflamed emotions and prevented many from seeing the true components of the exercise. I hesitated when asked to eliminate the verdict from the exercise because I believed the students needed the “award” of a verdict to motivate them - but students unanimously, and immediately, agreed to that request. They knew, as many critics did not, that this exercise was grounded on the research and evaluation of relevant, controversial and contradictory evidence. It was the process that mattered and that would provide the education and the enjoyment, not the result.

After fourteen years of teaching I can honestly say that this exercise was the finest learning experience that I have constructed. After acquiring and
demonstrating advanced knowledge and understanding of policy-makers and policy, my students received a second lesson from the resulting media fanfare. Not only did they respond to these events with intelligence and sagacity, they learned even more from the often biased reporting and coverage. I remain incredibly proud of those 27 young women and men.

Excerpts from the Geneva Convention and the United Nations Convention against Torture


ARTICLE 27: Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity.

ARTICLE 31: No physical or moral coercion shall be exercised against protected persons, in particular to obtain information from them or from third parties.

ARTICLE 32: This prohibition applies not only to murder, torture, corporal punishments, mutilation and medical or scientific experiments not necessitated by the medical treatment of a protected person, but also to any other measures of brutality whether applied by civilian or military agents.

ARTICLE 50: Definition of civilians and civilian population

1. A civilian is any person who does not belong to one of the categories of persons referred to in Article 4 (A) (1), (2), (3) and (6) of the Third Convention and in Article 43 of this Protocol. In case of doubt whether a person is a civilian, that person shall be considered to be a civilian.

3. The presence within the civilian population of individuals who do not come within the definition of civilians does not deprive the population of its civilian character.

ARTICLE 51: Protection of the civilian population

1. The civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against dangers arising from military operations. To give effect to this protection, the following rules, which are additional to other applicable rules of international law, shall be observed in all circumstances.

2. The civilian population as such, as well as individual civilians, shall not be the object of attack. Acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited.

ARTICLE 124: Internees shall not in any case be transferred to penitentiary establishments (prisons, penitentiaries, convict prisons, etc.) to undergo disciplinary punishment therein.


ARTICLE 1: For the purposes of this Convention, the term “torture” means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

ARTICLE 3: Each State Party shall ensure that any individual who alleges he has been subjected to torture in any territory under its jurisdiction has the right to complain to, and to have his case promptly and impartially examined by, its competent authorities. Steps shall be taken to ensure that the complainant and witnesses are protected against all ill-treatment or intimidation as a consequence of his complaint or any evidence given.

ARTICLE 14: Each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. In the event of the death of the victim as a result of an act of torture, his dependants shall be entitled to compensation.
Constitutional Convention Tee-Shirt Project
by Jennifer Debler and Gregory Silver

Project Goal: We will have a “mock” Constitutional Convention in class. At the convention, each student will represent a delegate (There were a total of fifty-five). You must use your textbook and the internet to learn as much as possible about the life and ideas of your delegate. At the convention, you will make an oral presentation explaining them to the class.

Prior to the convention, you will design a t-shirt with an image and a slogan that explains either who your delegate was, what they believed, or what they actually presented at the Constitutional Convention.

To create an image for your t-shirt using a PC:
1. Find an image on the web of your delegate to the Constitutional Convention or another appropriate image. Right click on the image and hit copy.
2. Open a Microsoft Word document. Under File-Page setup, choose landscape or portrait layout.
3. Right click and hit paste to bring the picture into your Word document.
4. Enlarge the image to the proper size. If the image is too fuzzy, find another image.
5. Decide whether to use callouts (word bubbles) or banners above and below your image.
To add text to your design and prepare for printing:
1. Insert-picture-Word Art: Choose a style in the Word Art gallery.
2. Begin editing text by choosing font and size (36 will work best).
3. The “abc” icon will allow you to change the shape. Select colors etc. When finished hit okay.
4. Now that the text is in the document, you need to flip it. Click on it until a little white boxes appear.
5. To reverse the image FLIP the text by grabbing it by the middle box. Drag it inside out. Now reposition the text. This is necessary for when you iron the image onto your shirt.
6. Print your design on tee-shirt transfer paper. You can purchase them at major stationary stores. The directions to use the tee-shirt transfers are inside the package.

Women’s History: The Struggle for Women’s Place in Curricula and Instruction
by Helen M. Simpkins

This is excerpted from a longer paper that was presented as part of a panel presentation on “Teaching Teachers to Teach Women’s History” at the Thirteenth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women Scripps College, Claremont, California in 2005.

In *Teaching Women’s History*, Gerda Lerner (1981) wrote, “Placing women into history and restoring, to half the human race, its legitimate past are intellectually exciting tasks, which demand the best effort of scholars and teachers, and bring out, in turn, the best efforts of students.” Lerner stated, it “must be clearly understood that women’s history exists always within the context of universal history” and that “historical scholarship has presented us with a world in which men act and women are largely invisible.” She concluded, “the advancement of women’s history demands the creation of a conceptual framework by which to place women in history.”

Since Lerner penned these insightful thoughts, study in the field of women’s history has continued to flourish among scholars and academicians. The general recognition of the ever growing body of work testifying to the scope and significance of women’s many roles and contributions to human history and their place in that history gave rise to the creation of “Women’s History Week” followed by the designation of March as “Women’s History Month.” Courses identified as “women’s studies” and “women’s history” have proliferated in colleges and universities across the nation and also may be found in a number of high schools. These are evidence of the increased attention and emphasis placed upon women’s history and women’s studies but it does not address the issue of the need to restructure “traditional history” into a framework that creates a “women’s and men’s history” that would include all of humankind.

The question remains as to how all of this increased knowledge, recognition, and understanding is being transformed and transmitted to the teachers who foster the education of students in the K-12 classroom and how they, in turn, find the ways and means to teach their students. A perusal of the requirements for the preparation of high school history teachers generally does not indicate an emphasis on any such restructured framework of history. It is entirely possible for a high school history teacher to reach the classroom without any grounding in women’s history or women’s issues and, undoubtedly, without a history class restructured to teach what Nancy F. Cott and Drew Gilpin Faust (2005), among many others, call “gender history.”

In a small sampling of teachers from seven school districts (spread over six counties) in New Jersey, “sometimes” was the most frequently selected response
to the question of whether teacher preparation in undergraduate courses included the study of women’s roles and contributions to history. “Seldom” was the second most common response while “not at all” was the third most common response.

In the absence of significant study of women’s history and/or women’s issues via the undergraduate and graduate programs, anticipated sources of knowledge and training for teachers usually would be expected to include conferences and workshops, school organized in-service training programs, mentoring from a colleague(s), self-study, and the school textbook with its accompanying teacher’s resource book. However, when responding to questions regarding participation in conferences and in-service programs focused on training and instruction in women’s roles and contributions to history, “never” exceeded the combined total of all other responses selected on the questionnaire.

The textbook and the accompanying teacher resource guide as a primary source of information continues to be the dominant resource for most teachers. Yet none of the respondents indicated that their text offered “extensive information” regarding women’s roles and contributions to history. The most commonly selected response was that the textbook provided “some information” with about one-third of the responses indicating “limited or no information.”

Some of the teachers interviewed have developed strategies to expand the focus of their teaching to include more about women. Several elementary and middle school teachers indicated that special efforts are made to increase the time and attention to women’s history and famous women during Women’s History Month. One high school teacher has a separate unit on women that typically covers the early 1800s to the present. This differs from the majority of the responses that indicated a preference for incorporating women’s history into each unit as studied or “as appropriate.”

One teacher challenges students periodically with the question “What is everyone else doing now?” This effort to encourage the students to stop and think about what women and other under-represented groups may be doing at any point or event in history can be a very effective tactic. Another teacher begins the school year with a discussion about “who gets included in history” and s/he attempts to maintain it as a theme and focus throughout the year. This becomes a venue for raising questions about those “less well known in history and women would be in this category.” The teacher indicated that this approach is utilized not only in class discussion but also in research and other projects and activities assigned to students.

Conducting interviews with women of a different generation, both family members and non-family women, was identified as a student activity by a number of teachers at different grade levels. This intergenerational activity provides a point of contact between the interviewer and the interview subject, and allows the student to place the personal information gathered into a contact point in history. It offers the student an opportunity to gain some sense of identity with the historical period and/or some sense of the reality of the story of history. A similar yet somewhat different activity by an elementary teacher involves seeking out women’s organizations and establishing links between the organizations and students. This activity provides an introduction to the community action level of many women’s groups that may go unrecognized and/or unacknowledged.

Teachers at the elementary and middle school levels commented on their efforts to carry the study of women beyond the history lesson into other areas of study such as literature, music, careers, immigration and genealogy, architecture, science and medicine, inventors, and recreational reading selections. This increased both the time and amount of study they were able to include in their lessons about women’s many roles and contributions throughout history.

Two teachers noted that their schools offered women’s history/women’s issues electives and both believed that this was a strong positive. Both also indicated that a great deal of time and thought had gone into creating the courses of study and selecting the materials for the electives. One of the teachers commenting actually teaches the new course in women’s studies and commented, “In 26 years I never enjoyed a class as much as this one. It was small, intimate, exciting, and fun.” The teacher also indicated that the supervisor had stated that the registration for the elective next year had more than doubled and the teacher is hopeful that boys will take the course as well.

Significantly, several teachers commented that teaching “women’s history and women’s issues” is a personal interest and “heart issue” with them and that influences the time and effort they devote to developing ideas, activities, and strategies and to
personal growth in terms of knowledge and insight. One, an elementary teacher, supports and often mentors the efforts of her colleagues in this area.

Impressions gathered from the comments and responses of teachers participating in the small survey and from other conversations with teachers makes it rather apparent that the separation of “women’s history” from “real history” or “traditional history” continues to be a significant divide in the K-12 educational arena. DuBois (2005), Lerner, and other contemporary scholars in the field of women’s history often cite historian Mary Beard. In the 1930s, Beard argued that women’s work and actions should “not be removed from the historical flow into a separate narrative,” but included in the “full range of national experience.” Three quarters of a century later, teachers continue the struggle to place this idea into practice.

References

United States v. Frederick Douglass for Planning and Materially Supporting Terrorism
By Alan Singer and Michael Pezone with Aly Lakhaney and Michelle Kaplan

This “mock” trial uses primary source documents from the 19th century and some of the language may be difficult for students. While it is ostensibly a trial of Frederick Douglass, it actually questions current definitions of terrorism and the Patriot Act. Rather than using the original material presented here, teachers may prefer to have students “translate” passages into contemporary language before acting out the play. Discussion of the text and issues can take place between scenes or after the entire production is completed. The trial is divided into scenes so that more than one student can play a particular character. For more information on New Yorkers in the era of slavery, see the “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” curriculum guide at http://www.nyscss.org.

The students in Michael Pezone’s African American history class had just completed acting out a fictional mock trial, “United States v. Frederick Douglass,” where Douglass was charged with planning and materially supporting terrorism against the United States. During jury deliberations, Rhonda Daniel, a student in the Law, Government and Community Service program at Campus Magnet High Schools in Queens, New York, argued that “America was supposed to be founded on freedom, but for African Americans it meant enslavement. How can a country deny freedom and liberty to people because of the color of their skin? How can it be a crime to fight for your rights? Frederick Douglass was only defending the fundamental principles stated in the Declaration of Independence. The entire political system was corrupt and it was the government that was terrorist.”

Clifford Pieroit replied to Rhonda arguing that “There is no denying that Frederick Douglass was a great man who accomplished many things as an abolitionist, author, political leader, and spokesperson for human rights. Unfortunately, his achievements are tainted by his part in the conspiracy with John Brown. Even though slavery was wrong, it was the law in the South at that time. Terrorism means to act violently against people or property to influence public opinion and government policies. That is what John Brown did. Because Douglass helped him, he can justifiably be branded as a conspirator and even a terrorist.”

“No, terrorism is a subjective term,” said Jamel Wells. “The thing that makes Douglass a freedom fighter and not a terrorist is that he was fighting for the inalienable rights of people that are part of democracy. Both the prosecution and the defense agreed that slavery was wrong and had to be abolished. If you convict Douglass of terrorism then all of the people who participated in the Civil War should be declared terrorists also.”

Fiorella Leal was not so sure. “Frederick Douglass is guilty of the charges. He did help John Brown plan a rebellion against the government of the United States. It does not make him a bad guy. You can be guilty and be a good person. He should have been punished for breaking the law. He would have become a martyr like John..."
Brown.” Ashley Willock countered, “There is nothing wrong with standing up for what you believe. Frederick Douglass was an anti-slavery activist who wanted to help his people. He did a wrong, but he did it to make a right. Douglass only agreed to use violence if they were provoked and had no choice. The courts accept that violence is legal in self-defense. When Douglass realized that the original plan had changed into something else that was too treacherous, he left the group. That is not the mind of a terrorist.”

Diana Chavez suggested a compromise. “Douglass could be charged with conspiracy, but not with terrorism. Talking about something and doing something are not the same thing. Douglass thought terrorism was wrong. He went home. But either way, slavery ended with the Civil War. Douglass was fighting against slavery and should be found not guilty.”

While it is written as a trial of Frederick Douglass, this activity is actually intended to stimulate discussion of current and past definitions of terrorism, conspiracy and the Patriot Act (2001). We recommend it as a three-day activity, although we have also done it in one day. On day 1, students discuss who Frederick Douglass and John Brown were, the attack on Harpers Ferry preceding the outbreak of the Civil War, the ideas of terrorism and conspiracy, and the Patriot Act. On day 2, students act out the play and discuss the issues highlighted in each of the scenes. We have included guiding questions that we found useful. For homework between days 2 and 3, students write their individual views on Douglass’ guilt or innocence and whether they believe he was a freedom fighter or terrorist. They can use a standard essay format or present their views as a rap. On day 3, students deliberate in groups, present their views to the full class and debate their conclusions.

Patriot Act (18 U.S.C. 2331). A person engages in domestic terrorism if they do an act “dangerous to human life” that is a violation of the criminal laws of a state or the United States, if the act "appears to be intended to: (i) intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping".

Federal Conspiracy Statute (18 U.S.C. 371). A person engages in conspiracy “if two or more persons conspire to commit any offense against the United States ... and one or more of such persons do any act to effect the object of the conspiracy.”

The “mock” trial uses primary source documents and some of the language may be difficult for students. Rather than using the original material presented here, teachers may prefer to have students “translate” passages into contemporary language before acting out the play. Depending on the class and student interest, discussion of the text and issues can take place between scenes or after the entire production is completed. The trial is divided into mini-scenes so that more than one student can play a particular character.

The students in Law, Government are overwhelmingly African American, Caribbean and Latino. They helped research the documents included in the play, edit the passages and organize the production. They especially enjoyed writing and performing the back-and-forth legal confrontations between participants in the trial. They also insisted that Martin Luther King, Jr. be added as a witness because of his commitment to social struggle and parallels they saw between his career and the career of Frederick Douglass.

Sources Used in the Play (with quote references)


United States v. Frederick Douglass for Planning and Materially Supporting Terrorism

Scene 1 (Scalia, Douglass, Ashcroft and Darrow).
Justice Anton Scalia: Mr. Douglass, you are accused of violating the Patriot Act of 2001 by participating in a conspiracy and materially supporting acts of domestic terrorism against the legitimate government of the United States of America. Although this act was not in effect at the time of your accused crimes, you will answer these charges to this special historical tribunal. How do you plead?
Frederick Douglass: Not guilty! Not guilty! Not guilty! This trial is a travesty of justice. It is a moral outrage.
Justice Scalia: Mr. John Ashcroft, you have been selected as prosecutor in this case because as Attorney General of the United States you were instrumental in drafting provisions of the Patriot Act following the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001. Mr. Clarence Darrow, you have been selected as Defense Attorney because of your long and successful career defending the civil liberties and legal rights of political activists and unpopular clients. Mr. Ashcroft, please make a brief opening statement.
Ashcroft: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. We intend to show that Frederick Douglass conspired with John Brown to commit acts of domestic terrorism against the legitimate governments of the state of Virginia and of the United States in an effort to free enslaved Africans and provoke a slave rebellion. Although Mr. Douglass did not participate in the final attack on Harpers Ferry, he met with John Brown regularly and his material support included providing Brown with a place to live during the winter months just prior to Brown’s outrageous attack on this country.
Justice Scalia: Mr. Darrow, please make a brief opening statement.
Darrow: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, we intend to show that Frederick Douglass was defending the fundamental principles stated in the Declaration of Independence that declares that “all men are created equal” and that “they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Is Mr. Douglass guilty because he defended these fundamental rights? The Emancipation
Proclamation and the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution ended slavery in this country. Is Mr. Douglass guilty because he believed that slavery must and would end? It is the misnamed Patriot Act that should be on trial here. It violates the spirit and the law of the Constitution and should be declared unconstitutional.

**Question: What issues are being debated in the opening scene?**

**Scene 2 (Scalia, Ashcroft, Brown and Darrow).**

Scalia: Mr. Ashcroft, please call your first witness.

Ashcroft: For the prosecution’s first witness we call John Brown, who was convicted of the terrorist attack on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia and executed for his crime.

Scalia: Mr. Brown, please take the stand.

Ashcroft: Mr. Brown, do you admit your treason against the government of the United States?

Brown: “Had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends . . . every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment. The court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. . . I believe that to have interfered as I have done . . . in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right” (1).

Darrow: I object your honor. It is not Mr. Brown who is on trial here. This testimony is prejudicing the jury against my client.

Ashcroft: Your honor, the prosecution wishes to establish the terrorist crimes against the legitimate government of the United States that actually took place.

Scalia: Objection overruled. Please continue Mr. Ashcroft.

Ashcroft: Why do you claim this act of terrorism was justified?

Brown: “I . . .am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with Blood” (2).

Ashcroft: Frederick Douglass harbored you in Rochester while you were planning the raid on Harpers Ferry. Will you please read to the court the letter you wrote to your wife on January 30, 1858?

Brown: “My dear wife and children, every one, I am (praised be God!) once more in York State. Whether I shall be permitted to visit you or not this winter or spring, I cannot now say. . . The anxiety I feel to see my wife and children once more I am unable to describe. . . . Do not noise it about that I am in these parts, and direct to N. Hawkins, care of Frederick Douglass, Rochester, N.Y. I want to hear how you are all supplied with winter clothing, boots, etc. God bless you all! Your affectionate husband and father, John Brown” (3).

Ashcroft: I have no further questions for this witness your honor.

Scalia: Please step down Mr. Brown.

**Question: How does John Brown’s testimony implicate Frederick Douglass?**

**Scene 3 (Ashcroft, Scalia, Darrow, Beecher and Lincoln).**

Ashcroft: I now call as a witness, the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher of Brooklyn, New York.

Scalia: Reverend Beecher, please take the stand.

Ashcroft: Reverend Beecher, you were a minister at the Pilgrim Congregationalist Church in Brooklyn, New York, a noted abolitionist, and the brother of the author Harriet Beecher Stowe?

Beecher: Yes sir.

Ashcroft: In your opinion Reverend Beecher, what was the impact of John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry on America?
Beecher: “We have no right to treat the citizens of the South with acrimony and bitterness because they are involved in a system of wrong doing . . . . The preaching of discontent among the bondsmen of our land is not the way to help them . . . No relief will be carried to the slaves or to the South as a body by any individual or organized plans to carry them off or to incite them to abscond . . . We must maintain sympathy and kindness toward the South . . . You should care for both the master and the slave . . . You ought to set your face against and discountenance [oppose] anything like an insurrectionary spirit” (4).

Scalia: Thank you Reverend Beecher. I have no further questions.

Scalia: Reverend Beecher, please step down.

Ashcroft: Thank you Mr. Lincoln. I have no further questions.

Ashcroft: I now call as a witness, Abraham Lincoln, former President of the United States.

Ashcroft: Mr. Lincoln, please take the stand.

Ashcroft: Mr. Lincoln, what are your views on the responsibility of citizens to obey the law?

Lincoln: “There is, even now, something of ill-omen, amongst us. I mean the increasing disregard for law which pervades the country . . . and . . . savage mobs . . . The question recurs, ‘how shall we fortify against it [danger]?’ The answer is simple. Let every American . . . swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least particular, the laws of the country; and never to tolerate their violation by others . . . Let every man remember that to violate the law, is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the character of his own, and his children’s liberty . . . Although bad laws, if they exist, should be repealed as soon as possible, still while they continue in force, for the sake of example, they should be religiously observed” (5).

Ashcroft: Thank you Mr. Lincoln. I have no further questions.

Darrow: Your honor, may I cross-examine the witness?

Scalia: Please proceed Mr. Darrow.

Darrow: Mr. Lincoln, when you made this statement in 1838, you were speaking at the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, on the problem of moral character, not about slavery. Could you be more specific about your views on the problem of slavery in the United States? I specifically refer to statements you made during the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates.

Lincoln: “‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe the government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free . . . Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it . . . or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South” (6).

Darrow: Is it fair to say that you believed Civil War was inevitable?

Ashcroft: I object your Honor. The question asks for an opinion, not a statement from the historical record.

Scalia: Objection sustained. Do you have any further questions Mr. Darrow?

Darrow: No, your Honor.

Scalia: Mr. Lincoln, please step down.

**Question: What do Beecher and Lincoln believe about rebellion against slavery?**

**Scene 4 (Ashcroft, Scalia, Darrow and Douglass).**

Ashcroft: I now call the defendant, Frederick Douglass, as a witness.

Scalia: Mr. Douglass, please take the stand.

Darrow: One minute, please, your honor. I wish to remind my client that he has the constitutional right not to testify against himself.

Douglass: I understand my rights. Your honor, I wish to testify.

Ashcroft: What exactly was your relationship with John Brown?

Douglass: “From the time of my visit to him in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1847, our relations were friendly and confidential. I never passed through Springfield without calling on him, and he never came to Rochester without calling on me. He often stopped over night with me, when we talked over the feasibility of his plan for destroying the value of slave property” (7).

Ashcroft: During these visits, did you plot with John Brown to use violence to overturn the laws of this country?

