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ABSTRACT

Many American educational materials present biased or inaccurate views of Africa. Although these problems are found in a range of media, this study examines printed matter only. A representative sampling of materials indicates that four approaches are generally used in a study of Africa: geographical, historical, cultural, and case study. An overview illustrates problems within each of these four categories. Although the trend in the study of geography has been to present man's interaction with his environment, African texts still discuss only the country's physical aspects. Historical materials are often slanted; for example, they often favor European colonialism without considering the African's point of view. Culture is portrayed not as different and valid, but rather as exotic and strange. Case studies contain large amounts of descriptive information with little analysis. Generally, too many materials offer a superficial treatment of Africa in language that has condescending or negative overtones. As a solution to such problems, African sources should be consulted when preparing materials. Bibliographies for both educators and students are included in this booklet. (KC)

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AFRICA IN U.S. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Thirty Problems and Responses

Susan J. Hall
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INTRODUCTION

The School Services Division of the African-American Institute has been working for seven years with students, teachers, supervisors and administrators in American schools to introduce, expand and improve teaching about Africa. As part of the Division's services, we have regularly examined a variety of materials — print and non-print — for use in schools in learning about the continent. One result of these efforts has been the production and distribution of annotated lists of suggested materials. The items listed are those which are generally accurate in their treatment of African Studies and which appear to be stimulating to students as well.

Recently, we in School Services decided to do more than simply publicize good materials. We decided to share with educators, librarians, publishers, and other interested readers some of our observations regarding the most common problems encountered in the materials. Our aim was not just to call attention to these problems but also to suggest some responses to them.

The problems identified here are those which are found in the range of materials on Africa, including books, films, records, filmstrips, and other media. However, those cited in this discussion are all print since books continue to be the basic tools of those involved in educating about Africa. Some are texts, others are story books. Most are widely used in classrooms and libraries throughout the United States. All are readily available here.

Yet our sample is not a comprehensive one. We have not had the necessary personnel or resources to mount a systematic, exhaustive study of the materials on Africa. But we do believe our sample is fair and representative. For it, we have drawn upon the books that have come to our attention as we have worked, over the years, with African Studies in the

schools. Many items cited appear on state or school district book lists; many are in use in classrooms. Still others we have learned about at educational conferences.

While our study was still being conducted, the Asia Society published its report on the treatment of Asia in American texts. In 1975, the Middle East Studies Association published a similar report concerning American texts' treatment of the Middle East*. Both of these extensive studies identify problems remarkably similar to those we have found regarding Africa. Taken together, all three studies point out the strengths and weaknesses of educational materials dealing with Third World peoples while they suggest directions for the development of new materials.

The thirty problems identified in this essay have been grouped around the four fairly distinct approaches most educational materials adopt when presenting Africa: the geographical, historical, cultural and case study approaches. (The survey approach has not been used because it contains elements drawn from these four.) This has been done because most of the problems relate to the subject matter these approaches imply, i.e., one is more likely to find the problem of an inadequate treatment of African civilizations during the Middle Ages in a history than in a geography. Within each of the four chapters, the problems are stated and discussed; responses to them are also suggested.

This does not mean that the reader should look only at the section directly pertaining to his or her interests. Some of the issues relate to more than one approach. To simplify the discussion, each problem has been dealt with only once under the approach with which it is most often associated. Thus, while classifications of Africa's people are made in most geography and in some culture area materials, the problems with classification are dealt with only in the geography section as an aspect of human geography. Consequently, one might find a reading of the full essay useful.

*Asia in American Texts, Asia Society, 112 East 64 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10021, 1976 and *The Image of the Middle East in Secondary School Texts*, The Middle East Studies Association, New York University, 50 Washington Square, N.Y., N.Y. 10003, 1975.

Two bibliographies are appended to the essay. One is for educators who wish to broaden their African background. The other is for students; it lists classroom and library materials which offer insights into the issues discussed here. Further, many suggest stimulating and enjoyable activities and experiences for learning about Africa.

One caution seems in order. It is quite easy to become discouraged about the available materials for teaching about Africa. Almost all have some faults, a few worse than others. There are also many still marketed that cannot be used in a classroom, except as negative examples, because they are so outdated, erroneous or biased. It is important that these be identified and avoided.

Yet there *are* items which are remarkably solid and exciting for students. While these may not be numerous, they do cover a wide range of disciplines, issues, and grade levels. This means that there are *good* materials for teaching a variety of aspects of African studies. It is even more important not to lose sight of this fact.

GEOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

For some time now, geographers have been pointing out that their discipline's concepts can best be learned if they are taught from a human perspective.[1] As a result, many of the newer geographies of the United States and Europe focus on the interaction between people and their environment. But the majority of materials on Africa have not made this change. Two books published in 1973, for example, begin their discussions of the peoples of Africa almost halfway through their presentations and only after they have set out detailed information on the environment.[2] What makes this especially regrettable is that the nine problems identified in this section could be avoided if geography materials focused more sharply on the people who live on the continent. Until this shift in emphasis is effected, educators will have to rely heavily on supplementary materials to fill in the texts' gaps if they wish to have a comprehensive overview of African geography.

1. Physical geography is often viewed in a vacuum. It needs to be seen as it affects population patterns and livelihoods.

Africa is the second largest continent in the world; the United States could be fitted into it roughly three times. It contains the world's largest desert, the Sahara; one of the world's highest mountains, Kilimanjaro; and one of the world's longest rivers, the Nile. It has almost every type of climate and vegetation known to man and a wide variety of mineral resources. Most texts give students these facts. Few

[1] An excellent resource for this approach to African geography is John E. Willmer, ed., *Africa: Teaching Perspectives and Approaches*. Tualatin, Oregon: Geographic and Area Study Publications, 1975. Besides including a number of essays on content for African geography, the book has resource essays and articles on teaching approaches and strategies.

[2] *Lands of Africa*. Concepts and Inquiry Series. Prepared by the Social Science Research Staff of the Educational Research Council of America. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1973; and Melvin Schwartz & John R. O'Connor. *Exploring Africa South of the Sahara: Its People, Cultures and Geography*. New York: Globe, 1973.

describe what they mean. As facts, they are little more than interesting. What gives them meaning is how they relate to people's living patterns. Almost any African geography text or series of maps can be used as the base for a demonstration of these relationships.[3]

One junior high world geography text that focuses on people adapting to their physical environment is *People, Places and Change.* In its chapter, "Life on the Gezira", the book examines an irrigation scheme in Sudan