Darrow: I object. Counsel is leading the witness.
Scalia: Mr. Douglass, are you pleading the 5th amendment right to remain silent?
Douglass: No. I am prepared to answer the question.
Scalia: Objection overruled. Please proceed Mr. Ashcroft.
Ashcroft: Let me repeat the question. Mr. Douglass, did you plot with John Brown to use violence to overturn the laws of the United States?
Douglass: “That plan . . . was to take twenty or twenty-five . . . trustworthy men into the mountains of Virginia and Maryland, and station them in squads of five . . . They were to be well armed, but were to avoid battle or violence, unless compelled by pursuit or in self-defense. In that case, they were to make it as costly as possible to the assailing party, whether that party should be soldiers or citizens . . . The work of going into the valley of Virginia and persuading the slaves to flee to the mountains, was to be committed to the most courageous and judicious man connected with each squad” (8).
Ashcroft: What was your opinion of this plan?
Douglass: “Hating slavery as I did, and making its abolition the object of my life, I was ready to welcome any new mode of attack upon the slave system which gave any promise of success . . . In the worse case, too, if the plan should fail, and John Brown should be driven from the mountains, a new fact would be developed by which the nation would be kept awake to the existence of slavery. Hence, I assented [agreed] to this, John Brown’s scheme or plan for running off slaves” (9).
Darrow: Your Honor, what difference does it make what my client’s opinions were. He is on trial because he is accused of terrorist actions against the United States government.
Ashcroft: We will get to the actions, your honor. We will get to them.
Scalia: By all means, continue Mr. Ashcroft. Objection overruled.

**Question: What does Frederick Douglass admit to in his testimony?**

**Scene 5 (Ashcroft, Douglass, Darrow and Scalia).**
Ashcroft: Mr. Douglass, did you participate in the final plans for the assault on Harpers Ferry?
Douglass: “We . . . talked over the enterprise which was about to be undertaken . . . I at once opposed the measure with all the arguments at my command. To me, such a measure would be fatal to running off slaves (as was the original plan), and fatal to all engaged in doing so. It would be an attack upon the federal government, and would array the whole country against us” (10).
Darrow: Your Honor, my client opposed the actions at Harpers Ferry. The prosecution has no case here. I move that all charges be dismissed.
Scalia: You will have an opportunity to present the defense’s case Mr. Darrow. Please do not interrupt.
Ashcroft: Let me continue. Mr. Douglass, what was your final response to this plan?
Douglass: “I told him, and these were my words, that all his arguments, and all his descriptions of the place, convinced me that he was going into a perfect steel-trap, and that once in he would never get out alive; that he would be surrounded at once and escape would be impossible . . . When I found that he had fully made up his mind and could not be dissuaded, I turned to Shields Green and told him . . . that I should return home, and if he wished to go with me he could do so. Captain Brown urged us both to go with him, but I could not do so, and could but feel that he was about to rivet the fetters [tighten the chains] more firmly than ever on the limbs of the enslaved” (11).
Ashcroft: What was Brown’s response to your decision?
Douglass: “In parting he put his arms around me in a manner more than friendly, and said: ‘Come with me, Douglass, I will defend you with my life. I want you for a special purpose . . .’ But my discretion or my cowardice made me proof against the dear old man’s eloquence-- perhaps it was something of both which determined my course” (12).
Ashcroft: Why did you flee the United States after the capture and conviction of John Brown?
Darrow: Objection your Honor. I do not understand the relevance of this question.
Ashcroft: I wish to establish that Mr. Douglass was aware of his guilt in this matter.
Scalia: Objection overruled. Mr. Douglass, please answer the question.
Douglass: “I knew if my enemies could not prove me guilty of the offence of being with John Brown they could prove that I was Frederick Douglass; they could prove that I was in correspondence and conspiracy with Brown against slavery; they could prove that I brought money to aid him, and in what was then the state of the public mind I could not hope to make a jury of Virginia believe I did not go the whole length which he went, or that I was not one of his supporters, and I knew that all Virginia, were I once in her clutches, would say ‘let him be hanged’” (13).

Ashcroft: Why did you later return to this country?
Douglass: “Much of the excitement caused by the Harper’s Ferry insurrection had subsided . . . Great changes had now taken place in the public mind touching the John Brown raid. Virginia had satisfied her thirst for blood . . . The old hero, in the trial hour, had behaved so grandly that men regarded him not as a murderer, but as a martyr. All over the North men were singing the John Brown song. His body was in the dust, but his soul was marching on. His defeat was already assuming the form and pressure of victory, and his death was giving new life and power to the principles of justice and liberty” (14).

Ashcroft: How did you avoid prosecution at that time?
Douglass: “Early after the insurrection at Harper’s Ferry, an investigating committee was appointed by Congress . . . I have never been able to account satisfactorily for the sudden abandonment of this investigation on any other ground than that the men engaged in it expected soon to be in rebellion themselves, and that not a rebellion for liberty like that of John Brown, but a rebellion for slavery, and that they saw that by using their senatorial power in search of rebels they might be whetting [sharpening] a knife for their own throats” (15).

Ashcroft: Your honor and ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the prosecution rests its case.
Scalia: Mr. Douglass, please step down.

Question: How did Frederick Douglass respond to John Brown’s plan?

Scene 6 (Scalia, Darrow, Ashcroft, Henry, Jefferson and King).
Scalia: Mr. Darrow, do you wish to call any witnesses for the defense?
Darrow: Yes, your honor. Our first witness is Patrick Henry.
Ashcroft: I object your honor. Mr. Henry was a leader of the American Revolution and the events under discussion today happened decades later just prior to the Civil War. I fail to see any relevance Mr. Henry or any of the Founding Fathers have to this case.
Darrow: Your honor, in 1775, in the Virginia House of Commons, Mr. Henry established the principal that rebellion against slavery was the duty of every citizen. That is exactly the issue being debated in this case.
Darrow: Thank you your honor.
Darrow: Mr. Henry, please take the stand.
Darrow: Mr. Henry, explain to the court your views on the legitimacy of revolutionary violence.
Patrick Henry: “Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!” (16).
Darrow: Thank you Mr. Henry. The defense now calls Thomas Jefferson.
Scalia: Mr. Henry, please step down. Mr. Jefferson, please take the stand.
Darrow: What are you views on rebellion against injustice?
Jefferson: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness . . . whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government . . . when a long train of abuses . . . evinces [demonstrates] a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government” (17).
Ashcroft: I object your honor. This is a selective quotation. Mr. Jefferson, did you not also warn: “Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes”? Do you still suggest that this rebellion was justified under the criteria of “prudence” established in the Declaration of Independence?
Jefferson: “The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriot and tyrants. It is their natural manure” (18).

Darrow: No further questions Mr. Jefferson. The defense calls Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ashcroft: Objection. Where is this line of question going your Honor?

Darrow: Your Honor, the defense needs some latitude to establish the principles that were motivating Mr. Douglass.

Ashcroft: But Douglass was dead decades before Dr. King was even born.

Darrow: He is being called as an expert witness on the principle of civil disobedience to injustice.

Scalia: I will allow this, but be warned, the patience of this court will only go so far. Mr. Jefferson, please step down. Dr. King, please take the stand.

Darrow: You have been called the 20th century’s Frederick Douglass. Why did you champion non-violent civil disobedience in the south? Please read to us from the letter you wrote to Birmingham, Alabama clergy while you were in jail in that city in 1963.

King: I wrote: “You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations . . . It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city’s white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative. Non-violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue” (19).

Ashcroft: Your honor, let me remind the court, Dr. King is referring to non-violent civil disobedience.

King: “Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro.”

Scalia: Dr. King, please step down.

**Question: Which testimony do you think best supports Frederick Douglass’ case?**

**Scene 7 (Darrow, Scalia and Douglass).**

Darrow: For its final witness, the defense wishes to recall Mr. Frederick Douglass.

Scalia: Mr. Douglass, please take the stand. Let me remind you that you are still under oath.

Darrow: Mr. Douglass, why do you believe rebellion against slavery was justified?

Douglass: “Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? . . . I hear the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are today rendered more intolerable by the jubilant shouts that reach them. . . . To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. . . . What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. . . . There is not a nation of the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of these United States at this very hour” (20).

Darrow: Knowing history following the assault on Harpers Ferry, how do you evaluate John Brown’s actions there?

Douglass: “Did John Brown draw his sword against slavery and thereby lose his life in vain? . . . To this I answer ten thousand times, No! . . . John Brown began the war that ended American slavery and made this a free Republic. Until this blow was struck, the prospect for freedom was dim, shadowy and uncertain . . . When John Brown stretched forth his arm the sky was cleared. The time for compromises was gone . . . The South . . . drew the sword of rebellion and thus made her own, and not Brown’s, the lost cause of the century” (21).

Darrow: Your honor, the defense rests its case.

**Question: Why does Frederick Douglass believe that John Brown was justified?**

**Scene 8 (Scalia and Douglass).**

Scalia: Mr. Douglass, would you like to make a final statement to this court before the jury begins deliberations?
Social Science Docket

“If there is no struggle there is no progress. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. If we ever get free from the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and if needs be, by our lives and the lives of others” (22).

Scalia: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the circumstances of this trial are highly irregular. The defendant and many of the other participants have long been deceased. The Patriot Act became law almost a century and a half after the events of 1859 took place. Yet despite this, the issues of rebellion against legitimate government and domestic terrorism remain pressing ones into the 21st century.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you will send a message to the nation and the world as you decide on the guilt or innocence of Frederick Douglass. Should Frederick Douglass be honored as a freedom fighter or should he and his friend John Brown be condemned as terrorists?

According to a poll by Hart Research, for the first time in history, a majority of Americans (54%) said they know little about labor unions. The implications are clear. To a very large degree, Americans are uninformed or misinformed about the labor movement and the role workers and unions have played in our nation’s economic, political, social and cultural life. In New York State, the Board of Regents “calls upon all members of the education community to recognize and include the contributions of the American labor movement as an integral part of the school curriculum.” Despite this policy, there has been no one place that teachers can go to find high quality curriculum materials to help them prepare and teach lessons that help students discover the rich history and the variety of activities that reflect the contributions working people and their organizations have made, and still make, to this country.

The American Labor Studies Center (ALSC), housed in the Kate Mullany National Historic Site in Troy, New York has been created to collect and disseminate a wide variety of materials and resources to assist K-12 teachers integrate labor history and labor studies into the curriculum consistent with state and national standards. Kate Mullany was one of early American labor history’s most important women. The twenty-four year-old Irish immigrant organized and led the nation’s first all women’s union and was the first woman to serve as an officer of a national union, the National Labor Union, in 1868. She led the Troy Collar Laundry Union on a successful strike in 1864 and became a prominent spokesperson for the right of women to organize and bargain collectively as the best way to improve their working conditions. Her home at 350 Eighth Street in Troy was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1998 and designated a National Historic Site by Congress in 2004 as a result of efforts by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and Congressman Michael McNulty.

Through its web site (http://www.labor-studies.org), workshops, exhibits and other venues, the ALSC provides teachers with basic resources such as a glossary of labor terms, a bibliography, filmography, timeline, labor quotes, photos, and labor songs. Full courses, such as Professor Gerald Zahavi’s “Workers and Work in America, 1600 to the Present: A Multimedia Course,” are available with the click of a mouse. “Lessons in Labor History” from the
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction includes materials, resources, and lessons designed to assist teachers and students alike to think about a variety of historic social and economic events, circumstances, laws, and forces that helped to shape today’s workplace. “The Daily Lesson Plan” developed by *The New York Times* and Bank Street College is aligned with academic standards and has interdisciplinary connections. The following overview of the lesson plan appears on the web site; “In this lesson, students compose a statement of basic rights to protect their own health and well-being. They then research the history, power and purpose of unions in the United States before creating their own union to promote the interests of (middle school or high school) students.” Two excellent simulations have been added to the web site including “Case Study: A National Labor Relations Board Union Representation Election at Get Well Hospital” and “Collective Bargaining Institute for Secondary Students,” a four-hour lesson/workshop where students are divided into management and union teams and negotiate a contract.

The ALSC web site’s section on “Child Labor” is linked to the “AFT Child Labor Project,” a “Child Labor in America” lesson plan from the Library of Congress and “Photographs of Lewis Hine: Documentation of Child Labor” that was developed by the staff of the National Archives and Records Administration. The link to LABOR ARTS offers a virtual museum that gathers, identifies and displays images of the cultural artifacts of working people and their organizations. Their mission is to present powerful images that help students understand the past and present lives of working people. There are many other quality resources available to teachers on the web site that is currently undergoing a comprehensive makeover. Specific materials will be highlighted in the future. Teachers are encouraged to recommend additions and improvements to the site and suggestions for lessons or other ideas to tell “labor’s untold story.”

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**Teaching About New Jersey’s Working People**

by Angelica M. Santomauro

The American Labor Museum is housed in the 1908 Botto House National Landmark in Haledon, New Jersey, a suburb of Paterson that was once known as the “Silk City.” As a result of a grant from The Partners in Distance Learning, the Museum began offering distance learning videoconferencing classes in 2000. Since that time, thousands of students from as far as Wisconsin and as near as New Jersey have had the opportunity to learn about the contribution of working people and immigrants in this country and throughout the world.

The newest videoconference offering from the American Labor Museum (http://www.labormuseum.org) blends songs, poetry and food to explore the struggle for social justice by immigrants and laborers in the early 20th Century. It introduces students to the historically significant collection of music and poetry on file at the Museum. When visiting the Museum on or off-site, the Museum’s period rooms, Old World Gardens and other exhibits continue to provide the feeling of warmth as if one has entered a working person’s home. The use of food in our program provides students with an understanding of the cultural traditions found in an immigrant’s home.

During the program, *History for the Soul*, for grades 3-through-adults, participants listen to songs about America’s everyday heroes who developed this country. Emotional lyrics and melodies convey the courage and determination of those working in the mines, fields and factories as they toiled and struggled for peace in the workplace. Poems by legendary and contemporary poets are also shared. The poetic verse expresses feelings about overcoming oppression and serves as inspiration for facing the challenges of today’s life. Finally, participants travel back to a century-old kitchen, equipped with a coal-burning stove used for cooking and an icebox for storing food. In the kitchen, a working class immigrant mill worker prepares a virtual meal. The period-clad homemaker stirs a copper pot of slow-cooking polenta, hand-grinds fresh espresso coffee beans, splits and roasts hot chestnuts, and toasts homemade Italian wheat bread – all without electricity! Throughout the program, participants are able to compare and contrast the conditions of the past with those of present day life. The program supports Labor Studies, Immigrant Studies, American History, New Jersey History, Language Arts, Music, and the Humanities curriculum.

Teachers, students, and the general public from around the country participate in the American Labor Museum’s *Virtual Field Trips*. Videoconferencing provides a means for students to “visit” the museum from the classroom and without leaving the school for the entire day. It “brings” a museum educator and various experts to the classroom where students can interact and engage in a dialogue. Furthermore, when bus transportation costs are high for school districts and parents, electronic field trips can prove economical.
The American Labor Museum offers a menu of eight additional Virtual Field Trip presentations (Grades 4 – 12): “American Textile Industry, 1900 – Present,” “Botto House: An Immigrant’s Home in 1908,” “Women at Work: Paterson Silk Strike of 1913,” “Child Labor: 1900 – Present,” “Paul Robeson (1898 – 1976): American Hero,” “A. Philip Randolph, the Pullman Porters & the Civil Rights Movement,” “Workers’ Struggles which led to Strikes, 1900 – Present,” and “Solidarity Forever: Organized Workers, 1900 – Present.” The Virtual Field Trip presentations provide students with the opportunity to learn more about the history and contemporary issues of working people and immigrants and, they serve as a source of inspiration for students to become active members of their community, country, and world. The presentations are designed for a 45-minute class period, but the length of each program may be tailored to meet the various needs of participants.

The Museum’s Virtual Field Trips are interactive. Students are assigned the role of historians. Then, they are presented with a series of primary materials including photographs, artifacts, audio recordings, graphs, and charts that are analyzed by the class. There is free time at the end of the Virtual Field Trip for a question and answer session. Suggested classroom activities for each Virtual Field Trip are available from the museum. These social studies, language arts, and visual arts activities were designed to serve as appropriate pre- or post-Virtual Field Trip lessons. Teachers may consider another follow-up activity: Primary materials seen in the Virtual Field Trip may be borrowed and brought to the classroom. Portable exhibits, called Museums-in-a-Suitcase, contain artifacts, photographs, and reproductions, and are available to schools.

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<th>American Voices at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century</th>
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<td>William Katz &amp; Laurie Lehman are editors of The Cruel Years: American Voices at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century (Apex Press, 2001). The stories of Bernardo Vega, Ah-men-la-de-ni, Lee Chew, the Troy “collar starcher,” and the New York City police officer are excerpted from their book. William Katz (<a href="http://www.williamlkatz.com">http://www.williamlkatz.com</a>) is an independent historian available to speak with school groups in the New York metropolitan area.</td>
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(A) Bernardo Vega: From Puerto Rico to New York

In 1898, the U.S. Army, acting on information provided by Puerto Rican freedom-fighters, defeated the Spanish occupying forces. When the United States claimed the island, Puerto Rico’s leading figures voiced shock. Born in 1885 when Puerto Rico was still ruled by Spain, Bernardo Vega was among millions who suddenly became “wards” of the United States. A proud, self-educated cigar worker, he joined the island’s first large working class organization as a teenager, and at 20, he helped found the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. In 1916 Vega sailed to New York, ready for hard work, new adventures, and political activity. - William Katz & Laurie Lehman

A. [T]he Coamo docked at Hamilton Pier on Staten Island. First to disembark were the passengers traveling first class-businessmen, well-to-do families, and students. In second class, where I was, there were the emigrants, most of us tabaqueros, or cigar workers. We all boarded the ferry that crossed from Staten Island to lower Manhattan. We sighed as we set foot on solid ground. There, gaping before us, were the jaws of the iron dragon: the immense New York metropolis. All of us new arrivals were well dressed in our Sunday best. I myself was wearing a navy blue woolen suit, a borsalino hat made of Italian straw, black shoes with pointy toes, a white vest, and a red tie.

B. In those days you didn’t need much to get by in New York. Potatoes were selling for a fraction of a cent a pound; eggs were fifteen cents a dozen; a pound of salt pork was going for twelve cents, and a prime steak for twenty cents. A nickel would buy a lot of vegetables. You could pick up a good suit for $10.00. With a nickel fare you could get anywhere in the city, and change from one line to another without having to pay more.

C. In 1916 the Puerto Rican colony in New York amounted to about six thousand people, mostly tabaqueros and their families. The broader Spanish-speaking population was estimated at 16,000. There were no notable color differences between the various pockets of Puerto Ricans. As a rule, people lived in harmony in the Puerto Rican neighborhoods, and racial differences were of no concern.
D. According to statistics kept by the International Cigarmakers’ Union, there were over 4,500 Puerto Ricans enrolled in its various locals around the city. But the majority of the workers lacked a skilled trade, and made a large labor supply willing to take on the lowest paying jobs of New York. For the most part Puerto Ricans worked in nonunion shops. Sewing shops and restaurants, in particular, were filled with Puerto Ricans. But the unions in those lines of work didn’t do a thing to recruit them. Furthermore, carpenters, bricklayers, tailors, and barbers who came from Puerto Rico were not admitted as members of the A. F. of L. unions. In fact, not until the cigarmakers began to wage their union battles did unions in other trades show any interest in Puerto Rican workers. And that didn’t happen until into the 1920s. Shortly before that, the first union to bridge through that barrier within labor, after the International Cigarmakers’ Union, was the Furriers’ Union.

E. The first political campaign in New York in which Puerto Ricans participated was the Alfred Smith campaign of 1918. Around seven thousand Puerto Ricans registered to vote, the majority in the first and third electoral districts in Brooklyn. A major force behind the drive was the Club Democratico Puertorriqueno, the first organization of its kind inside the Democratic Party.

(B) Ah-nen-la-de-ni: A Mohawk Receives a White Education

Native American children were whisked off to distant schools where they were compelled to adopt a new outlook, dress and civilization. This is the story of Ah-nen-la-de-ni whose name means “Turning Crowd.” He was born in 1879 on the St. Regis Reservation in Franklin County, New York. - William Katz & Laurie Lehman

A. My father was a pure blooded Indian of the Mohawk tribe of the Six Nations. He was a medicine man who made frequent journeys, taking his family with him and selling his pills and physics in various towns along the borderline between Canada and United States. The reservation was a very beautiful place, fronting on the main St. Lawrence River. We had our permanent home in a log house surrounded by land, on which we planted corn, potatoes, and such other vegetables as suited our fancies. The house was more than fifty years old.

B. The woods provided my father and grandmother with their herbs and roots, and they gathered there the materials for basket-making. We were generally on the reservation in early spring, planting, fishing, basket-making, gathering herbs and making medicine, and then in the fall, when our little crop was brought in, we would depart on our tour of the white man’s towns and cities, camping in a tent on the outskirts of some place, selling our wares until cold weather came, when my father would generally build a little log house in some wood, plastering the chinks with moss and clay, and there we would abide, warm amid ice and snow, till it was time to go to the reservation again.

C. There were four Indian day schools on the reservation, all taught by young white women. I sometimes went to one of these, but learned practically nothing. The teachers did not understand our language, and we knew nothing of theirs, so much progress was not possible. Our lessons consisted of learning to repeat all the English words in the books that were given us, but we did not know what any of the words meant. Our arithmetic stopped at simple numeration. The Indian parents were disgusted with the schools, and did not urge their children to attend, and when the boys and girls did go of their own free will it was more for sociability and curiosity than from a desire to learn. Many of the boys and girls were so large that the teachers could not preserve discipline, and we spent much of our time in the school drawing pictures of each other and the teacher, and exchanging in our own language such remarks as led to a great deal of fighting.

E. When I was thirteen a great change occurred, for the honey-tongued agent of a new government-contract Indian school appeared on the reservation, drumming up boys and girls for his institution. He made a great impression by
going from house to house and describing, through an interpreter, all the glories and luxuries of the new place, the
good food and teaching, the fine uniforms, the playground and its sports and toys. My father was away from the
reservation at the time of the agent’s arrival, but mother and grandmother heard him with growing wonder and
interest, as I did myself, and we finally decided that I ought to go to this wonderful school and become a great man
perhaps at last a chief of our tribe. I was one of the twelve boys who in 1892 left our reservation to go to the
government-contract school for Indians situated in a large Pennsylvania city.

F. Till I arrive at the school I had never heard that there were any other Indians in the country other than those of
our reservation, and I did not know that our tribe was called Mohawk. My people called themselves “Ga-nien-ge-
ha-ga,” meaning “people of the Beacon Stone.” I at first thought that “Mohawk” was a nickname and fought any
boy who called me by it. I had left home for the school with a great deal of hope, having said to my mother: “Do
not worry. I shall soon return to you a better boy and with a good education!” Little did I dream that that was the
last time I would ever see her kind face. She died two years later, and I was not allowed to go to her funeral.

(C) Lee Chew Describes His Experience as an Immigrant from China

From the time the Chinese began to come to America in large numbers during the California Gold Rush in
1849, they were viewed with suspicion and treated with hostility. The majority of those who came were single
males. Many originally intended to stay only until they made enough money to return home with some savings, and
they did not surrender their own culture. Their readiness to work hard for low pay, first demonstrated on the
transcontinental railroad during the Civil War, made them the targets of white workingmen who resented them as
job competitors. In 1882, Chinese were denied entrance to the United States. By the close of the nineteenth century,
the Chinese had been shunned by labor unions, confined in ghettos, and attacked by mobs. They survived, however,
because of strong family ties and a proud cultural tradition that viewed hostility from the outside as proof of their
own superiority. Most Chinese in America, unlike Lee Chew, were not successful storekeepers but menials, day
laborers, and workers in the Chinese ghetto. - William Katz & Laurie Lehman

A. In 1898, I began a laundry business in Buffalo. Work in a laundry begins early on Monday morning-about
seven o’clock. There are generally two men, one of whom washes while the other does the ironing. The man that
irons does not start in till Tuesday, as the clothes are not ready for him to begin till that time. So he has Sundays
and Mondays as holidays. The man who does the washing finishes up on Friday night, and so he has Saturday and
Sunday. Each works only five days a week, but those are long days—from seven o’clock in the morning till
midnight. The reason why so many Chinese go into the laundry business in this country is because it requires little
capital and is one of the few opportunities that are open.

B. But Chinese laundry business now is not as good as it was ten years ago. American cheap labor in the steam
laundries has hurt it. So I determined to become a general merchant, and with this idea I came to New York and
opened a shop in the Chinese quarter, keeping silks, teas, porcelain, clothes, shoes, hats and Chinese provisions,
which include shark’s fins and nuts, lily bulbs and lily flowers, lychee nuts, and other Chinese dainties.

C. About 500 of New York’s Chinese are Christians. The others are Buddhists, Taoists, etc., all mixed up. These
haven’t any Sunday of their own, but keep New York’s Day and the first and fifteenth days of each month, when
they go to the temple in Mott Street. In all New York there are only thirty-four Chinese women, and it is impossible
to get a Chinese woman out here unless one goes to China and marries her there, and then he must collect affidavits
to prove that she really is his wife. That is in the case of a merchant. A laundryman can’t bring his wife here under
any circumstances, and even the women of the Chinese Ambassador’s family had trouble getting in lately.
D. Men of other nationalities who are jealous of the Chinese, because he is a more faithful worker than one of their people, have raised such a great outcry about Chinese cheap labor that they have shut him out of working on farms or in factories or building railroads or making streets or digging sewers. He cannot practice any trade, and his opportunities to do business are limited to his own countrymen.

E. The treatment of the Chinese in this country is all wrong and mean. It is persisted in merely because China is not a fighting nation. The Americans would not dare to treat Germans, English, Italians, or even Japanese as they treat the Chinese, because if they did there would be a war. There is no reason for the prejudice against the Chinese. The cheap labor cry was always a falsehood. Their labor was never cheap, and is not cheap now. It has always commanded the highest market price. But the trouble is that the Chinese are such excellent and faithful workers that bosses will have no others when they can get them. If you look at men working on the street you will find an overseer for every four or five of them. That watching is not necessary for Chinese. They work as well when left to themselves as they do when someone is looking at them.

(D) A Collar Starcher in Troy, New York

Although women were five million strong in the labor force by 1900, trade unions shunned them almost as much as they did racial and ethnic minorities. Women’s permanent place was in the home, it was said, and their loyalty to jobs and unions could only be temporary. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, more and more women joined unions and struck for higher wages, better working conditions, and union recognition. Fearing her recent part in a laundry workers’ strike in Troy, New York, would result in her being blacklisted in the industry, this collar starcher dictated her memoir to a sympathetic female reporter but she stipulated that her name be withheld. - William Katz & Laurie Lehman

A. When I left school at the age of sixteen to go to work there were very few opportunities open to young girls, for the time was nearly thirty years ago. Therefore I considered myself unusually lucky to have been born and brought up in Troy, New York, where the shirt and collar factories offered employment to women. I was lucky also in being a large, stout girl, for the work offered me when I applied was that of a collar starcher, and while this does not call for much muscle, it certainly requires endurance and a good constitution. In those days practically all the laundry work was done by hand. There were no ironing machines and very few washing machines. The starching was about all there was for a girl of sixteen.

B. I thoroughly enjoyed my first working years. The factory was not at all a bad place. I worked side by side with my friends, the girls I had gone to school with, met at church and at dances and picnics. The starching rooms were very hot and stuffy generally, like a Turkish bath, and the work was hard on the hands; but I didn’t mind these discomforts. The working hours were not to long - about eight hours a day. We went to work at nine o’clock, except in the busy season, when we were on hand at eight. The day passed quickly with the talk and sometimes a bit of song to liven things up. Some of the girls had beautiful voices.

C. We have to be at the tables at seven now and an ambitious worker is usually in the factory half an hour before the whistle blows, to get her table ready. As for talk or singing, the foremen would have a fit if anything like that should happen. In our factory all talking is strictly forbidden. You run the risk of instant dismissal if you even speak to the girl across the table. Even at the noon hour you can only whisper. I’ve seen girls discharged for talking and I know of a case here a girl lost her job for sneezing. The foreman said she did it on purpose.
D. If a starcher drops one collar on the floor she is docked five-dozen collars. In other words for every collar dropped on the floor the girl must starch five-dozen collars for nothing. If a collar drops from the cleaning bars and is found on the floor, the four girls whose work is nearest are fined. Since it is not possible accurately to locate the careless one the four are punished in order to find the right one. These are not all the excuses for docking, but they are the most flagrant and unjust ones. It has been said on good authority that our firm alone has recovered from its employees, in fines, $159,900, during the past ten years.

E. There are many married women and widows in the factories in Troy. Of the married women, some have been deserted and others have gone to work because their husbands could not seem to make a living. It seems to me that in a community where the women greatly outnumber the men, the men get discouraged and deteriorate. Very few of the girls in Troy look forward with enthusiasm to marriage. If they are making fairly good wages they hesitate before giving up their jobs. They have too many object lessons around them of women who have come back to the factories after a few years of married life, all their gaiety and high spirits gone and two or three children at home to support.
(E) Corruption in the New York City Police Department

At the end of the 19th century, many reformers denounced U.S. cities as ungovernable dens of lawlessness. Charged with keeping this bubbling caldron from broiling over was the lowly cop on the beat. Armed with a billy club, a pistol, and an inadequate knowledge and appreciation of civil liberties and justice, he was asked to bring public behavior into line with society’s professed moral standards. Recruits were usually obliged to use bribes and politics to join the force. In 1895, Police Captain Max F. Schmittberger testified before a state commission that New York City’s entire Police Department was “rotten to the core.” It took $600 to make an officer a sergeant, $14,000 to make him a captain. Three years after Captain Schmittberger’s testimony, a young man, fulfilling a boyhood dream, joined the New York Police Department. This is his story. - William Katz & Laurie Lehman

A. When I got to be twenty-one years of age I tried to get on the police force, and a politician told me that he would put me on for $300. I had been working as a clerk for a junkman in Pearl Street and had saved a little money and I agreed to pay $300. I gave it to the politician in the back room of a saloon on William Street, and he counted the money and said that he would see me through. He told the proprietor of the place to enclose the money in an envelope, and put it in his safe, which was done. I made my application and waited three months, but was turned down. The politician told me that I would have to raise $300 more, and so I went back to clerking till the beginning of 1898 when I was ready for another attempt to get on the force.

B. I made application to the Civil Service Commissioners and received a copy of the requirements, which seemed to show that I was not eligible. I found that there was a fight on under the surface because the civil service schools were putting men on the force who had paid nothing to their leaders. I told my district leader that I was going to the school and he swore at me. Six months after I had entered the school I was examined by the Civil Service Commissioners and passed with 81 percent physical and 83 percent mental, and a month later I was appointed by the police commissioner.

C. I was assigned to duty in the precinct where I lived, and reported to the captain, who put me on probation for 30 days. Each week day I attended the police school of instruction, where I kept up athletics and learned drill and rules, and each night I went out with a policeman, who “broke me in” to the duties, and whom I assisted in making arrests. The politician met me on the street, shook his fist in my face, and swore that he would have me dismissed from the force if I didn’t “put up.” He made trouble for me two or three times after that by means of a sergeant who was always reporting me. Finally I got myself transferred out of his district, when I thought I was safe, but he kept after me by means of another leader, till at last I gave him $200 to “call it square.”

D. In some of the precincts where there is plenty of “graft,” the man who is violating the law pays the patrolman for closing his eyes, the captain for not breaking [reporting] the patrolman and the inspector for not breaking the captain. These are separate amounts. Say the patrolman get $5 a month, the captain and inspector would get $20 each. The most I ever made on any post was $156 a month. That was downtown in Manhattan on a beat that was about a mile and a half long. Every saloonkeeper on my post used to put up $5 a month for me and my partner. There were twenty-five of these saloons and five gambling places, three of which gave me $10 a month, while two paid $5. From the women, I and my partner, who patrolled the beat when I was off, got a total of about $75 a month. Of course, there were many who tried to do business without paying, but they soon found themselves in a hole because we enforced the law against them. Some patrolmen have made as high as $250 a month.
Brownsville is located on the southeastern most edge of modern day Brooklyn, New York. Today, it is largely a residential area with aging apartment buildings built during the 1920s, vast low-income public housing projects, and recently built blocks of attached single-family houses. A person walking down Rockaway Avenue, its main north-south thoroughfare will find welding shops, iron works, car repair shops, and the usual McDonalds. You will also pass a number of churches.

Brownsville has undergone a number of transformations during the last two hundred years. At the time of the American Revolution, the area was part of the town of New Lots. William Suydam purchased the farmland and dreamed of subdividing it into smaller lots with two and four room shacks. However, he went bankrupt and in 1865 sold the land to Charles Brown who renamed it Brownsville. In 1883, there were 250 wood frame houses in the village. Four years later, Brown was bought out by a group of Manhattan real estate developers who hoped to attract new residents from the tenements of the Lower East Side. In 1903, the Williamsburg Bridge opened, followed by the Manhattan Bridge six years later. The bridges and new public transportation, the Fulton Street elevated line connected to the area in 1889 and the IRT subway arrived in the nineteen-twenties, made possible a mass exodus from overcrowded Manhattan communities to the relatively open spaces of Brownsville.

Originally, Brownsville was a near paradise for its largely Jewish immigrant population. Money went much further in Brooklyn then in Manhattan. Rents were lower. There was more room in the tenements, as well as parks and places for children to play. By 1926, Jews made up seventy-five percent of the total population of Brownsville and it was nicknamed the “Jerusalem of America.”

During the early decades of the twentieth century Brownsville was often in the news. In 1916, Margaret Sanger opened up the first birth control clinic in the United States here. She chose Brownsville because of the number of large families struggling to make ends meet. Over 140 women were treated in the clinic on the first day of operation. Brownsville was also home to Murder Inc. during the Prohibition era and to large numbers of radical trade unionists.

As the neighborhood grew more developed, it began to resemble a slum. Older houses were made out of wood and were vulnerable to quick spreading fires. New brick buildings often evaded building health and safety codes. Commercial and residential areas were mixed. During the nineteen-thirties, The WPA New York City Guide (New York: Random House, 1939: 498) described Pitkin Avenue, the neighborhoods principle east-west thoroughfare as a block with “large shops, a movie palace, and restaurants; great crowds of shoppers and strollers, day and evening,” that “offer a colorful contrast to the numerous side streets with their dismal houses. The open-air pushcart market on Belmont Avenue, from Christopher Street to Rockaway Avenue, is the cynosure for local housewives, wives, who come to make thrifty purchases. Here Yiddish is the shopkeepers' tongue, and all the varieties of kosher foods, as well as delicacies particularly favored by Jews, are the leading articles of sale. In winter the hucksters bundle up in sweaters and stand around wood fire.”

In the two decades after World War II, Brownsville’s Jewish population migrated to newly developed suburbs and was replaced by African Americans from the South and Puerto Ricans. This change contributed to an era of political activism and turmoil. Local schools were overcrowded and education was deteriorating. Black and Puerto Rican residents increasingly demanded community control. In 1968, an experimental school district was established and the new leaders tried to reassign teachers considered unsatisfactory. The teacher’s union objected and launched a series of strikes that closed most of New York City’s schools for three months.

Today, the largest groups living in Brownsville are Caribbean immigrants from Jamaica, Trinidad, and the Dominican Republic. The community has had a new renaissance led by a coalition known as East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC) that has built thousands of “Nehemiah” houses for low- and moderate-income families.
Brownsville in the News

“3,000 Tailors To Quit,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 21, 1897, p. 2

Two meetings of the executive committee of Local No. 21 of the United Garment Workers were held in the striking garment workers’ headquarters, Christopher Street and the Eastern Parkway, Brownsville, this forenoon, when delegates were received from nearly every shop in the Brownsville district, the operatives in which had not yet come out. The delegates represented the sailor jacket makers, alpaca coat makers, pants makers and knee pants’ makers. They said that all their people were in sympathy with the strike and ready to come out this morning, and asked that the executive committee appoint pickets.


Three birth control advocates were released on bail yesterday pending trial on the charge of disseminating information on birth control . . . Mrs. Margaret Sanger and her assistant, Miss Fannie Mindell, were arrested on Thursday night for spreading birth control information at Mrs. Sanger’s birth control clinic, 46 Amboy Street, Brownsville.


Evidence tending to show a direct link between the leaders of the Brooklyn murder syndicate and a Brooklyn Democratic club was made public yesterday by Commissioner of Investigation William B. Herland . . . “Murder, Inc. could not become incorporated in 1930 and flourish for ten years unless it had political protection” . . . The evidence . . . was found in the pocket of Martin (Buggsy) Goldstein, former Brownsville terrorist who was electrocuted in Sing Sing prison.


Defiant Negro parents and their supporters took over Junior High School 271 in Brooklyn yesterday, barricading the doors and preventing five “dismissed” teachers from entering. A crayon sign posted on a school window said: “Black people control your schools” . . . Two hundred uniformed and plainclothes policemen were stationed outside the school . . . About 40 teachers, the majority of them Negroes, did go to work yesterday and provided instruction to 800 pupils who showed up. The school, at 1137 Herkimer Street, normally has 2,000 pupils. Mayor Lindsay declared . . . ”Because the community group in Brownsville has taken action that is beyond the law, . . . I will, of course, support the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools if they ask for police assistance.”

“Police Use Cars and Clubs To Quell Brownsville Riot,” by Mary Breasted The New York Times, September 20, 1974, p. 86

Police officers in radio cars drove into riotous crowds of Brownsville youths late Wednesday night and at least half a dozen stragglers were struck with police nightsticks. The violence occurred after a crowd of angry youths, who had been waiting for hours to view the body of Claude Reese, the 14-year-old black slain by a white policeman in Brownsville Sunday night, broke a store window and then began throwing bottles and rocks at the police and taunting them.


The Dinkins administration and a group of churches and homeowners’ associations in Brooklyn have reached an agreement in principle that will allow the group to build as many as 1,300 single-family houses for lower-middle-income families previously unable to buy their own homes . . . The group, East Brooklyn Congregations, has been in the forefront of the so-called Nehemiah housing movement, named for the Old Testament prophet who rebuilt Jerusalem . . . East Brooklyn Congregations has already built about 2,300 two-and-three-bedroom homes in Brownsville and East New York in the last eight years.
Teaching Local History Through the New Deal
by Staci Anson

The course I teach starts with U.S. history in the 1890s and goes through the 1990s. It is a junior-level course at Ramapo High School serving Franklin Lakes, Wyckoff, and Oakland, NJ. Throughout the course, I show students photographs of the main streets and sites in our community to let them see how they have expanded and changed, and how they have been affected by societal, political, and economic issues. The textbooks present history on a national scale, so incorporating local information enables students to connect local and national developments. It also helps students understand how their community has changed over time. When we move into the 1920s and the emergence of consumerism and the expanding car industry, we examine photographs and advertisements to see how our towns changed. Wyckoff had an expanding downtown shopping area with a gas station and a Goodyear Tire and General Store. New suburban developments were built and a trolley was set up in Paramus for people to commute to New York City. During the 1930s, we look at how the Depression hurt local residents and how the Wyckoff YMCA and New Deal agencies responded. When we study the 1940s, my students analyze local newspaper articles about the attack on Pearl Harbor. They also read copies of the letters sent home to parents by the Rutgers University President to see a more personal local reaction. When we enter the fifties, students examine local suburban development plans and advertisements, photos of the development of the shopping malls we all flock to on or near Route 17 in Paramus, local manuals for what to do in case of an atomic attack, our school’s yearbooks and newspapers to see the teenage perspective, and primary source records from the local Nike Missile sites in Mahwah and Franklin Lakes.

It is very important to cover the local side of history so as to help students relate to the larger historical events and see how their community has changed. They can read about how Americans were fearful of another attack by the Japanese during World War II, but when they learn that the local towns had a watch tower manned 24 hours a day on the Ramapo Mountains to ensure the safety of their community, then the history becomes more real. Local history is then infused throughout the curriculum, and as a result, students remember more of the history.

When we cover the immediate and long-term effects of the Great Depression on our country, I include handouts and PowerPoint presentations on what was going on in New Jersey. Local New Deal projects included construction of the Holland Tunnel, the Triborough Bridge, Ramsey and Ridgewood High Schools, Jersey Homesteads in Roosevelt, and the sewage and drainage system at Newark Airport. The local history is very easy to find online by searching for local town historical societies. Many have sections with town photos taken over the years. Another excellent resource for local history is the book series “Images of America.” I have used copies of the book for the towns of Wyckoff, Oakland, and Ramsey. I complete the Great Depression / New Deal unit by having students become historians. They complete projects that can include interviewing someone in their family who lived during the Depression and New Deal in the New York-New Jersey area. Another project entails going out into the community and investigating an actual local New Deal funded project. Students share information with the class using a variety of formats including PowerPoint and IMovie presentations, posters, or historical fiction.

WPA Investigation: For this project you will investigate local NY-NJ tri-state area New Deal funded projects; projects funded by the WPA, PWA, or RA, for example. You can begin your search for this information by contacting local historical societies, schools, town halls, libraries, or selecting a local project mentioned in class and then contacting the relevant agency. You need to find out what programs handled the project, how it was constructed and/or restored, who was employed on the site, and any other relevant information. Your finished project can be done in one of three ways: a museum style display of photos accompanied by historical background. This MUST be at least the size of a large poster board and can include actual 3-D objects; a videotape or DVD of your investigation of the project, edited into a 7-10 minute movie on a program such as IMovie (you can use IMovie in our school computer labs); or a PowerPoint presentation including visuals and historical information on the project.
The New Deal for Artists
by Jacqueline Ford

When accepting the 1932 Democratic presidential nomination, Franklin Delano Roosevelt promised a “new deal” for the economically downtrodden in America. Upon his inauguration, President Roosevelt’s premier objective was the relief, recovery, and reform, of the United States economy. Echoing his famous campaign oration, Roosevelt ignited the New Deal, ambitious federal programs that were designed to reduce unemployment in America. The President’s initial New Deal endeavors, like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Civil Works Administration (CWA), provided thousands of men and women with steady employment in civil-service projects.

Expanding upon the early efforts of New Deal legislation, leaders within the Roosevelt Administration sought to further remedy high unemployment and bolster national morale through the creation of fulfilling jobs in more-specialized fields. The first New Deal program to embrace vocational forte was the Public Works of Art Project. The skeletal framework for the Public Works of Art Project was loosely fleshed out on December 8, 1933 at a conference facilitated by the organization’s National Director, Edward Bruce. With the onset of the Great Depression, the financial and societal status of the average artist was precarious due to diminishing private patronage. The principal aim of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) was to alleviate the economic hardships of the artist community by commissioning talented artists to adorn public buildings with the fruits of their labor. A peripheral aim of PWAP was to increase public accessibility to high quality art and to amplify general public appreciation of the arts. A landscape painter himself, Edward Bruce was hopeful that government benefaction would redefine the role of the artist (and art product) in the United States.

PWAP commissioned hundreds of artists to embellish federal buildings with their paintings and sculptures and PWAP led to the formation of several New Deal organizations that responded to the financial crisis by capitalizing on the unique skills of the American population. Unfortunately, the two competing objectives of PWAP, to provide work relief for needy artists and to maintain high aesthetic standards, were inevitably irreconcilable. Recognizing the need to take a new direction, the Roosevelt administration terminated PWAP in June 1934 and replaced it with two independent art programs: the Section of Fine Art (SFA) and the Federal Art Project (FAP).

SFA was placed under the direction of Edward Bruce and its operations were centralized in Washington, DC. In a manner similar to its predecessor, SFA employed artists to “beautify” public buildings with high quality art. Bruce felt that through public accessibility the average person would come to regard the arts as a community asset rather than an expendable luxury. He slowly divorced SFA from New Deal relief programs by emphasizing artistic caliber over financial need. Bruce hired established artists and implemented anonymous competitions to find the best-suited “undiscovered” talent to work within the agency.

Section of Fine Arts Mural (1939), Montevallo Alabama, http://www.deepfriedkudzu.com

Bruce knew the kind of art that he wanted, made his expectations very clear to artists, and handled his commissions in a manner that gave him control if the work was not up to standard. Once an artist was hired, he was provided with a projected completion date and was visited multiple times by a SFA official through the course of the project. These visitations determined if and when the artist would be paid for his effort. The artist received his first paycheck after the Washington staff approved the design. The second monetary installment was obtained once the artist was granted with a favorable progress-report from a visiting Section official. If the Section disapproved of the employee’s artistic performance, payment would be withheld until the mural or sculpture was modified accordingly. Local
government approval of the finished piece was the prerequisite for the final payment.

Although the organization did not officially limit compositions to one specific genre, it was no secret that SFA overwhelmingly favored optimistic visualizations of the American scene. Edward Bruce maintained that although United States citizens possessed the inalienable right to scrutinize the nation, SFA artists were to be denied federal funding if their projects negatively rendered American life. The combination of Bruce’s thematic preferences, constant Washington supervision, and delays in securing local government endorsement resulted in a strong tendency to “paint Section”. To an artist, this meant to produce a capable, pleasant, and safe mural, dealing with local industry or historical episode, which would not antagonize anyone and would get quick approval.

Thomas Hart Benton, a renowned American painter, was one of the critics who expressed his displeasure with SFA policies. Benton resented the aesthetic restrictions that were actively enforced by SFA resented that the subject and style of each commission was dictated to the artist not by the artist. To ensure payment, most painters and sculptors begrudgingly repressed personal inclinations to meet the demands of SFA.

The Federal Art Project (FAP) was an agency within Federal One, a subdivision of the Works Progress Administration that sought to provide equal relief to visual artists, authors, musicians, dancers, and thespians. Although FAP was overseen by the National Director, Holger Cahill, daily operations were supervised by regional offices throughout the nation. FAP placed painters, sculptors, photographers, printmakers, textile-makers, and art historians on the government payroll. Most of the organization’s employees produced embellishments for public buildings. FAP selected its personnel on the basis of financial necessity, hiring individuals with varied degrees of artistic training. Approximately 90% of the FAP employees were in desperate economic straits. Among its influential experimental artists were Jacob Lawrence, Jackson Pollack, and Ben Shahn.

FAP enforced minimal restrictions on style and content. Cahill believed that visual art was a venue capable of igniting public awareness on pressing contemporary issues; a well-constructed, topical painting could serve to enlighten the masses. FAP unreservedly supported productions that were saturated with both social and political commentary. Unlike SFA, which purposely avoided controversy, FAP became a popular target for the New Deal’s reactionary opponents in Congress. Critics in the State Department described FAP commissions as “incompetent and ugly, saturated with Communist motifs” (McKinzie, 156). Martin Dies, the bad-tempered chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, detested all Federal One programs and used his political clout to expose suspected communist subversion. Along with his conservative allies in the House and Senate, Dies successfully pressured the White House to scale back FAP in the late 1930s.

In truth, art was not a high priority on President Roosevelt’s domestic agenda. However, the President did acknowledge the twofold benefit of governmental patronage to the arts. Not only would this unprecedented gesture put legions of unemployed artists back to work, but their creations would invariably entertain and enrich the larger population. The Section of Fine Art and the Federal Art Project may have functioned quite differently but they were organizations that successfully elevated visual art into instruments of monumental societal reform.

Sources
McKinzie, Richard D. The New Deal for Artists.
Margaret Bourke-White (1904-1971) was a photojournalist named one of the ten most prominent women in the United States in 1936. Her photographs of industry, people, and history in the making around the world filled the pages of *Fortune* and *Life* magazines from the 1930s to the 1950s, when Parkinson’s disease forced her retirement. Bourke-White produced ten books, including three co-authored by her husband, Erskine Caldwell. Her most influential books included *Eyes on Russia* (1931), which documented a trip to the Soviet Union, and *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937), about Southern tenant farmers.

Bourke-White was born in the Bronx, New York, but spent her childhood in and near Bound Brook, New Jersey, and graduated from Plainfield High School. Her father, Joseph White, had a successful career as an engineer inventing improvements to printing processes. He was an amateur photographer and Margaret frequently observed her father at his photographic experiments, several of which led to patents. Margaret later recalled that lenses and light fascinated her father, interests she would eventually share.

The most dramatic light Margaret saw as a child was when her father took her to a foundry in Dunellin, New Jersey, where Joseph's rotary printing presses were built. In her memoir, she recalled the “sudden magic of flowing metal and flying sparks. I can hardly describe my joy. To me at that age, a foundry represented the beginning and end of all beauty. Later when I became a photographer . . . this memory was so vivid and alive that it shaped the whole course of my career.”

It was the memory of the foundry and her attraction to technology that led Bourke-White to become an industrial photographer in Cleveland, where she settled in 1927. In factories, she found what she described as “an unconscious beauty . . . Every curve of the machine, every attitude of the worker has an eloquent simplicity, a vital beauty.”

While making a living initially by photographing the homes of the wealthy, she was greatly attracted to the drama she imagined to be inside Otis Steel. The twenty-three-year-old convinced Elroy Kulas, the head of the company, to give her carte blanche access. In February 1928, after overcoming significant technical problems, she produced a dramatic portfolio depicting the drama of molten steel, which Kulas bought for an astounding $100 a print.

Bourke-White’s success at Otis soon led to a long succession of corporate clients who recognized the publicity potential of her work. Her industrial photographs, often characterized by dramatic angles and repetitive forms, regularly appeared on the cover of *Trade Winds*, a magazine published by the Union Trust Company of Cleveland. “Dynamos,” she wrote, “were more beautiful to me than pearls.”

Most of these pictures were consistent with the Machine Aesthetic, a style that was beginning to spread through the arts. While Bourke-White did not originate the Machine Aesthetic in photography, she probably produced a larger body of aesthetically inflected work depicting heavy industry and its products, such as bridges and machinery, than any previous photographer. In addition to photographing steel, Bourke-White also began photographing workers with machinery. In these pictures, the worker was integrated formally with the structure of the machine, giving the viewer the impression that the two were interdependent and inseparable. They were not really portraits of particular individuals.
A *Fortune* editor, early in 1930, decided to send her to Europe to photograph German industry. With characteristic optimism, Bourke-White determined that this assignment should be but the springboard for a more important shoot in the Soviet Union.

For Bourke-White, the Soviet Union was “the land of tantalizing mystery,” all but closed to foreign photographers. Although a few visiting Americans had taken pictures there since the Revolution, no professional photographer had been given official access to the big industrial work sites like the huge dam on the Dnieper River, the world's largest hydroelectric project.

In her autobiography, Bourke-White wrote that she wanted to go because, “Nothing attracts me like a closed door. I cannot let my camera rest until I have pried it open, and I wanted to be the first.” She added, “With my enthusiasm for the machine as an object of beauty, I felt the story of a nation trying to industrialize almost overnight was just cut out for me.”

In addition to publishing a book about her trip, there was a public exhibit of her Russia photos in a New York theater as part of a benefit to raise money for the Communist newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, and the Workers School. She soon became involved with the American-Russian Institute, which held forums where Communists and fellow travelers could discuss politics, and left-wing photography organizations like the Film and Photo League.

Bourke-White's friendly relations with Communists and her willingness to let her work be used as propaganda did not cause her any real problems until the Cold War. In September 1951, newspaper columnist Westbrook Pegler began a daily series of diatribes against Bourke-White, whom he called, “the Red Photographer.” She voluntarily submitted a statement to the House Committee on Un-American Activities that she was opposed to all dictatorships.

Bourke-White was too much of an individualist and an entrepreneurial businesswoman ever to have become a Communist. She could never blindly follow a party line like some American Communists who publicly endorsed the Moscow purge trials or the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact. She went to the Soviet Union because she was fascinated with machines and industry and she wanted to get ahead. The Soviets used her work as much as she used them; she made deals and maintained cordial relations to gain access to the pictures she wanted to take and to enhance her reputation. With exposure to the very real accomplishments of the Revolution, she came to have a more sympathetic view than most of her contemporaries in the U.S. Depending on one's political orientation, one could say she was an unprincipled opportunist, a fair-minded progressive ahead of her time, or both.
On a spring day in 1933, a YMCA volunteer arrived at the door of a beautiful Ridgewood, New Jersey mansion in search of donations for the poor. A distinguished looking older gentleman answered the door and invited the canvasser into his lavishly furnished home. When the volunteer told the gentleman the purpose of his visit, the man said he was sorry but he and his wife were unable to make a contribution. “You see,” he said, “we haven’t had anything to eat today.” This story, from a history of the Ridgewood YMCA, is indicative of how deeply the Great Depression affected the formerly affluent in Ridgewood, Bergen County, and much of New Jersey.

The years 1922-1928 were ones of economic prosperity in New Jersey. However, between 1929 and 1932 there was a steady decline in business. By 1930 unemployment levels, wages, and take-home pay began to decline steadily across the state. Manufacturing employment decreased by nearly 50% and factory payrolls dropped by nearly as much. By 1932, 400,000 gainful workers, an estimated 25% of the state’s work force, were unemployed. Many begged on the streets, waited on bread lines, and searched the garbage for food. The Meadowlands in Bergen County, now home to Giants Stadium, was used for thousands of small private plots where hungry people grew vegetables to eat. In Newark, a city of 1,326,316 residents, 60,000 people were out of work by 1931, and the local government had defaulted on its payroll. In November 1930 the *Paterson Evening News* donated space in the classified section for those looking to request work. It received over 100 responses. By 1932 in Paterson, a city of 140,000, 14% of the city’s workforce was registered as unemployed. For those still employed wages were slashed drastically.

**Depression Hits Bergen County**

In the early years of the Depression, New Jersey city governments, like Newark and Paterson, agreed with President Herbert Hoover that private charity should be used to alleviate the situation. Leonia and Tenafly held a football game to raise money for relief. Saddle River and Rochelle Park held minstrel shows for their towns’ emergency relief fund. Hackensack held midnight charity vaudeville style shows to raise money for the Mayor’s Emergency Committee. In Fair Lawn, firemen canvassed residences and raised $3,000 for unemployment aid.

However, voluntary relief efforts proved to be inadequate. At the urging of local newspapers, Paterson announced in 1930 that it would hire local unemployed for public construction and improvement projects. But because so many residents could not pay their property taxes, the city was running out of money. In October 1931, the New Jersey legislature passed the State Emergency Relief Fund (SERA) and allotted $22 million to localities to spend it on relief efforts as they felt appropriate. Paterson used the money to provide one dollar per person a week for groceries. President Hoover response to the economic downturn seemed to many New Jersey residents to be too little, too late. In 1932, over 50% of New Jersey voters voted for Franklin Roosevelt.

By 1920, Bergen County was the fourth largest county in the state with a population of over 210,000. Residents included those who had achieved success in the white-collar world and many who lived a fairly rural existence. While Hackensack and Garfield each had almost 20,000 citizens, the county still had 37,000 acres cultivated by over 1,000 farmers. Smaller northern towns, like Ramsey and Mahwah, still had no county roads or highways. In 1931, the George Washington Bridge opened and increased the population 73% in ten years. In 1930 there were 811 farms in the county, 300 less than in 1920. Diversity and change have made Bergen County an interesting area in which to analyze and evaluate the Great Depression and the New Deal.

The Great Depression affected Bergen County communities in many ways. More than 5,000 gainful workers in Bergen County were unemployed by 1930. The more industrialized areas, including Hackensack, Garfield, Lodi, and Cliffside Park had the highest unemployment rates. These towns provided temporary work and direct relief assistance. Confident that the George Washington Bridge would bring continued prosperity, Teaneck residents purchased lots of land from the town government. Only a few years later, much of this property was lost to foreclosure and returned to the municipality. A Teaneck woman said
she went to the library each day to get away from the four unemployed men in her home. In 1930 in the tiny community of Allendale, children played in large, deserted houses along East Allendale Avenue. Unable to afford mortgage payments, their owners had simply left. Long time Allendale resident George W. Parigot, a stockbroker in despair over his financial situation, shot himself to death in December 1930. Paramus is now a major shopping destination, but in the 1930s most of its residents were farmers not affected by official unemployment numbers. This does not mean they did not suffer. In 1930 the police chief got a local teacher to help him identify six families in town in need of assistance.

**Early Relief Programs**

In 1930, Bergen County was the first county in the state to offer jobs to the unemployed repairing and building roads. By year’s end, 205 county men were at work. In 1931, 9,000 Bergen County males registered with the Emergency Relief Association. In 1932, county freeholders received a $300,000 loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Much of the money was spent putting people to work on sewage and drainage projects in Hackensack, Tenafly, and Cresskill.

Franklin Roosevelt’s election in 1932 seemed to bring a new attitude and sense of confidence to Bergen County. Hackensack customers flocked to make deposits in banks that reopened after the “Bank Holiday.” Weaver’s Department Store in Hackensack (then the shopping hub of Bergen County) urged customers to demonstrate their willingness to cooperate with the new president by shopping for a “glorious Easter.”

The New Deal brought many projects to Bergen County. Nearly 200 local businesses, from lingerie stores to ice manufacturers, pledged cooperation with the NRA program. By August 1933, even the Hackensack Republican was displaying the NRA Blue Eagle. Bergen County was home to two CCC camps and benefited greatly from Civil Works Administration (CWA), Public Works Administration (PWA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects. In 1940 the Bergen Evening Record summed up some of the accomplishments, including “275 miles of roadway, thirty-eight miles of storm and sanitation sewers, sixteen new buildings including a new bus terminal in Hackensack (since demolished) and Borough Hall in Closter, and the expansion and renovation of seventy-one school buildings.

**New Deal in New Jersey**

The New Deal put people to work. In Hackensack, the CWA hired unemployed men to shovel snow after a thirty-six hour snowstorm in February 1934. The CCC enrolled more than 300 men, mostly from Bergen and Hudson Counties. The camp sponsored the digging of drainage ditches and building of flood dykes and gates for mosquito control in the Hackensack Meadows, Secaucus, and Overpeck Park in Teaneck. In Teaneck, the PWA funded a high school stadium, a junior high school addition, Lowell Elementary School, and an armory. The program also provided a tractor for unemployed men to grow gardens on land provided by the township. WPA funding built Teaneck’s Votee Park on the land the town government got back when the owners defaulted on their property taxes and there was also a WPA sewing room where women sewed clothing for the needy. James Earle of Paramus, Richard Paulson and Eva Melady of Hackensack, and Merlin Ritter of Hasbrouck Heights were Bergen County artists funded by the WPA. WPA murals and reliefs by local artists Robert Laurent, Bruno Neri, Hunt Diederich, and Robert Martin The Garfield, Cliffside Park decorated the Westwood, and Teaneck post offices.

Bergen County municipalities benefited from the New Deal, both from short-term relief and long-term public beautification and building projects. State officials may have lamented the loss of power to the federal government under the centralization of the New Deal, but Bergen County benefited greatly from road building and repair, parks, schools, post offices and art projects.
“Beginning at 4.8 m. the woods on both sides of the road are fenced off with barbed wire, and trees are placarded “U.S. Government Reservation.” This is Picatinny Arsenal, . . . a 1,400-acre reservation for the manufacture and storage of munitions for the Middle Atlantic Corps of the U. S. Army. Two brick and limestone three-story buildings and a number of smaller wooden structures set in a landscaped park give the atmosphere of a peaceful educational institution.” - The WPA Guide to 1930s New Jersey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press), p. 480.

Despite the passing of almost seven decades, the Works Progress Administration’s (WPA) state guidebooks remain good reads and fairly reliable guides to life in the 1930s, but they could slip up on small details. The above quote from the 1939 Guide to New Jersey was not completely accurate. At the time, Picatinny Arsenal covered 2,297 acres of Northern Morris County, did munitions research as well as manufacturing, and turned out items for the entire United States Army, not just a single corps area. Furthermore, while it did have something of “the atmosphere of a peaceful educational institution,” it was a lively place with much more activity and many more buildings than this brief passage suggests. It is odd that guide writers missed this because much of the work was done by their colleagues in the WPA and other New Deal agencies.

Debates over the positive or negative consequences of New Deal job creation tend to focus on economic effects and lose sight of work actually done. Documents at Picatinny lay out in detail what the New Deal wrought almost seventy years ago at one Army installation in northern New Jersey.

Although a government agency, Picatinny was not automatically a recipient of Federal largesse. The basic goal of this spending was to provide jobs, so the agencies directed almost 80 percent of project funds to labor. Picatinny had usually apportioned costs 50-50 between labor and materials. It reduced the materials percentage by bulk purchasing items useful in many diverse projects, obtaining materials from other installations, and salvaging materials from demolished buildings. Its expenditures for equipment, transportation, material, and its own skilled laborers frequently ran higher than the twenty-five percent the installation had to add to the funds from Washington.

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration began life on May 20, 1933 with the task of appropriating relief money through state and local agencies. Work done at Picatinny with this money included cataloguing records and a boundary line survey. The Civilian Works Administration (CWA) was a temporary agency established by presidential order in November 1933. It began a survey of the roads and bridges at Picatinny on December 2, 1933. It then drained, built, and improved roads, dredged and dammed brooks, cut bush as a fire prevention measure, repaired buildings, salvaged old buildings, built sewers, and reshaped road shoulders and gutters. The most men CWA employed at the arsenal at any one time was 417.

CWA closed shop at Picatinny in April 1934. The WPA appeared on the scene on September 1935. Initially there were about forty employees, but this quickly changed. From 1935 to 1939, WPA assigned over 1,000 employees to the arsenal per year, reaching a high of 1,903 in 1938, and spent over $2.1 million rehabilitating or constructing, among other things, an experimental powder factory, roads, a plating plant, a locomotive shelter,
storage buildings, a pyrotechnic factory, garages, an officers’ club, and an employees athletic club. This work met real needs. Inadequate storage for both explosives and inert materials was a continuing Picatinny problem. WPA funds and labor provided the eighteen new, large magazines that alleviated the problem. The experimental plants not only housed on-going development work, but, when World War II came, they readily expanded into full-scale production.

Much of this work seems unromantic, the normal infrastructure upkeep of any installation. Arguably, it should not have required special programs to do it. However, when funds are short, and Congress kept the Army on very short rations until the end of the thirties, infrastructure is one of the first areas to suffer. People familiar with budgeting for school plants may recognize the phenomenon. The arsenal could not have absorbed the rise from 1,800 employees in 1937 to 17,900 in 1942 if not for the roads, railroad track, and equipment, and the new sewage disposal plant the WPA had bequeathed to it. A reason for this success was the number of skilled and semi-skilled artisans, engineers, draftsmen, clerks, and laborers the depression had thrown on the WPA rolls.

Even seemingly frivolous work, such as constructing officers’ clubs and tennis courts, had its value. They not only helped the health and morale of the workers, but for military families stuck at this rural post during the war, they afforded one of the rare sources of recreation.

WPA activities were under the direction of the chief of Picatinny’s Operating Department, and one of his chiefs picked foremen, sub-foremen, and gang bosses. Until July 1938, all WPA funding was Federal. After July 1938, the states took over handling both state and Federal WPA funds and the workers received their checks from an office in Newark, New Jersey.

The number of WPA workers began to decline in 1938 until it reached about two hundred in 1942. On January 5, 1942, Picatinny transferred some forty of its remaining WPA men to the Morris County Mosquito Extermination Commission and they cut brush along the arsenal’s largest brook and dredged it to provide drainage in swampy areas. This work lasted into 1943.

The National Youth Administration had forty boys start work under a Picatinny supervisor in October 1939. These workers re-roofed and repaired ten magazines. Company 3222 from Civilian Conservation Corps Camp AF-4 in Butler, New Jersey, appeared in the fall of 1940 and built reconnaissance roads and fire breaks.

During World War II, Picatinny looked back on the work the WPA had done for it and found it worth far more than it had cost. It could say the same for the work of the other alphabet agencies. In World War II, Picatinny played a vital roll in research, development, and manufacture of large caliber munitions, work private industry was not up to performing until midway in the war. Picatinny would not have been up to the task if not for New Deal work programs.

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I was born in 1919 in Mount Vernon, New York where I grew up. My father was a traveling salesman until the Great Depression. He was a partner in a business that manufactured women's coats and suits and he was the one who went on the road. He traveled from store to store, mainly in the south. During the Depression, the business could not support the two partners, my father and my Uncle Hyman, so my father opened a retail store. My mother helped run the store while caring for the house and the children. I graduated from Mt. Vernon High School when I was fifteen-and-a-half. My mother gave me a choice of going to college or work so I decided to go to college for a while. I went to an extension program of the City College of New York in Yonkers. I was not really into college, I wasn't studying, so I dropped out after two years and went to work. I did sales work at various stores, including a five-and-ten and became active in union activities. I did volunteer work in the office for District Council 65, went to meetings and gave out leaflets. It was an active union and progressive. We opposed Hitler and supported the Spanish Republic. We also pressed the United States government to provide support for the unemployed and pushed for union recognition.

Eventually I went back to college at night and about the same time I was introduced to my future husband, Ed. A friend had intended to introduce me to Ed's older brother, Hy, who was also a political person. The brothers lived together, but Hy was not home. This must have been when I was twenty. Ed was a furrier's apprentice but was let go when he finished his apprenticeship. My father got him a job as an errand boy for a button factory but he lost the job when they sent him to make a delivery at a factory that was on strike and he refused to cross the picket line. Then he went to work in new war-related industries until he was drafted. He really hated doing defense work because most of the factories were paid cost-plus. That meant that if they hired more workers, they made more profit, even if the worker wasn't really working. He was once told to find an inconspicuous place in the plant and take nap! We lived first on the Lower East Side in Manhattan and then moved to the Bronx. Ed initially had a military deferment because we had two children, but eventually he was drafted. I went back to work part-time. Ed's younger sister lived with us and helped with the children so I could go to work. A little later I put the children in a nursery and worked full time.

When Ed was sixteen he had worked on a poultry farm in Massachusetts and he decided that was what he wanted to do with his life. He was always a nature lover. From the beginning of our relationship he told me that he did not want to stay in the city. After Ed came out of the army, with my father's help, we bought a poultry farm in South Jersey in Estelle Manor about ten or twenty miles from Vineland.

We shopped for the farm through the Jewish Agricultural Society that showed us farms that we could afford. We owned the first farm for five years and then bought a piece of property with just a house and Ed built chicken coops. We kept this farm until 1962.

I was really a city girl and chicken farming was a lot of work. Though I got used to it, I never really liked it. We had a lot of friends in the area and were involved in the Farmer's Union so it was not too bad. Poultry farming is more like a business than other
types of farming. We got up early in the morning, maybe six o’clock, and Ed went out to feed the chickens and collect the eggs. The process took a couple of hours. After that there were all kinds of chores that had to be done -- cleaning the waterers, feeding and collecting eggs twice a day, vaccinating, debeaking, culling non-layers. There was always something to make or repair. Ed kept a small garden to grow flowers and fresh vegetables for the family.

After the afternoon collection, we used to clean the eggs, remove cracked and soft-shelled eggs, candle them, sort them for size, and pack them. When we started working the farm we had to rub the eggs with a brush covered with sandpaper to clean them. We used to hold the egg up to the light to make sure they hadn’t been fertilized and sorted them by size. Later we bought a motorized bucket that warmed and agitated water to wash a basket of eggs at a time in some kind of solution. We also bought a conveyor belt system on which the eggs would roll past a light for candling, and then were sorted for size by a series of scales. The eggs were hand-fed onto the machine, but it was still a big improvement in labor.

I remember when my daughter Judi was about a year and a half old and we had just started on the farm she sat down in a basket of eggs breaking many of them. I was so mad I refused to change her for a while. When the children got older, about seven or eight, they used to help with the feeding of the chickens. Gradually we mechanized the farm so you didn’t have to carry the buckets from the feed bin but could roll them along a track. Like all farming, the poultry business could be very unprofitable. Chickens got sick or they stopped laying. The cost of raising laying hens was several times what the chicken-man would pay if we had to sell them for meat. Farmers had little control over the price of feed, which kept going up, even though we belonged to a feed coop. And we had no control over the price of eggs, which was high when the chickens weren’t laying and low when they were. When things were going bad you had to keep feeding the chickens even though you could not get a fair price for the eggs. It wasn’t worth it to sell them for meat because if the price of eggs went back up it would be too expensive to replace them. The Farmer’s Union tried to lobby the government for price controls or subsidies, but was unsuccessful. Larger farms that could mechanize sufficiently that they could take care of large numbers of hens were able to stay in business but the small farmers couldn’t make a living and started to go bankrupt.

To keep the family afloat, I went to work in an office. We declared bankruptcy on the farm and Ed and I decided to go back to school to become teachers. While we got our degrees, we operated a soft ice cream stand where our three children all pitched in. Eventually I graduated from Rutgers and got a high school teaching job in Highland Park. Ed graduated from Glassboro State and became a middle school teacher in New Brunswick.
I grew up on a dairy farm in Chateaugay, NY. This tiny farming community is located on the Canadian border in the northeast corner of the state. It is a small village with one traffic light and about 1,000 people. An additional 1,000 people live in the surrounding area that makes up the town of Chateaugay.

The Dwyer family has lived in Chateaugay since the 1820’s. The original homestead is still in the family. My father was born in 1934 and remembers when his house was modernized with indoor plumbing. He attended a one-room schoolhouse. Cows were milked by hand when he was young, however, machinery became commonplace by his teenage years.

My father purchased a farm near his father’s farm when he completed high school and married a “city girl” from Malone, the county seat with a population of 10,000. The family and farm both grew quickly. I am the youngest of seven children, four girls and three boys. All of the family helped on the farm. Traditional gender roles prevailed most of the time. The boys did more of the farm chores and outdoor work while my sisters were responsible for more of the housework.

Hard Work on a Dairy Farm
Our herd of more than one hundred Holsteins meant we had 60-70 cows to milk twice each day. The cows were milked at 5 a.m. and 4 p.m. With the use of four milking machines it took about 3 hours to milk all the cows each session. Most of the cows’ food was grown on our 100 acres of land. Spring, summer and fall were filled with long days preparing fields, and planting, cultivating and harvesting crops of hay, alfalfa and corn. I officially started working on the farm when I entered second grade. I helped with the evening milking everyday after school. My chores included feeding the calves, cleaning out the stalls, washing equipment and other basic tasks.

As I grew older, my duties expanded. I worked in the barn at least six days a week. During the school year I was only responsible for the evening chores. On weekends and summers I did the morning milking as well. By the time I was twelve I was doing the milking myself and operated heavy machinery including tractors. Typically, my father did the milking while we did the other tasks. The cows were fed a variety of feed. The barns had to be cleaned daily. Machinery needed constant maintenance.

Each spring the barbed wire fences needed mending. Fields needed to be prepared for planting. The most tedious job was picking large stones out of a newly plowed field. By the time the school year ended, we would be in the midst of hay season. The first cutting of hay was chopped and blown into an upright silo. July and August was the season for baling hay. We worked with my uncle and his sons who also owned a dairy farm. The Dwyer army would tackle over 100 acres of hay each summer. We all lobbied for the tractor driving jobs like cutting, raking and baling the hay. At that time hay was baled into 75-pound bales. Each had to be individually stacked on a flat bed wagon. Then it was unloaded onto a hay conveyor that would bring it to the hayloft above the barn. By the end of the summer the barns were filled with over 20,000 bales of hay.

Baseball, Church, and School
During the summer, I played an endless number of baseball games with my cousins. We often spent evenings playing ball in the cow pasture and occasionally had to call a game if the ball was hit to close to a particularly mean bull. The highlight of the summer was usually the annual trip to see our home team, the Montreal Expos.

The small community of Chateaugay was a great place for children. The school was one building for all thirteen years of schooling. My entire grade had only 44 students and most of us were together from kindergarten to graduation. My parents valued our education so farm work never interfered with our studies, although time management skills were definitely needed. The Catholic Church was another centerpiece of the community. Weekend masses were a chance to catch up with family and friends.

Our family farm ended its operations just before my senior year of high school in 1988. My father had health issues that prohibited him from full-time farm work. I continued working on neighboring farms during my college years. I would not trade my childhood experiences for any others. It is sad that small family farms are disappearing. The lessons I
learned milking cows, baling hay and doing all the other farm chores are carried with me daily.

**Watervliet Arsenal**

As the United States entered the 19th century, the new nation’s Army depended on contractors for the supply of weapons and accoutrements required to outfit soldiers. To overcome problems of overcharging and shoddy goods, Congress authorized the construction of government owned and operated arsenals. Our nation’s oldest arsenal in terms of uninterrupted service is located along the Hudson River in Watervliet, near Albany. The Erie Canal once ran directly through arsenal.

The Watervliet Arsenal has played a vital role in national defense throughout its long history of developing and producing products for military use, most importantly large caliber cannon. Established by Congress in 1813 to provide supplies for the War of 1812, it initially produced such equipment as powder horns and cartridge boxes. During the next twenty years, everything from shoulder slings to solid shot and ammunition were manufactured at Watervliet.

During the Civil War, there was another rapid increase in production. Artillery barrels were still cast by contractors, but the arsenal constructed the carriages for the artillery pieces shipped in from nearby foundries. At the height of Civil War production, the arsenal employed about 1,500 adults and 500 children. Early in the war, only boys were employed at the arsenal, but the arsenal commander believed girls were more skilled at rolling the small carbine cartridges, and employed about 250 young girls in this capacity.

After the Civil War, the arsenal became a storage depot until the Army selected it in 1887 for conversion to cannon production. During the Spanish-American War, the arsenal produced the nation’s first 16-inch gun. Production increased again during the World Wars, and Watervliet became known as “America’s Cannon Factory.”

Today the arsenal continues to produce modern high tech, high-powered weaponry such as the guns for the Army’s main battlefield tank, the M1A1 Abrams. One of the most publicized recent contributions of the arsenal was the building of casings for the “Bunker Buster”, the 5000 pound GBU-28 Hard Target Penetrator used in the Gulf War against Iraqi command bunkers.

Your students can learn more about the arsenal at the Watervliet Arsenal Museum. Housed in the Iron Building, a structure listed on the National Register of Historical Landmarks, it is made entirely of prefabricated cast iron plates, wrought and cast iron trusses, and steel roofing. It was cast in New York City, shipped up the Hudson by boat, and erected at the arsenal during the summer of 1859. Originally a storage building, in 1971 it became the site of the “Museum of the Big Guns,” a certified U.S. Army museum relating the history of large caliber cannon as well as the story of the Watervliet Arsenal. This unique museum displays a priceless collection of rare artillery pieces from the 16th century to the present, showing the development of strategic warfare from medieval times to the 21st century. You can find more information about a visit on the arsenal’s website at http://www.wva.army.mil/.
In New York’s public schools, colleges, and universities, teachers and professors, at the time of their hire, are required to sign the following statement: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States of America, the constitution of the State of New York, and that I will fully discharge, according to the best of my ability, the duties of the position . . . . . (title of position and name or affiliation of school college, university or institution to be here inserted), to which I am now assigned” (McKinney’s Consolidated Laws: Education 16, 81).

This loyalty oath is similar to what most states, including New Jersey, demand as a condition for employment. It would be interesting to poll current educators to find out how many actually remember signing this pledge and what reservations, if any, they may have had. More than likely, the opportunity to receive a position outweighed any reluctance to sign on the dotted line.

The current loyalty oath is relatively non-threatening in matters of academic freedom. Yet there was a time in United States history when loyalty oaths struck fear in the hearts and minds of those who encouraged free inquiry and open discussion on controversial issues.

The history of loyalty oaths goes back to the First World War. Prior to that time, teachers were relatively free to express their opinions on matters of public interest. Loyalty oaths acquired an even more sinister and far reaching application during the post-war Red Scare of 1919-1920. According to historian Robert K. Murray (1964: 170-171), “New York City, . . . was the chief area where witch hunting for ‘Red’ school teachers was undertaken.” The superintendent of the city’s schools, William L. Ettinger, insisted that “the New York City system had no place for any teacher whose ‘personal convictions’ made it impossible for him to be a ‘patriotic example to his students.’”

The Lusk Commission

On March 26, 1919, the New York State Legislature set up a joint committee of six members under the chairmanship of Senator Clayton R. Lusk. The committee was charged with investigating and reporting back to the full legislature on matters involving radical and seditious activities. The committee’s creation and actions resulted in the enactment of two new school laws. The most dramatic one established a loyalty oath that all teachers were required to take and mandated expulsion of any teacher found guilty of advocating “a form of government other than the government of the United States or of this state” (Ekirch, 1967: 236). It became the legal instrument for firing many teachers. However, when the hysteria subsided in 1920, New York Governor Alfred E. Smith, approved the repeal of the Lusk school laws. He declared that the two laws “were repugnant to American democracy and a violation of freedom of opinion and freedom of speech for teachers and schools, both of which could be compelled to defer to what a state officer deemed loyalty.”

The loyalty controversy resurfaced during the height of the Great Depression. Once again, New York was in the forefront. In 1934, state legislator Irving Ives successfully sponsored the passage of a bill “requiring a loyalty oath of all teachers as a defense against ‘isms’” (Ekirch, 1967: 357). This action was prompted by the increasing popularity of Marxism among intellectuals and the failures of capitalism in the 1930s. In the late 1930s, the state conducted numerous investigations of communist influences in schools and colleges. A 1939 statute mandated the dismissal of teachers in public school or colleges who advocated the violent overthrow of the lawful government. It was specifically aimed at the New York City school system, where, in 1935, a Communist faction had gained control of the small teachers’ union.

While World War II resulted in near patriotic conformity, emerging Cold War fears, sparked by Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy’s accusations of subversion and disloyalty on the part of public servants, rekindled the loyalty controversy in the immediate post-war years. In McCarthy’s relentless hunt for Communists, he was joined by large numbers of private citizens – at the height of his influence a national poll indicated that Americans who supported his actions outnumbered his critics by almost two to one.
Caught in the web of “guilt by association” were actors, writers, educators and other individuals and organizations investigated and accused of Communism or Communist sympathy. By 1952, approximately thirty states, including New York and New Jersey, enacted some sort of loyalty oath for teachers and professors.

McCarthyism in New York

In No Ivory Tower (1986), Ellen W. Schrecker argues that McCarthyism was a reflection of the public’s displeasure over America’s international role and internal security fears sparked by growing tensions with the Soviet Union and the emergence of Communist China. By invoking the icon of national security, school officials and college presidents were able to give their actions a patina of patriotism. In New York, Senate Majority leader Benjamin Feinberg sponsored legislation that directed the Board of Regents “to draw up a list of subversive organizations, membership in which would automatically constitute ‘evidence of disqualification for a position in a public school in the state’” (Schrecker, 1986: 114). The law also required school leaders to certify that their employees did not belong to any organization on the subversive list.

Teachers were singled out for special loyalty oaths. The ostensible purpose of the loyalty oaths was to force Communist teachers to resign or be exposed to charges of perjury. More sinister were attempts to demand complete conformity. The new loyalty oath required educators to swear that they did not subscribe to certain beliefs or belong to certain organizations. The damage to intellectual freedom was costly. The stifling of free inquiry as a means of searching for truth, especially in social and political subjects, dealt a serious blow to teacher freedoms.

Fortified with this new statute, the witch-hunt in New York began in earnest. Attacks were carried out in both secondary schools and in higher education. At the University of Buffalo, William Parry, a philosophy professor, was summarily dismissed in 1953 for his refusal to cooperate with the House Un-American Activities Committee. In New York City, the Board of Higher Education used a provision of the City Charter to fire any teacher who invoked the Fifth Amendment before a congressional investigating committee. Three professors were fired in October 1952 for refusing to tell a Senate committee whether or not they ever belonged to the Communist party. Over the next few years, several hundred New York teachers in public schools and colleges across the state resigned or were dismissed after they refused to implicate others.

The most celebrated case was that of Bernard Adler, a Brooklyn high school mathematics teacher. Adler was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate from City College who received Master’s and Doctoral degrees from Columbia University. He had been employed in the New York City schools since 1932 and was active in the progressive Teachers’ Union in the 1930s. After the enactment of the Feinberg law, Adler was one of many teachers who came under suspicion for alleged subversive behavior. His refusal to cooperate with government investigations into teachers’ political beliefs and associations ultimately resulted in his suspension and dismissal.

Adler fought these actions in the courts and his case made its way all the way to the United States Supreme Court. His defense team argued that the Feinberg law was a violation of his 14th amendment due process rights. The climate of opinion in the United States was decidedly against toleration. The veneer of McCarthyism clouded judicial judgment and the Supreme Court upheld his suspension. It was not until 1976 that he was reinstated and allowed to retire.

McCarthyism in New Jersey

New Jersey educators fared no better. In 1951, the Rutgers University administration became aware that Moses I. Finley, a historian at its Newark campus, was about to be called before a congressional investigating committee. Finley was accused of running a Communist study group while a graduate student at Columbia University in the 1930s. Finley, who was considered “an outstanding teacher and scholar,” denied any communist ties. Simon Heimlich, an associate professor of mathematics in the College of Pharmacy, was also called to testify. Heimlich was an outspoken leader of Rutgers’ chapter of the American Association of University Professors. Rutgers president, Lewis Webster Jones, announced “We cannot . . . allow academic freedom to be used as a cloak for incompetence; nor can we tolerate conspirators who claim its protection in order to destroy freedom” (see http://www.scc.rutgers.edu, accessed 9/26/2006), and established a Board of Review to investigate the professors.
New Jersey’s 1947 “Statement of Loyalty” asked “Do you now give sincere and complete support and do you now affirm that you will give sincere and complete support in and out of the classroom, to the doctrine that political and economic transitions in the United States of America are properly to be effected and accomplished only by orderly constitutional processes that express the will of the majority, and not by force, violence or any other unlawful means?” (see http://www.scc.rutgers.edu, accessed 9/26/2006). When Finley and Heimlich refused to answer questions before the congressional committee, the Board of Trustees decided to fire both the professors. The Rutgers faculty decided to go along with the administration’s blacklist, voting 520 to 52 in support of the board’s policy of excluding Communist Party members from the faculty.

By the mid-to-late 1950s, with the demise of McCarthyism, most states curtailed rigid enforcement of loyalty oaths and blacklists of educators. The 1956 Supreme Court case, Slochower v. Board of Education of New York City, ruled that teacher Harry Slochower’s summary dismissal for invoking his Fifth Amendment privilege before the Internal Security Subcommittee hearings violated the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In New York, Commissioner of Education Clifford Allen issued an order effectively permitting former, but not current, members of subversive organizations to hold professional jobs in public schools, colleges, and universities. From that point on academic freedom protections for teachers increased tenfold.

The matter was finally settled in the 1967 Supreme Court case, Keyishian et al v. Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York et al. In this case, after the privately owned and operated University at Buffalo was merged into the State University of New York, three professors, including English instructor Harry Keyishian, were threatened with termination if they refused to comply with a requirement of university trustees that they certify that they were not and had never been Communists. All three professors sued the State University of New York. In its decision, the Supreme Court invalidated the state’s Feinberg law.

Although loyalty oaths remain a requirement for teacher employment in public education, they are far less intrusive in matters of academic freedom. However, there was a time, when faced with Cold War realities and legislative enactments, educators were put at risk. During the dark ages of the McCarthy Era loyalty pledges were extended far and wide to include obtaining a driver’s license, fishing license, and building permits in the state of New York. Texas demanded that school textbook authors not only sign anti-communist oaths, but include in their works accounts of “our glowing and throbbing history of hearts and souls inspired by wonderful American principles and tradition” (Schaller, Schulzinger, & Anderson, 2004: 78). American society in the late 1940s and early 1950s had to face the realities of “guilt by association,” blacklisting, and loyalty oaths for public servants. Sadly, despite proclamations supporting a democratic way of life, America’s teachers were forced to choose between loyalty to the state and loyalty to one’s conscience. Conscience hardly ever won out.

References
In the spring of 1802, a settler by the name of Zerah Phelps built a log cabin near the Tonawanda Creek, about twelve miles south of Batavia. Soon others came to his grist mill, and before long there was a saw mill, a blacksmith shop, a church, a small school, and a cheese factory. Phelp's Settlement changed its name to Attica in 1837 when many other small towns in New York took classical names.

George Cogswell and Congressman Harold Ostertag suggested Attica as a site for a new prison in the late 1920s. Governor Alfred E. Smith, approved the idea, but construction did not begin until after Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected governor in 1928. Attica was chosen as a site for the prison because of the availability of water and railroad access.

Costs were estimated at $7,000,000 with half allocated to purchase of 697 acres of land. Ground-breaking began in October 1929. Construction cost overruns ran to $2,000,000 because the site chosen was on quicksand. Extra pilings of wood and steel tubings were used to stabilize the foundation. The thirty-foot high walls are as deep as they are high, more out of necessity than design. Because of a prison riot in Auburn where thirteen inmates and the Superintendent for Security were killed, work was sped up. Tracks were laid from the Erie and Attica and Arcade Railroads to the new facility. Over two hundred "trustees" or non-dangerous inmates were brought in as workers. By July 1930 the exterior of A Block was completed and two months later five hundred cells were finished.

During the Great Depression, construction of the prison provided good employment for many of the men of Attica and the surrounding area. By 1938, the last cellblock was ready.

Attica was designed to keep dangerous criminals apart. Connecting corridors were built in the center to form an intersecting "Times Square." Until 1968, Attica's main "occupation" for inmates was the production of textiles. It was replaced by a metal shop producing lockers, metal tables and seats.

Because it is a maximum facility Attica has housed many notorious criminals. Among these are Willie "The Actor" Sutton, bank robber and master of disguise and escape; Joseph "The Mad Hatter" Donahue, mob hit man; James Fink, sent to Attica in 1940 for a triple murder; David Berkowitz, the "Son of Sam," who killed seven people in New York City during the late 1970s; and Mark David Chapman, who murdered John Lennon. In 1971, Joseph Sullivan became the only person to escape from Attica. He was recaptured and is currently in the Sullivan County Correctional Facility.

The first disturbance in the prison was described by the Buffalo Courier Express on December 30, 1932. A tear gas sprinkler system was used to quell a disruption in the mess hall. The problem arose when a "mentally deficient" inmate dropped his food tray and recent transfers from downstate Sing-Sing protested their relocation so far from friends and families. According to Warden William Hunt, "One shot of tear gas put a quick end to the demonstration" and "there was no damage and the troublemakers did not leave a scratch on the building." Residents of Attica will long remember the infamous prison riot of 1971. There were helicopters flying overhead, the sounds of gunfire, and the smell of tear gas in the air. Tear gas was used again in 1980, when there was a "lockdown." In 1990, an inmate died while being taken out of the yard by corrections officers. Inmates broke windows, burned wooden platforms, and would not return to their cells. The next day CERT, a special reaction team, was brought in to force the inmates back into their cells. Weeks of lockdown followed.

In 1878 Correction Officers went on strike for higher salaries and better working conditions. During the strike, State Police worked twelve-hour shifts outside the prison maintaining perimeter security, traffic control, and monitoring picket lines. Inside the National Guard watched over inmates locked in their cells. Supervisors who had stayed on duty supervised the Guardsmen.

In recent years gangs have been a major problem. There are occasional disturbances and stabbings with homemade knives. Gang leaders are separated from "population" or sent to other facilities.
Today the Attica Correctional Facility houses 2,189 inmates. Watching over this population is a staff of approximately 870, 625 of whom are security personnel. The facility’s annual budget is $45,000,000 ($29,000/year to house one inmate), and 75% of the current employees live outside the village and town of Attica. Currently it is the largest employer in Wyoming County.

The Attica Prison Rebellion – Who is to Blame?
by Sherida Cowans

The Attica prison rebellion on September 13, 1971 and the retaking of the correctional facility by New York State authorities was one of the bloodiest chapters in New York’s history. During the assault on the prison, state troopers killed ten hostages and thirty-nine inmates and hundreds of people were wounded. An examination of the rebellion and the state response gives insight into issues of race, class, and state power in the United States during the early 1970s.

There were several reasons for the Attica rebellion. The prison, which housed some of the most serious criminals in the state, is located in isolated rural Wyoming County. While 63% of the prisoners were African Americans and Latinos from urban areas, the guards were locals and all of them were White. They justified their abusive treatment of the inmates claiming it was necessary to maintain control. The prison was overcrowded and living conditions could best be described as sub-human. Prisoners were rationed one role of toilet paper per month per man and were allowed only one shower per week.

Medical and dental care was virtually non-existent. Food served to inmates was unpalatable. Educational facilities consisted of out-dated, second-hand, books. Prisoners also resented the treatment of their families, who in order to visit, had to travel by bus for as much as ten hours each way from downstate communities.

Added to this mix, many of the inmates had experience with the Black Panthers, a popular radical group that challenged racism and oppression in American societies. The Panthers preached that the Attica inmates were the political prisoners of a racist society. Racial tension at Attica was further exacerbated by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968 and by the death of George Jackson, an inmate at the San Quentin Correctional Facility in California who was fatally shot by a prison guard during an escape attempt escape on August 21, 1971.

On July 2, 1971, a group of prisoners issued a manifesto demanding improved conditions for inmates. State Corrections Commissioner Oswald finally visited the prison on September 2, but he refused to meet with inmates. On September 8th and 9th, a series of minor incidents bubbled over and on the morning of the 9th 1,200 inmates took control of the “D Yard”, the cellblocks, six other buildings, and forty-three hostages. The next day inmates held elections and selected spokesmen to participate in negotiations. That evening, thirty-three outside observers including elected officials and newspaper reporters arrived at the prison and briefly met with inmates. Official negotiations began on September 11. Prisoners demanded amnesty but state negotiators refused because one of the guards had died from wounds suffered during the riot. That night, the inmates refused to surrender. The observer’s committee, which had been established by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, appealed to the governor to come to the prison and address the inmates, but he refused. The next morning, Commissioner Oswald’s ultimatum was read to inmates in D Yard. After they affirmed their decision not to surrender, the assault on D Yard began with tear gas dropped from a helicopter. During the next six minutes, more than 2,000 rounds of ammunition were fired.
In 1992, a verdict in a federal class action suit filed by former Attica inmates held the state responsible for a variety of atrocities at Attica. A later court decision awarded 502 former Attica inmates eight million dollars in compensation. For more information about the Attica Rebellion, visit “Attica Revisited,” a website developed by Gerald Zahavi of SUNY-Albany at http://www.talkinghistory.org/attica.

Frank Smith Discusses the Attica Rebellion


As a prisoner and coach of the inmate football team in the Attica Correctional Facility, Frank Smith was known as “Big Black.” He was in prison for stealing money from people shooting dice in an after-hours club. During the 1971 prisoners’ rebellion, Frank Smith was in charge of security for the civilian negotiators who met with the rebels. After state authorities re-took the prison in an armed assault, he was suspected of injuring one of the hostages and tortured by correctional officers. Smith charged that officers hit him in the testicles with their nightsticks and dropped lighted cigarettes and hot shell casings on his chest. His charges were confirmed by a reporter from The New York Times. He was also mistakenly branded a leader of the revolt and indicted on thirty-four counts of kidnap, two counts of coercion, and two counts of unlawful imprisonment. These charges were later dropped. After Frank Smith was released from prison he worked as a paralegal and ultimately won a four million dollar legal judgment against the state. He died of cancer in 2004 at the age of seventy-one.

1. What were your grievances as an inmate in the Attica Correction Facility?
I was working for the warden, they called me a laundry boy, and I was a full-grown man, but that was the title. I was making 30 cent a day to hand iron shirts and sheets and tablecloths, and all that type of stuff. I lost just about all of my teeth in prison, because when you go to see a dentist you see the medical doctor. You had to go through them in order to get to the dentist, and if you go in to get an extraction they'll let you through, but if you're not going to go and get an extraction, then they give you two aspirins and you go back to your cell. The education department was really outdated. We wanted to get books, the same as people got in the street. We wanted to get better food, because you had a lot of people there not eating meat, especially the pork and stuff. We wanted to change that type of stuff.

2. What happened during the negotiations?
We were dealing with the commissioner, Oswald. He told us, “We did that, that makes sense, we can change, and we going to do that, and we going to work on this and we going to work on that. But then he went outside and he said, “in there, they want everything, they want the whole world.” He changes right up. Then we started talking to the observers that we needed the Governor, we needed somebody there that really, really wants to take this on, because Oswald is double-dealing. Rockefeller should be the person to come, you know, and talk to us as the chief executive of New York State, recognizing that his arm was reaching all the way to Washington. The observers felt that Rockefeller should be the person to come in and take charge and really deal with the situation.

3. What happened during the assault on the prison?
The first thing I saw and heard was a helicopter circling over the yard, and then gas, and then a loudspeaker, “Put your hands on your head and you won't be harmed.” Everybody hit the ground and the assault forces were coming over the wall shooting. They made me get up, beat me, and laid me on the table and put a football under my neck, and told me that if it falls, they was going to kill me, and they spit on me and dropped on me, and while I was laying there, they said “Nigger, why did you castrate the officers, why did you bury them alive? We are going to castrate you.” They had a gauntlet set up and they were running everybody through the gauntlet, beating them -- they had 20, 30 people each side -- with what they called their nigger sticks.

4. Do you think this could this have been prevented?
Attica was a slaughter and it didn't have to be. If the Governor would have took it on, and would have really did the executive job that he's supposed to do, then it wouldn't have happened that way, instead of sending some cronies like the commissioner and people to come there, to give up some token.

Prison Films
by Norman Markowitz

Prisons are institutions of punishment and fear in all societies, even those that have made serious commitments and resource investments in rehabilitating inmates. As is true of other social institutions, prisons are not static, unchanging entities but reflections of larger social and political forces in societies, defined and re-defined over time. The conditions within prisons, de jure and de facto, are also, along with the general penal code and the laws governing labor and social welfare, the prime indices of a civilization, of where it has been and where it is going.

Hollywood films have always sought to both entertain and educate, to play with and help to shape conventional wisdoms on a wide variety of topics, although such films have been constrained not only by the dictates of studio owners and distributors but also by various forms of formal and informal censorship.

In the 1930s, perhaps the most famous practical analysis of Hollywood’s role in society was James Rorty’s contention that it functioned as a “dream factory,” where love stories, war stories, crime stories, domestic comedies and adventure films set in the 19th century West and far away places in time and space provided both release from the daily grind of the depression and re-assurance about the parameters of what was and what was not permissible.

Prison films have often functioned as an inversion of the “dream factory,” rather like a house of horrors in an amusement park, albeit one where plots and characters at times have been used to call for reforms.

Depression Era Movies

Charlie Chaplin, the most famous star in the world in the period between WWI and WWII, used film to make social commentary. In Modern Times (1936), Chaplin presented his statement on the depression as seen through the character he had created a generation earlier, the “tramp,” or the little man who spends his life getting into and out of trouble. The “tramp” accidentally picks up a red flag from a manhole cover as protesters sweep him forward into a battle with police, leading to his arrest as a Communist leader. In prison, he helps to foil an escape and becomes a favorite of the warden and the guards. Prison gives him food, shelter, and even friendly guards to play cards with. When he is released with a letter from the warden to help him find work, he is genuinely dismayed. Although prison itself is not a major theme in the film, the “tramp” is more than happy to return to jail (he even tries to get the police to arrest him) because it is a less threatening place than the world of mass unemployment on the outside. This film can be used to evaluate both the era in which it was filmed and the present. Teachers can engage students around this question: What kind of social conditions would make prison preferable to the world of “freedom”? What does freedom mean without employment, housing, and economic security?

I Am A Fugitive From A Chain Gang (1932) told a very different story. The use of chain gangs and convict labor in the South had provoked criticism and calls for reform since the Progressive era. Based on Robert E. Burns memoir, the movie deals with an unemployed WWI vet, James Allen (Paul Muni) who is arrested, tried, and wrongly convicted for a minor crime which he did not commit. Allen is sent to work on the chain gang, chained to other men, and treated more like a mule or an ox than a human being. Eventually he escapes and establishes a new and productive life in business in a Northern state until he is exposed by his estranged wife and extradited back to the chain gang. Late in the film, he escapes again and becomes a fugitive in Depression-era America. Asked at the very end how he lives, Allen’s poignant comment, “I steal,” captured for movie audiences in 1932 not only the injustices of the chain gang convict labor system but also of the mass unemployment, hunger, and homelessness of the depression.

This film played a significant role in mobilizing public opinion against the chain gang system, which was abolished in Georgia in 1937. In real life, Burns found refuge in New Jersey and wrote about his experiences. New Jersey governors refused Georgia’s requests to extradite him. At the end of WWII, Ellis Arnall, Georgia’s new pro-New Deal governor, supported a compromise where Burns returned to the
state and had his sentence commuted to “time served.” Teachers can use the film to engage students on these questions: Why are there such disparities in the penal code among the states, differences greater than the differences that exist among European countries?

Themes of wrongly convicted prisoners, fugitives and men turned into criminals by social circumstances reflected the political culture of the New Deal. They Made Me a Criminal (1939) John Garfield’s first major film, and Each Dawn I Die (1939) starring James Cagney were other examples of such films.

Post-War America

The post-war era brought with it the Cold War and a much more conservative orientation in all areas of life. In films like Kiss of Death (1947) and White Heat (1949), crime was portrayed as the result of sociopathic personalities who had to be imprisoned or destroyed by the authorities in order to protect society. Tommy Udo (Richard Widmark), who pushed an old woman in a wheelchair down the stairs in Kiss of Death and Cody Garrett (James Cagney) in White Heat were the best examples of this new orientation.

One film, Knock on Any Door (1949), was perhaps the last of the New Deal oriented films in its portrayal of crime. More a courtroom than a prison drama, it is based on a popular novel by Willard Motley, an African-American novelist. Motley’s novel was based in part on the conditions in poor Italian-American neighborhoods in Chicago that he studied as part of the WPA Federal Writers project.

In the film, Andrew Morton (Humphrey Bogart) defends a “career criminal” whose family was ruined by the Depression. Sent to a reform school for a crime that he did not commit, his experiences in prison transform him into a criminal until he finally “graduates” and kills a cop who had brutalized him as a boy. The film centers on the trial in which Morton fights to save Romano (John Derek) from the death penalty by putting society on trial. Morton’s appeal fails, much as New Deal policy commitments such as full employment, national health insurance were failing in the larger society. Teachers can use this film to engage students on the question: Do harsh punishments deter crime or continue criminal behavior?

Riot in Cell Block 11 (1954) was perhaps the most interesting prison film of the 1950s. It was produced by Walter Wanger, a distinguished veteran Hollywood producer who had previously served time in prison for shooting a man in a love triangle with his wife. Don Siegel, who was later known for Invasion of the Body Snatchers, directed the film, which deals with a Folsom Prison riot. Riot in Cell Block 11 is actually about revolutions and why they must be suppressed even when there are just causes. In this film, prisoners take over the cellblock and seize a handful of hostages. Their leader, Dunn (Neville Brand), leads the cellblock against guard brutality, overcrowding, bad food and other inhuman living conditions. The warden is sympathetic to the prisoners on the issues, unlike politicians who denounce the riot on what contemporary writers would call a “no negotiations with hostages” policy. As the riot spreads through the prison and Dunn can no longer control the sociopathic prisoners for whom death and destruction are ends in themselves, the warden calls in troops and carries out a full-scale suppression. These events are portrayed as both tragic and necessary, as much of the press portrayed Nelson Rockefeller’s response to the Attica prison rebellion nearly two decades later.

Teachers can engage students with the following questions: Does the film offer any alternative except the riot to achieving reforms? What might have been done to prevent the use of troops?

Civil Rights Era Films

As the Civil Rights movement emerged as a powerful social movement and force in U.S. society in the late 1950s, it provided an alternative vision, particularly for young people. Stanley Kramer’s Defiant Ones (1958), was an early example of the space opened up by the Civil Rights movement. The film follows two convicts, one White, Joker Jackson (Tony Curtis), and one Black, Noah Cullen (Sidney Poitier), as they escape from a Southern chain gang, chained to one another. Imprisoned both by the chains and their own hostilities, they fight for survival in a backwoods jungle, hunted relentlessly by the sheriff, helped by a sympathetic woman, and threatened by a lynch mob.

Although their chains are broken, they cannot go their separate ways. They eventually learn to respect and accept each other. At the films end, there is even sacrifice and solidarity, when they share a cigarette after a failed attempt to hop a freight train. Cullen, the black prisoner falls back rather than abandon his white comrade, whom he cannot lift up into the car. Teachers can engage student with the following questions: Was it just the need to survive that led the two prisoners to
work together? After the chains were broken, how did the relationship they forged change them? 

Cool Hand Luke (1967) reflected in the prison context what Abby Hoffman would call the “revolution for the hell of it,” the anarchist spirit of the late 1960s counter-culture. A hero of WWII, Luke (Paul Newman) is sentenced to two years in a Florida work camp for cutting off the heads of parking meters. Luke does what he wants, when he wants, and not even prison can stop him. Even after he is beaten relentlessly in a boxing match with the head inmate, who acts as a prison “slave driver” for the overseer guards and the “ole massa” warden, he keeps coming until even Dragline (George Kennedy) walks away. Luke becomes a hero to the prisoners by doing erratic, anarchic things, such as betting that he can eat fifty hardboiled eggs in an hour, and leads his work gang to confound the guards by paving a road at a work pace that keeps them from using their standard forms of intimidation against the prisoners, which is the basis of their power.

The guards seek to destroy Luke as a human being, to show prisoners that no one can pretend they have no power and do not exist. When Luke’s mother dies, he is put into the “box,” an especially brutal form of solitary confinement until after the funeral. Luke escapes, is caught and brutalized. He escapes again and sends the inmates a photo of himself with a pretty girl. He is finally recaptured, brutalized, and made to beg for mercy, which loses him the support of the other prisoners. He escapes one more time, is surrounded in a church, and shouts to the police who are about to shoot him, “what we have here is failure to communicate,” the same words the warden had uttered earlier as Luke was whipped for one of his escapes.

There is much in Cool Hand Luke that defines the late 1960s. At one point, Luke asks forgiveness for killing during World War II. The Warden (Strother Martin) feigns interest in the inmates and talks like a liberal as he manages the dehumanizing brutality of the work camp. For many, the phrase “what we have here is failure to communicate” captured perfectly the hypocrisy of a government that spent tens of billions and killed hundreds of thousands in the Vietnam War while it spent a small fraction of that for a “war on poverty.” Teachers can engage students with the following questions: Can they understand Luke’s behavior in light of what is happening outside in the 1960s, the Vietnam War, the ghetto riots, the development of the counter-culture? Does Cool Hand Luke help them understand, even in an extreme way, a social institution like prison?

Sexploitation and Some Seriousness

Social movements of the 1960s were pushed back and a new “long march” to the political right characterized U.S. and global politics after the mid-1970s. U.S. prisons expanded in unprecedented ways, producing at the end of the 20th century a “prison-industrial complex” parallel to the military-industrial complex. By the early 21st century, there were more than two million people in U.S. prisons and jails. The death penalty, which had been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in the 1970s, was both revived and expanded. An emphasis on punishment and social revenge rather than rehabilitation permeated mass media. Hollywood responded with a variety of formula films exploiting these themes. From the 1970s to the 1990s, sexploitation films of women in prison, with titles like The Big Doll House, Women in Cages, Chained Heat, and Chained Heat II, were filled with “Peeping Tom” moments of voluptuous actresses like Bridgette Nielson and Pam Grier in showers and in various stages of undress.

Interestingly, when prisons were portrayed in the past or other countries, there were more serious themes. Papillion (1973), which starred Dustin Hoffman and Steve McQueen, was a powerful film set on Devil’s Island in the 1930s and 1940s, before the most feared penal colony on earth was finally closed. Although clearly a sensationalistic film, Midnight Express (1978), written by Oliver Stone, dealt powerfully with a young American subjected to the brutality and corruption of the Turkish prison system. In Rambo: First Blood, Sylvester Stallone, who from the first Rocky films of the 1970s distinguished himself as a sort of junk dealer of Hollywood formula films, “returned to Vietnam” to rescue imprisoned American MIA’s, a theme that was to re-appear in 1980s and 1990s Hollywood films appealing to the manufactured myth that there were untold numbers of American being held in captivity in postwar Vietnam. This myth served two purposes in the post-Vietnam War era. It kept the war alive for conservative politicians and constituencies who “blamed” the anti-war movement for betrayal and it ignored the nearly three million Vietnamese who had been killed or seriously wounded in the war.
The Post-Cold War

Post–cold war films of the 1990s and the early 21st century moved away from the escapism and exploitation of Rambo and Chained Heat. In the Name of the Father (1993) dealt with questions of false imprisonment, informing and torture in a sensitive way as it related to the British intervention in Northern Ireland. The Shawshank Redemption (1994) based on a Stephen King novel, told the story of Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins), a wealthy banker given a life sentence for a murder he did not commit. Faced with brutal guards in a corrupt Maine prison, Andy develops relationships with and helps, other inmates. He eventually gains protection for himself by using his business acumen to greatly expand the embezzling activities of the corrupt warden. When a new inmate enters the prison with the promise that he can help free Andy, the warden has the inmate killed, rather than lose Andy.

Unlike Cool-Hand Luke, The Shawshank Redemption has a happy ending of sorts. Andy escapes from prison and sends letters to the press exposing prison corruption. The warden kills himself as he is about to be arrested. Finally, Andy leaves money for Red (Morgan Freeman), a prison friend, who was paroled to a halfway house, so he can join him in Mexico. Teachers can engage students with the following questions. How is the corruption portrayed in prison like the corruption in the larger world?

Two recent prison films, Dead Man Walking and American History X are worth examining since they capture two significant themes of the contemporary prison world. Dead Man Walking (1995) deals with capital punishment, based partially on a best-selling work by Sister Helen Prejean. Sister Helen (Susan Sarandon) tries to treat Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn), a criminal who has committed a vicious murder, as a human being, to give him spiritual and moral support, and to help fight for a new trial. Poncetel is on death row more for his poverty and his inability to get effective legal counsel than his crime, savage as it was and guilty as he is. Through their relationship, Sister Helen is able to reach Matthew as a person, to penetrate the wall of bravado and hate that he has built to protect himself from the society that regarded and treated him as a monster; the wall that created the isolation that led him to commit monstrous acts. Dead Man Walking is in part a throwback to the New Deal oriented liberal social dramas of the 1930s and 1940s. During this period, the death penalty existed in Britain and throughout Europe and the United States was seen as a leading force internationally for social reform. Teachers can engage students with the following questions: Is the death penalty, as seen in the film, defensible in terms of deterrence? Is it defensible as an extreme punishment that constitutes society’s revenge for terrible crimes? What alternatives to the death penalty have been established in European and other countries for people who have committed such crimes?

Defeated in World War II, Hitlerism in a truly grotesque way lives on in the burgeoning American prison system. White prisoners join the “Aryan Brotherhood” to swagger in their misery and gain some protection from Black and Latino prisoners, who, thanks to racism and much higher rates of poverty, are over-represented there and dominate prison life. American History X (1998) examines this world through the eyes of Derek Vineyard (Edward Norton), who joins a neo-Nazi group, when his father, a fireman, is killed by an African American drug dealer. After he kills two African Americans who are attempting to steal his truck, Vineyard is sentenced to three years in jail for voluntary manslaughter. In jail he joins the “Aryan Brotherhood,” but “idealism” leads him to break with the group when he sees them negotiating drug deals with a Mexican gang. They respond by savagely raping him.

After the rape, Vineyard’s racist world-view begins to crumble. He develops a friendship with an African American inmate who is serving a six-year sentence for dropping a stolen television on a policeman’s foot. Lamont (Guy Torrey) is his only friend and the source of his protection in prison, the exact opposite of everything that had previously constituted his reality.

After his release, Vineyard struggles to save his brother Danny (Edward Furlong), who is following in his footsteps. Danny breaks with the Nazis, but is shot to death by a Black gang member he had previously offended. Like a character in a Shakespearean tragedy, Derek ends up holding the murdered Danny, weeping for a horror he could not prevent. Teachers can engage students with the following questions: Is the violence of the streets that create the gangs different than the violence of the prison? Does racism, if not confronted and challenged, feed on the violence that it provokes and implements? What social policies might have
prevented the social separatism and escalating violence that devastated the high school, the community and ultimately led to Danny death?

In using these films, as well as films on other topics, teachers should help students understand them as documents that allow viewers to better understand the times in which they were made.

Teaching Immigration History: The Asian-American Experience

by Linda Kantor Swerdlow

Student conceptions of “successful” immigrant groups are often formed by the popular press and equated with measures of academic attainment and socioeconomic status. Many students believe that the cause of this success is a linear relationship between the values and practices of the home culture. While cultural factors are important, the complex array of structural variables is often ignored. In order for students to understand the immigrant experience they need to be aware of its historical context, as well as the educational and social class background of the immigrants entering the country.

The Asian-American immigrants’ experience is often measured through such decontextualized statistics, often earning them the mantel of “model minority.” This stereotype serves to draw attention away from the pressures on Asian-American immigrant children to conform to the dominant culture and obscures the impact of juggling two diverse and often conflicting cultures on one’s social and emotional growth (Gibson, 1988). The “success” stereotype implies that racism is no longer a problem and can be used against less successful groups to assign blame and simplistically suggest that all they have to do to obtain success is emulate the Asian-Americans.

Asian–Indians are one of the fastest growing immigrant groups to the United States. According to 2000 census data, India ranked second to Mexico as a source of immigration with a total population of 1.9 million. Seventy-five percent live on the East Coast. The largest concentration, approximately 250,000 people, lives in the New York metropolitan area. Asian-Indians have a household median income of $48,320 that is both the highest of any ethnic group and over fifty percent higher than that of U.S. born households. Fifty percent of Asian Indians are homeowners. Sixty-five percent have a bachelor’s or an advanced degree. This is higher than any other immigrant group. Twenty percent of the U.S. born have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher (Project Impact).

First Wave: 1904-1965

Asian-Indians have lived in this country since the beginning of the 20th century. Prior to the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, their numbers were limited by institutionalized anti-Asian immigration policies of that era. The first wave of immigrants came to the U.S. between 1904 and 1920. During this period approximately 6,400 Asian-Indians were admitted to this country. The typical immigrant was a lone male, either married or unmarried, who hoped to amass a small fortune ($200-$500) within five years and return home. The majority lived in Northern California. They primarily worked on farms or as construction workers on the Western Pacific Railroad (Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Hess, 1976).

Despite their relatively small numbers, local residents perceived the community as the newest Asian threat. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, 300,000 Chinese had immigrated to the U.S. Between 1900 and 1910, more than 140,000 Japanese had arrived (Gibson, 1990). Opponents of Asian immigration, led by the San Francisco based Asiatic Exclusion League, placed pressure upon immigration officials to stop the flow of Indian immigrants.

Their goal was met by the passage of the 1917 Immigration Act, which was aimed at restricting immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and excluding Asians. Under this law, Asia became a “barred zone” and laborers from these countries were prohibited from entering the United States.

The climate of anti-Asian sentiment made it difficult for East Asians already residing in the U.S. to obtain citizenship. The Naturalization Law of 1790 limited naturalization to “white persons.” In 1870, the law was amended to include persons of African descent. Asians were omitted.
However, the immigrants from Northern India claimed Aryan descent. As a result, their status was disputed. In 1910, in the U.S. vs. Balsara, the Supreme Court ruled that their Aryan ancestry made Indians eligible for citizenship. Despite this ruling, only seventy petitions for citizenship were granted. Thirteen years later the Balsara decision was overturned by “U.S. vs. Thind,” which argued that the definition of a “white” person should not be based upon race, but according to popular definition. Hence, White was to be equated with European origin and Indians were categorized as Asian or Oriental.

As a result of the Thind decision, Asian Indians were declared ineligible for citizenship and previous grants of citizenship were annulled. In addition, the community was subjected to the provisions of the California Alien Land Law that prohibited the sale of leasing land to aliens ineligible for citizenship (Hess, 1976).

In this hostile environment, the community ceased to thrive. Between 1920 and 1930, 3,000 immigrants returned to India. By 1941, only 1,500 Asian-Indians remained in the United States. Their numbers slowly increased between 1947 and 1965. Approximately, 6,000 immigrants of Indian descent entered the US through the quotas of other countries or as non-quota immigrants, the husbands, wives and children of American citizens (Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Hess, 1976).

1965 to the Present

The prospects of Asian-Indian immigrants changed dramatically with the revisions in the 1965 immigration law. The national origins system was abolished and the quota system revised so that Asians and Africans had equal status with Europeans. The new law, Public Law 89-236, changed both the ethnic and class composition of the incoming immigrant population. The law, which became effective in 1968, divided the world in western and non-western hemispheres. The western world was given an annual quota of 120,000 and the non-western world was given a quota of 170,000 (Helweg & Helweg, 1990).

Admission to the new quota system was based upon a preference system that made family unification primary. Initial preferences were given to family members of American citizens, their spouses, children, and siblings. Immigrants who had training in occupations that were in short supply within the United States were given sixth preference. Seventh preference was given to refugees.

However, the severe restrictions placed upon Asian immigrants prior to 1965, made sixth preference immigrants the majority. Between the years 1965 and 1972, most new immigrants qualified for visas because of their professional status or technical credentials.

During the 1960s in India, the number of people educated for the professions far exceeded the number of jobs available. In 1970, there were 20,000 unemployed doctors and a surplus of engineers (Takaki, 1990: 82). The decision to come to the United States was not an individual matter, but involved the entire extended family and was made according to how the move would enhance family prestige and resources. The extended family often provided the economic backing necessary for the individual to make the trip (Helweg and Helweg, 1990).

Currently, the Asian-Indian community has the highest percentage of Asians working in the professions and as managers. These include doctors, dentists, engineers, scientists and university professors. Not all professional immigrants have been able to find employment in their fields. Others have opted for self-employment. Small businesses have been a primary source of employment. Thirty percent of all hotels and motels are owned by Asian-Indians. In addition, Asian-Indians own newstands, restaurants, food and clothing stores, luncheonettes and travel agencies, as well as food and clothing stores catering to the to the specific needs of the Indian community. They also work as cabbies, factory workers and in agriculture (Takaki, 1990). While the community no longer consists solely of professional elites, its mean income of $65,381 is the highest of any group in the United States.

References
The Portuguese Community of Yonkers

by Diana Simoes

Portuguese immigrants started arriving in the United States during the nineteenth century. They came for many different reasons. Many wanted to avoid military service or escape poverty. They came in search of jobs in industry or whaling. Many settled in southeastern New England near Bedford, Massachusetts. During the early 1900s, many Portuguese immigrants settled in the New York metropolitan area. There were Portuguese communities in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Newark, New Jersey, Mineola in Nassau County, and in the city of Yonkers in Westchester County. In 1928 a Portuguese cultural club was established in Yonkers. This club, which is now known as the Portuguese American Community Center, continues to serve as a meeting place and educational facility. To learn more about Portuguese immigration, visit http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/portam/carte.html and http://www2.bc.edu/~brisk/portugal.htm.

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Portuguese Immigrants by State, 1870-1978

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Sources: http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0081/twps0081.pdf; http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/population/immigration/; Jerry R. Williams, And Yet They Come

A Portuguese Immigrant In Yonkers

My name is Mario Simoes and I am proud to be a Portuguese American. I first arrived in the United States in 1984. I was 37 years old. I came with my wife and seven year old daughter. I came to America in search of a better life. There weren’t a lot of job opportunities in Portugal. My wife had a sister living in Bronx, New York so we packed our things and came to live here.

When we first arrived we lived near my sister-in-law in the Bronx. It was very difficult for me when I first came here because I didn’t speak English. Since I didn’t know the language, it was very hard for me to find work. I was afraid that maybe I had made the wrong decision in coming to America. Luckily, a Portuguese man who said he worked in construction approached me. Many Portuguese men worked in that field so I was able to communicate with the other workers. My wife worked in a factory with other Portuguese women. Once our daughter went to school and began learning English, she was able to help us a lot when it came to speaking with people that didn’t know our language.

Six years later, we moved to Yonkers because my daughter wanted to go to the high school where one of her cousins went. When I moved to Yonkers, I began trying to speak more English. I would talk to the neighbors and to people at work but I still spoke Portuguese at home.
There are many places in Yonkers that remind me of my home country. I often go with my family to the Portuguese American Community Center. At the center, I can talk to other Portuguese immigrants. They have festivals that celebrate many of the things we celebrate in Portugal. There are other community events like picnics, soccer games, and traditional folk dancing. My daughter goes to Portuguese school to learn the language, history and culture of Portugal. She is in the rancho (a traditional folk dancing group). I feel that it is important for my children to learn about where they are from.

### Bronx Origins of Hip Hop

by Theron Grinage

It is not uncommon, while walking down the street, to see groups of youngsters, hats backward, durags exposed, pants sitting low on their waists, sporting baggy t-shirts adorned with logos and phrases such as “Stop Snitching” and “Welcome to the Hood” or a picture of a notorious rap music icon such as Tupac Shakur or the Notorious B.I.G. They will probably be carrying headphones and reciting the lyrics to their favorite rap songs. Teachers often frown upon them for their inappropriate usage of profanity, verb tense, and vernacular. But every culture has a native tongue and form of artistic expression; for the hip hop culture, rap music is the medium of expression.

Loosely defined, rap means reciting rhymes to beats. This form of expression has deep roots within African and African American cultures and oral traditions. Rap had its genesis in the early 1970s in the Bronx, New York. Its usually involved a disk jockey alternating and mixing excerpts of recorded music and adding “scratching” noises while a vocalist recited rhymed lyrics similar to spoken poetry. The founding fathers of rap include DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash.

**Bronx Origins**

DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell) was originally from Kingston, Jamaica. He moved to the West Bronx when he was twelve years old. While in Kingston, he became familiar with the sounds of dancehall music. In the Bronx, he hosted parties where he performed as the DJ and incorporated his homelands style. Kevin Donovan, a founding member of a gang known as the Black Spades, was another Bronx rap pioneer. After a life-changing trip to Africa, where he was inspired by Zulu warriors, he changed his name to Afrika Bambaataa, and began the Zulu Nation, a group of racially and politically aware rappers. In the 1980s, inner-city communities saw a mass exodus of middle and working-class families at about the same time as the introduction of crack. Crack is a variant of cocaine that is inexpensive and provides a quick, intensive, high. Joblessness caused by the lack of investment and prejudice in hiring contributed to the emergence of an army of crack dealer plying their trade and the formation of drug gangs to control territory. Crack use and dealing helped produce a new set of values and beliefs that devalued normal social and economic interactions. This new lifestyle of “easy money” emphasized deception and violence. During this period, crack use and dealing came to be associated with hip hop culture.

**Gangsta and Political Rap**

At this time, two inter-related types of rap music emerged - gangsta rap and political or protest rap. Gangsta rap highlighted violence, gunplay, misogyny, and profane language and promoted anti-social messages. Political rap took stands on drugs, sexism, poverty, the judicial system, and racial identity. Both styles came from poor ghetto communities that had inadequate resources and problems such as high mortality rates, violence, and crime. Proponents of gangsta rap claimed they merely spoke about the harsh realities of the environment in which they were forced to live.

In 1982, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five released the song, “The Message.” This song was one of the first to talk about the struggles and frustrations of living in the ghetto. Flash rapped about rats, roaches, people using the hallways as bathrooms, drug addicted neighbors, prostitution, homelessness, and the hazards of living in poverty. He claimed that in order to survive it was necessary for him to “keep my hand on my gun/cause they got me on the run” and feeling like an “outlaw.”

The first gangsta rap song was probably “P.S.K.- What Does It Mean,” released in 1985 by the Philadelphia rapper, Schoolly D. P.S.K. are the initials for Park Side Killas, a street gang that Schoolly D was affiliated with. His lyrics focused on graphic sex and gunplay. They included drug references and the word “nigga.”

Although the rapper Ice T from California is credited with the proliferation of gangsta rap, his songs
promoted political ideas as well. His 1984 release “Killers” included comments on the death penalty, nuclear war and gang warfare. Ice T was one of the few rappers to condemn homophobia on tracks like “Straight Up Nigga” and “The Tower.” He condemned anti-White bigotry on “Momma’s Gotta Die Tonight” and anti-immigrant racism on “Race War.”

These songs remain popular in the rap community and form the foundation of the hip hop culture. They combine social protest, musical creation, and cultural expression. This community remains one defined through its artistic expression including its forms of communication, dress, and musical identity.

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**All Kinds of Families**

by Judith Y. Singer and Marilyn Martinez

When I was growing up, more than fifty years ago, all the families in my schoolbooks had a mother and a father, two or three children, and a dog and a cat. Most of the children had blond hair, and many had blue eyes. The children lived in houses with white picket fences, and everybody spoke English. Every day the mothers cooked dinner, the fathers came home from work and ate dinner with their families. Thirty years ago, my two little girls brought home these same books and read about the children with blond hair and blue eyes who were called Dick and Jane. They lived with me, their mother, and sometimes they visited their father, but he didn’t live with them. This was called a “divorce.” Lots of families had divorces, but my two little girls did not like to talk about it, because it made them feel “different.” Nobody wanted to be different.

We lived in a tall apartment building, and my girls, who were white, went to school with children who were black and brown and beige. Some of their classmates spoke English, while others spoke Spanish or Haitian Creole. The children who spoke Spanish and Haitian Creole were also considered different, and sometimes other children made fun of them for not speaking English. The children who went to school with my children were Christian and they went to church on Sundays and celebrated Christian holidays like Easter and Christmas. My family was Jewish and we celebrated Jewish holidays like Chanukah and Passover. This was another way of being different and sometimes other children made fun of my little girls for being Jewish and not Christian.

In the late 1980’s, some educators decided that differences should be respected and wrote a “multicultural kindergarten curriculum” called *Children of the Rainbow* for New York City schools. This curriculum told teachers how to teach children about different languages and different cultures and different abilities, but it did not talk about children from multiracial families or children with gay parents. One book about lesbian mothers, called *Heather has Two Mommies*, was actually removed as a recommended title because of political opposition.

I believe we have to expand our notion of what is a “normal” family. Children need to know that they have a place in their classrooms, whoever they are, whatever they believe, whatever languages they speak, and whatever their parents think about marriage. Eventually my little girls had a step-father and a new brother who were all part of their extended family.

In this collection of books, there are many ways children and their families are different. There are children of all different colors, including black, brown, white, and even blue (Yes! Blue!). There are children who live only with their grandmothers or only with fathers or only with their mothers. Some of these children are adopted, and they do not look like their parents at all. Some have traveled to their new parents from China, a country far across the sea. Some have traveled from Columbia or Guatemala in Central and South America. One African-American child traveled to Gambia, in Africa to visit her father and her father’s other family. One boy lives with his “uncle” and his “uncle’s friend,” who are gay and they both die from a disease called AIDS. Some make their families where they find them. One wants to be a dancer. While not all kinds of families are represented in this collection, each story does begin the task of reassuring us that families, whoever they are, are the people who love you. Each story has the task of reminding us that all of these differences make us human. Each of these books can be used to help start a conversation with young children about ways children are different, including adopted families, single parent families, and lesbian and gay families.
Who’s in a family? by Robert Skutch (1994), illustrated by Laura Nienhaus. California: Tricycle Press. This is a lovely little book with illustrations of all kinds of families, doing all the things that American families do. There are single mothers, single fathers, and families made up of a parent, a child and a grandparent. There are interracial families, step families, families with two Moms, families with two Dads, and families with a father, a mother, and one, two, and three children. The families play games together, go swimming, and they do homework together. The book also includes animal families, like elephants and ducks, and how they live together. This book can set the stage for young children to learn that there are many ways for families to be.

Amazing Grace (1991) by Mary Hoffman, pictures by Caroline Binch. New York: Dial Books for Younger Readers. The African-American family in this book is made up of Grace, a six year old girl, her mother and her grandmother. The story is about all the things that Grace likes to do and all the ways her mother and her grandmother encourage her. Grace loves to read stories and she loves to act them out with her mother and grandmother as her audience. When it came time for the class play, Grace wanted to be Peter Pan, but other children said she couldn’t, because Grace is a girl and she is black. Her grandmother takes Grace to see a Black ballerina and she tells Grace, “You can be anything you want, if you put your mind to it.” Grace practiced being Peter Pan all weekend, and everyone voted for her.

Boundless Grace by Mary Hoffman (1995), pictures by Caroline Binch. New York: Dial Books for Younger Readers. This is another book about Grace’s adventures. In this story, Grace travels with her grandmother to Gambia in Africa to become reacquainted with her father and to get to know his other family. At first Grace is not so sure she wants to spend time with these people she does not know. Grace reflects on her father’s family, with its two parents and two children. She remarks, “They make a storybook family without me. I’m one girl too many.” Later, she asks Nana, “Why aren’t there any stories about families like mine, that don’t live together?” As Grace questions the idea of having a single-parent family, readers may also be able to discuss the idea of different kinds of families as well.

A Chair for my Mother by Vera B. Williams (1982). New York: A Mulberry Paperback Book. This is another story about a family made up of a girl, her mother and her grandmother. It is also a story about how the whole community can be your family and help you out if you need help. When Rosa’s house burned down, all the neighbors brought things to help them: a table, pots, pans, a rug, and a bed. Meanwhile, Rosa, her mother and her grandmother saved up for a chair, so “Mama would have a good place to take a load off her feet.”

Best Best Colors: Los Mejores Colores by Eric Hoffman (1999), ill. by Celeste Henriquez. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press. In this Spanish-English bi-lingual book, a little boy named Nate is searching for his “best, best colors.” Nate keeps changing his mind until he realizes that he can have more than one best color and he can have a whole rainbow in the Gay Pride parade. At the same time, readers of this book can learn that a child can have two Moms.

One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads by Johnny Valentine (1994), Illustrated by Melody Sarecky. Los Angeles: Allyson Wonderland Publications. This book emphasizes the possibility of differences among dads and other people. This book can also stimulate discussion of what kinds of differences might be possible, and what kinds might be impossible. In this case, a discussion about gay dads might be appropriate.
*And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell (2005), Ill. by Henry Cole. NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Reader. This is a story about two penguins living in the Central Park Zoo who fall in love. This is a true story. It is not fiction. While all the other penguins were looking for the right mate, these two penguins, Roy and Silo became interested in each other, but Roy and Silo were both boys. When it became time to hatch an egg, they did not have an egg to hatch, until one of the zookeepers found an egg that no one else was hatching. Now Silo and Roy and their fuzzy baby chick named Tango were a family. “Tango was the very first penguin in the zoo to have two daddies.” Again, this is a story that can help start a conversation with young readers about gay parents.

*Tiger Flowers* by Patricia Quinlan (1994), pictures by Janet Wilson. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers. This is a sad book about two young men who loved each other and who died of AIDS, first Peter and then Michael. It is narrated by Michael’s nephew, Joel. Peter, Michael, and Joel took care of the tiger lilies and other flowers growing around Michael’s house. They went to ballgames together, played with model trains, and went to the zoo. They did everything that uncles and nephews did together. The only thing different about them was that Peter and Michael were gay and they were infected with HIV/AIDS. Since the AIDS epidemic, it has become increasingly important to help children understand this disease and to make those who suffer from it human. This is a story which can begin such a conversation.

*I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* Rose Lewis (2000), Illustrated by Jane Dyer. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. Another thing that makes children feel “different” is being adopted. This book is about what it feels like to be adopted. It reads like a Valentine from a new mother to her new daughter. The adoption originates in China, where Crazy Cakes stays in a big room with other babies until someone comes to adopt her. Finally Crazy cakes takes an airplane to America, where many people are eager to meet her and to welcome her to her new home. This is a good book to help provoke discussion about adoption, which has its downside in the mothers who are left behind.

*The White Swan Express: A Story About Adoption* by Jean Davies Okimoto and Elaine M. Aoki (2002). New York: Clarion Books. In this book, we learn the stories of parents who are adopting baby girls from China. All four of the girls are coming from China to America. The parents gather their papers, and they finally meet their new babies and prepare for the long flight home. The parents have been waiting a long time to meet these babies. They are eager to welcome the children to their new homes.

*Chicken Sunday* by Patricia Polacco (1992). New York: Philomel Books. This is a story about a group of people who made themselves into a family. When Patricia’s grandmother died, Eula Mae Walker became Patricia’s “surrogate” grandmother. Eula Mae already had two grandchildren, Stewart and Winston, and all three children looked after Eula Mae, while Eula Mae looked after them. Eula Mae tried to bring all three children up to do the right thing and to tell the truth. This is a family of people who treasure one another and who include a Black grandmother, her two Black grandchildren, her Jewish “grandchild,” and an old Jewish hat-maker. The story provides an ideal opportunity to engage with children about who can be part of your family and how we can build our families together.

*Heather Has Two Mommies* by Leslea Newman (1989). Illustrated by Diana Souza. Boston: Allyson Publications. This story provides an opportunity to talk about two mommies who have a baby using artificial insemination, and it might be helpful when one of Heather’s counterparts asks the inevitable question, “Where do I come from?” The book also provides more illustrations of different kinds of families to provoke conversations with young children.
do not find the illustrations in this book to be very attractive, for either children or adults, but I think it is unfortunate that it was removed from the New York City Children of the Rainbow curriculum nonetheless.

**Daddy’s Roomate** by Michael Willhoite (1990). Boston: Alyson Publications. This book provides illustrations of two gay men living together and doing all the normal things that a couple with a young son might do together. They go to the zoo and to the beach. They tell jokes and play catch. They clean the house, go grocery shopping, and go to the movies. They sleep together in the same bed. The story begins with narrator, a young boy, informing readers, “My Mommy and Daddy got a divorce last year.” Except for sad faces on the part of Mommy, Daddy, and the boy, there does not appear to be any of the normal sadness which accompanies children and parents when families break up. Mommy does not appear to be troubled by this upheaval in her life at all. I find the illustrations of life in this book to be a bit cartoonish. Similar scenes in *Tiger Flowers* are much more realistic. However, this story may also help to provoke questions and conversations with young children.

**Children’s Literature and Resources on Growing up in Coal Country**

by Suzanne S. Miller

The books that are starred (*) deal with social justice issues as well as with coal mining. Excellent exhibits include the Anthracite Heritage Museum, Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit #19, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority and the Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museum.

**Children’s Literature:**


*An ethnic mosaic cookbook.* Weatherly, PA: Eckley Miner’s Village Association.


**Reference Works for Teachers and Older Students:**

*Donegal Weavers (1994). Last day of the northern field: Memories of Pennsylvania coal mines.* Wilkes Barre, PA


**Web sites:**
http://is2.dal.ca/~mmtturnbu/coal.html. General information about coal from four Canadian university students.

**Tapes and CDs:**
The Donegal Weavers (1992). *Last day of the northern field: Memories of Pennsylvania’s Coal Mines.* Wilkes-Barre, PA: Donegal Weavers (PO Box 2820).

**Videos (available from Anthracite Heritage Museum, Scranton, PA):** The Anthracite People; Stories from the Mines; Fire in the Hole.

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**Fourth-Graders Search for the Underground Railroad**

by Jerry Ahern

“Search for the Underground Railroad” is an interdisciplinary look at the Underground Railroad and its impact on New York State designed for fourth grade students. It was developed through the New York Institute of Technology’s Project VIEW, a Federal Innovation Challenge Grant in Partnership with the Schenectady City Schools. Time required for the unit is five concept periods lasting 45 minutes each, two video conferencing sessions, five research computer sessions, and five data assessment periods. You will need computers with internet access and printing capabilities; copy capability; bus transportation; white butcher block paper; art charcoal for rubbings; postal access; video conferencing capabilities; CD and tape player/recorder; maps of New York State and Long Island; and Nassau County Phone Book.

“Search for the Underground Railroad” is designed so students become part of the past rather than just observers. It focuses on fourth graders who will be taking the fifth grade New York State Social Studies examination. It supplements the McGraw Hill Social Studies text, *New York: Adventures in Time and Place* (2001), Chapter 8, “In Search of Freedom.” The premise of the unit is that for students to better understand the subject matter being taught, they must develop an emotional and physical attachment to the information.

“Search for the Underground Railroad” develops a fourth grade student’s ability to:

- research his or her heritage and the heritage of members of the community
- identify time lines and their importance in the study of history
- understand how artifacts teach us about the past
- locate and visit relevant local historical places connected to slavery and the Underground Railway
- gain an appreciation of how the past has affected our lives today
- consider what would have happened in the United States if the Underground Railway never existed
- write a document-based report on his or her research

After the American Revolution, and especially after 1827 when New York State formerly abolished slavery, the Underground Railroad was a pathway to freedom for people escaping bondage in the South. It made many stops in New York on its way to Canada and many of the riders settled in the state. New York is rich with the history of both slavery and the Underground Railway. There are separate cemeteries for African Americans, both free and enslaved, scattered across the state and descendants of former slaves are a source for oral histories.

To complete this project, students should have a working knowledge of the Northeast and Southern States, be able to locate Canada on a map, and should be familiar with the name of the cities in central New York including Albany, Syracuse, Auburn, Elmira Buffalo, Rochester, and Niagara Falls. They should also be able to interpret a time line and have some awareness of what slavery is and how and when it was practiced in the United States.
Questions examined during “Search for the Underground Railroad” include:

- How were the people who traveled on the Underground Railroad related to us?
- Why was it dangerous for an enslaved person to escape to freedom?
- Why was it dangerous for people, both Black and White, who helped enslaved people escape?
- If you were enslaved, would you have taken the risk and tried to escape?
- Are there institutions similar to the Underground Railroad in the United States today?

Part 1. Research on the Underground Railroad: Degrees of Separation: Students research genealogies for their families, friends, and neighbors to determine if they or other local residents had any personnel connections to the Underground Railroad. On the first day, they review the history of the Underground Railroad using “New York Adventures in Time and Place” by McGraw-Hill. On the second day they learn about genealogy (e.g., What is a family tree?). The third day consists of instruction on the creation of a family tree, a survey form, and a letter introducing the project to family, friends, and neighbors. The fourth class period will show the students how to create a personal family time line. For the fifth lesson, teams report any links to the Underground Railroad in families that they investigated. During the sixth class period, students summarize what they have learned and create a class museum.

Part 2. Videoconferencing: Students are introduced to the Underground Railroad through the eyes of Rowena, a runaway slave who has come to the Ohio Village seeking the conductor of its “Safe House.” Students help identify the conductor through deductive reasoning and interviewing. In part two, students and villagers debate the issues of the times. This lesson takes three 45-minute periods. The first period consists of the video conference with the Ohio Historical Center on the video “Can She Trust You With Her” Life?” (Accessed April 26, 2007 at http://www.ohiohistoryteachers.org/05/index.shtml). During the second period student teams write their own versions of a slave escaping a slave owner and entering the Underground Railroad. The third session teams present their versions of the Underground Railroad to the class.

Part 3. Field Trip to Local African American Slave Cemetery: Our students visit the site of an African American Slave Cemetery in Old Brookville on Long Island and record the names and create rubbings from the tombstones found there. Prior to the trip, they do Internet research on the site. The first period will be an investigative computer period finding more supportive evidence of the Underground Railroad on Long Island. The second 45 minute period consists of instructing the student on the “hows and whys” of writing a DBQ. The third period will use the data compiled to answer, “Who were those people and what do they have to do with me?”

Part 4. Document-based Essay: The culminating activity is writing and responding to a DBQ entitled “Who Were The People on the Underground Railroad and What Did They Have to Do With Me?”

Recommended Websites for Student Research on Slavery

- Passage on the Underground Railroad (art focus). http://herbergercollege.asu.edu/marc/history.html.
Alice Stokes Paul was a key leader in the final fight for women’s voting rights that culminated in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Paul led the radical wing of the suffrage movement through the National Woman’s Party, an organization she founded. Following the suffrage victory in 1920, Paul dedicated the rest of her life to a ceaseless campaign for women’s legal equality. She influenced the wording of the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1947 and the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include gender equity in both. Her life’s work was another proposed change to the U.S. Constitution, the Equal Rights Amendment. At her death in 1977, 35 of the requisite 38 states had ratified the amendment. Today the ERA has a significant number of co-sponsors in Congress and a national network advocating for reintroduction of the amendment and passage by another three states or re-ratification by the required 38 states.

In 1985, a group of women founded the Alice Paul Centennial Foundation to celebrate Alice Paul’s 100th birthday. They created a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a mission to “educate the public about the life and work of Alice Stokes Paul.” In 1988, when Paul’s nephew Donald died without a will and her last effects went up for public auction, the Foundation bid for and won the entire collection. They donated it to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History and to the Schlesinger Library of Women in American History at Radcliffe Institute. Those two entities culled through the items, kept what they deemed appropriate for their archives and returned the rest. Today those items that they returned - family photo albums, duplicate materials from the National Woman’s Party and books - comprise the Alice Paul Institute’s Alice Paul Archives.

The publicity around that 1988 auction brought the group to the attention of the Feyerherm family who lived in Alice Paul’s birthplace (Paulsdale) in Mt. Laurel, a Philadelphia suburb in southern New Jersey. They were interested in seeing the home and surrounding 6.5 acres preserved in Paul’s memory and encouraged the Foundation to purchase the property. The small group of determined volunteers went on a national fundraising campaign and in early 1990 bought the property. Since that time they have met a monthly mortgage payment and have been responsible for the maintenance and preservation of a 200-year-old National Historic Landmark.

To determine the best use for Paulsdale, the Foundation’s volunteers met with representatives of women’s organizations from around the state. It was agreed that the most appropriate way to commemorate Alice Paul was not to create a historic house museum - Paul left few personal effects, no furniture or family heirlooms to view - but instead to create a living memorial to her life’s work for women’s equality. It was decided that Paulsdale would serve as a leadership development center for women and girls. This use of a historic site to address contemporary issues was a new concept in the museum and social service world, a concept that both confounded and excited many potential funders.

Alice Paul Leadership Program
In 1994, a volunteer committee of educators and non-profit administrators, some but not all of whom were members of the Alice Paul Centennial Foundation, started the Alice Paul Leadership Program with the following mission and vision statement: The Alice Paul Leadership Program provides leadership training for women and girls grounded in an understanding of the ability of women to overcome personal and societal obstacles. Our mission is to provide women and girls with the tools to reach their full potential, to empower the self, and to recognize the spiritual strength we may draw from our gender solidarity.

The APLP committee’s initial focus on adolescent girls was sparked by the wealth of research being published at the time that documented patterns of diminished confidence, lowered self-esteem, plummeting academic performance and social withdrawal among girls ages 13-15. Committee members attended workshops and conferences, read the current literature in the field, talked with professionals who worked with girls, and conducted focus groups with girls themselves.

Armed with what they learned, the committee decided to develop an intervention workshop for South Jersey middle school girls. The workshop would stress prevention by introducing girls to skills and confidence-building exercises they need to reverse negative self-perceptions. The workshop would also provide girls with female role models for their own leadership styles, role models that they generally do not learn about in school textbooks or even in their general reading.

All Alice Paul Leadership Program activities were founded on the following basic principles:
- The goal of APLP programs is to introduce girls to the continuum of successful women leaders in the past and present and to familiarize them with some of the skills they need to join that continuum in the future.
- APLP programs approach contemporary concerns through the examples of women in history, including Alice Paul, who can serve as role models to young women today.
- APLP workshops are proactive and affirmative. Girls learn in a supportive atmosphere and are empowered to share their own voices to identify strategies for their own success.
- The committee decided to work through the local schools for the programs, hoping to engage teachers in preparation and follow-up, which would add continuity and create a support network for the girls in their daily world.

In late 1995 the committee held its pilot workshop, which was intended as a one-time, large-scale focus group. The goal of the workshop was that girls would “find their voice” in an environment that enabled them to speak up and be heard. Thus, the workshop was titled, “Leadership: Share Your Voice.” Fifty eighth-grade girls from ten South Jersey schools attended the workshop. They sat in small groups with girls from the other schools and an adult discussion facilitator.

The Criteria for Girls

The participant schools were instructed to select five girls who represented their school population’s ethnic, racial and economic diversity. They were given a “Criteria for Selection” statement that encouraged them to select girls who
1. Are eager participants in school activities but who do not lead those activities
2. Are mature, curious, sensitive to others and have a willingness to share what they have learned with other girls in their school or peer group
3. Have a positive perception of women as leaders
4. Are not, or do not perceive themselves to be, leaders in their school community

This emphasis on “potential” leaders was, and continues to be, a unique feature of the Alice Paul Leadership Program. Teachers frequently thank workshop organizers for “giving these girls a chance,” for “picking out the girls that never get picked.” Occasionally a school will disregard the criteria and will send the class president to represent their school. More often than not, however, we have concluded that those girls, though perceived as leaders by their peers, do not have a strong sense of what it is to be a leader and the responsibilities involved in leadership. Therefore, the program activities are just as beneficial to them as they are to the “potential” leader girls.

Alice Paul herself fits the “potential” leader profile. She did not have a “natural leader” personality enjoying great social popularity. She was, in general, a shy person who lacked strong social skills. She is a role model less
for her personality but more for what she accomplished despite her innate reserve and challenges. Girls quickly identify with her commitment to an ideal and are inspired by her tenacity and dedication.

This is excerpted from a paper presented at the Thirteenth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, “Sin Fronteras: Women’s Histories, Global Conversations,” held at Scripps College in Claremont, California, June 23-25, 2005. It was part of a panel on “Teaching Teachers to Teach Women’s History: One State’s Perspective.” It was organized by Dr. Delight Dodyk, formerly of Drew University, Dr. Ferris Olin, Rutgers University, and Dr. Margaret Crocco, Teachers College, Columbia University. Dodyk and Olin are founding members of the Women’s Project of New Jersey, the organization responsible for publication of Past and Promise: Lives of New Jersey Women (Syracuse University Press, 1996) and its electronic companion, the New Jersey Women’s History website (http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/njwomenshistory).

Using Poetry to Teach About African American History
by Tanya Di Mambro

Between 1910-1929, nearly a million African Americans moved from the South to the North as part of the Great Migration. They left the south to escape sharecropping, permanent debt, racism, and lynchings. The African American migrants found work in northern factories and over 200,000 people settled in Harlem. Though Harlem residents suffered from poverty, the community bloomed with talent. Writers, actors, poets, playwrights, musicians, and artists came together in the flowering of the Harlem Renaissance. They called themselves “The New Negro Movement.” They celebrated Black culture and achievement; their art and writing focused on the lives of Black people, often on the impact of racial discrimination.

Response to Racism

To explore the Harlem Renaissance response to racism, students examine three different artistic pieces, “Incident” (http://www.duboislc.org/ShadesOfBlack/CounteeCullen.html), “The Lynching” (http://www.poesy-archive.com/m/the_lynching.html), and “Strange Fruit” (http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/film.html). In the poem “Incident,” Countee Cullen describes a young Black boy who is discriminated against while he travels in Baltimore. The speaker in the poem states, “Now I was eight and very small, and he (a white boy) was no withe bigger, and so I smiled, but he poked out his tongue and called me nigger.” Later in the poem, the speaker reflects back on this incident and says, “Of all that happened there, that’s all I can remember.” The poem gives students a sense of the time and place where the incident happened and of the impact of racism. This incident connects directly to Claude McKay’s poem, “The Lynching.” McKay writes, “Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view the ghastly body swaying in the sun; and little lads, Lynchers that were to be, danced round the dreadful thing with glea.” I also connect McKay’s poem to Billie Holiday’s version of the song “Strange Fruit” where she describes “Southern trees bear strange fruit. Blood on leaves and blood on root. Black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze. Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.”

Students learn about working conditions in the north from Claude McKay’s “The Tired Worker” (http://www1.bartleby.com/269/80.html), a poem that pairs nicely with Jacob Lawernce’s painting, “Ironing” (http://www.nwjp.org/contact.html), which depicts faceless African American women ironing clothes while standing up. McKay tells readers, “Be patient tired body, soon the night will wrap thee gently in her sable sheet, to rest they tired hands and tired feet. The wretched day was theirs, the night is mine.”

Disillusionment

Many African Americans thought that when they migrated from the South their lives would greatly improve. However, when they arrived they were rudely awakened by the harsh reality of life in the North. In Langston Hughes’ poem, “Po’ Boy Blues” (http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmID/15608) he highlights their disillusionment. Hughes writes, “When I was home de Sunshine seemed like gold. When I was home de Sunshine seemed like gold. Since I come up North de Whole damn world's turned cold.” After reading this poem, students would have the opportunity to discuss why and how the speaker’s life turned from “gold to cold,” and in doing so, they would learn about the social restraints placed on...
African Americans during this time period. Aaron Douglas’ painting, “God’s Trombones” (w<wbr/>.eyeconart.net) and lyrics from Louis Armstrong’s song, “Black and Blue” (http<wbr/>.lyricsfreak.com/l/louis+armstrong/black+blue_20085352.html), are good companion pieces that also explore disillusionment.

After analyzing the Harlem Renaissance, I have students analyze poems and songs from the 1960s to compare the two time periods. The ideas presented in “Merry-go-round” by Langston Hughes (http<wbr/>.www.bu.edu/favoritewpoem/poems/hughes/merry.html) and Maya Angelou’s “Still I Rise” (http<wbr/>.www.poemhunter.com/poem/still-i-rise/) are similar to those in Cullen’s “Lynching.” However, the music of the sixties, which is associated with the Civil Rights movement and social struggle, is much more hopeful. A good example is “We Shall Overcome” (http<wbr/>.www.k-state.edu/english/nelp/american.studies.s98/we.shall.overcome.html).

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Still Not Making It: Welfare Reform and the Working Poor

In the final chapter of this “undercover” examination of the lives of minimum wage earners, Barbara Ehrenreich levels an indictment against the American economy and dominant mythology. “Something is wrong, very wrong, when a single person in good health, a person who in addition possesses a working car, can barely support herself by the sweat of her brow.” Ehrenreich does not present her conclusions in the form of a Marxist diatribe against capitalism in theory. Rather, she presents evidence of its failings in practice. She offers thought provoking experiences social studies educators at the secondary and college levels will find useful in their teaching.

One of the greatest strengths of Nickel and Dimed is the way it challenges readers. Prompted by her concern for how the poor working at “unskilled” jobs get by in today’s economy, she focuses on how “the roughly four million women about to be booted into the labor market by welfare reform” are “going to make it on $6 or $7 an hour.” Ehrenreich goes “under cover” and works as a waitress in Florida, for a cleaning service in Maine, and as a sales associate in a Minnesota Wal-Mart. Ehrenreich’s chronicle of her experiences challenges the culturally prevalent assumptions about the working poor and the potential for welfare reform. Low wage earners are outside the economic world of “economic man” (people who operate as free agents making financial and career decisions that are optimally beneficial). They live in a “dictatorship” restricted by factors most of us fail to see. She comes to appreciate the strength and skill required to do this work and refers to this class of people as low wage workers or the working poor, and not as unskilled workers.

I have used this book with my graduate students. The vivid descriptions of her working and living in the economic underworld of the low wage earner spark wonderful discussions. Student reactions are typically shock, anger, and disbelief. Many also point to what they see as weaknesses in her research. She is, by her own admission, working with a “safety net” in that she could use her ATM card and escape to her lived reality of a “bank account, IRA, health insurance, [and] multiroom home.” Also her “research” techniques are more journalistic than scientific and therefore raise questions about her objectivity. Her description of the origin of the idea for her research (“How does anyone live on the wages available to the unskilled?”) suggests Ehrenreich may have proceeded with a biased agenda. If this is true, to what extent does this impact the validity of her findings?

Were I still teaching high school (which I did for thirty years), I would use Nickel and Dimed in teaching Participation in Government, Economics or American History. First, it is a pretty easy read that high school students – especially juniors and seniors – would find entertaining and relevant. Additionally it raises important questions about the nature of welfare reform (for example which is more accurate, government statistics depicting fewer numbers of people on welfare versus the description of the lived reality that Ehrenreich provides) and the larger issue of public policy. In the final chapter of the book, Ehrenreich offers an interesting perspective on government statistics (such as wage increases) that would offer a real world discussion to economics classes. The book includes two pages of discussion questions that classroom teachers can easily adapt.

Secondary teachers might also benefit from reading and reflecting on this book. If they are not familiar with her critique, Ehrenreich’s portrayal of the working poor might well challenge their own beliefs and assumptions regarding the reality of achieving the American Dream. Her assessment of an economic dictatorship (“What
surprised and offended me most … was the extent to which one is required to surrender one’s basic civil rights”) existing in the framework of a democratic-capitalist nation is both thought provoking and disturbing. No less provocative is her assertion that a growing underclass exists and is increasingly invisible to policy makers, thus creating an evermore hopeless and potentially desperate situation.

Nickel and Dimed is flawed if one considers it an example of ethnographic educational research. However, as a journalistic expose it resonates with the “stuff” of the social studies and offers rich opportunities for teachers to engage their students in meaningful and substantive discussions. And isn’t that what brings social studies alive for students?

### Racial Inequality in 20th Century America


Affirmative action, the controversial policy giving preference to applicants in employment, education, and government contracts in order to rectify past bias against women and members of minority groups, has seen many challenges in its relatively short-lived existence. The term "affirmative action" first appeared in Kennedy's Executive Order 10925 in March 1961, but President Johnson introduced the policy, as we know it today, in 1965 during a speech at Howard University. However, according to Ira Katznelson it actually has deeper roots, and was originally designed to benefit whites.

During the 1930s, a Congress heavily influenced by southern representatives enacted legislation preventing African Americans from receiving New Deal benefits. They achieved their goals by allowing racist local governments to decide how benefits would be distributed and by exempting domestic work and farm labor, two black-dominated occupations in the south, from the Social Security program. In a similar way, the post-World War II GI Bill generally benefited Whites but not Blacks, who, while eligible for government insured mortgages, could not receive them from local lenders. Black veterans also found it difficult to gain admission to colleges in the segregated South despite federal tuition benefits.

A major strength of his book is Katznelson’s commitment to an ongoing discussion of affirmative action and what it means in the twenty-first century. He writes, “I have been troubled by the inability of advocates of affirmative action to secure their ground and by the narrowness of the policies they have defended . . . Those of us who think the work of affirmative action is incomplete need to bolster our case.” He believes affirmative action needs to be carefully applied and have a public purpose, so that a true color-blind society can emerge.

Katznelson’s work supports the social studies curriculum in a number of areas. His discussion of Supreme Court arguments in affirmative action cases shows the way the Court’s positions develop over time. His study of New Deal politics, challenges assumptions about the past while illustrating the workings of Congress, Students also get a better sense of how and why the disparity between Blacks and Whites emerged it the twentieth-century, especially if, like many Americans, they believe racial inequality was erased by the Civil Rights Movement. In upper-level classes, Katznelson’s book can be used in comparison with other books devoted to ethnic and race relations in America, such as Noel Ignatiev’s *How the Irish Became White* (1996) or Dave Malcolm’s *A Whole New Ball Game* (2005). On a more mundane level, *When Affirmative Action Was White* exemplifies solid historical research and reasoning.

At a time when Social Security, affirmative action, and other federal programs giving the nation’s minorities and middle class support have been weakened, the discussion of the value of such programs remains relevant and important. Through his use of statistics on disparate treatment, thoughtful reasoning concerning southern politics during the Depression, and a well-articulated analysis of the racial failures of the New Deal, Katznelson presents a compelling case for affirmative action today. Until a true color blind society is achieved, the reality of racial bias will continue. It is a shameful reality that must be confronted, as this book bravely attempts to do.
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Social Science Docket is a joint publication of the New York and New Jersey Councils for the Social Studies. Each issue includes theme-related and non-themed articles, lesson plans, learning activities, and book, movie and museum reviews designed for K-12 social studies teachers. Article and lesson plan submissions are welcomed. The deadline for Winter-Spring issues is October 15 and for Summer-Fall is March 1. We encourage early submissions.

Upcoming Themes:
- Summer-Fall, 2008 – History of Religion, History of Science;
- Winter-Spring, 2009 – Environment and History, Global Warming Natural Disasters, Toxic Waste Sites;
- Summer-Fall, 2009 – Immigration: Past, Present, Future

Regular features include teaching with historic places; document-based instruction; local history; using oral history; addressing controversial issues; book, movie and museum reviews; social studies resources (including organizations and web sites); multicultural literature. Articles should be between 5 and 10 pages typed (1000-2000 words). Lesson plans and learning activities should be appropriate for classroom use. All submissions via e-mail. Authors should use APA format without footnotes or endnotes. This is a peer reviewed journal by an editorial committee of social studies. Articles, lessons and activities may be duplicated by teachers for classroom use without permission. For additional information contact: Alan Singer, Editor, Social Science Docket, Department of Curriculum and Teaching, 128 Hagedorn Hall, 119 Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY 11549. (Phone) 516/463-5853 (Fax ) 516/463-6196 (Email) CATAJS@Hofstra.edu

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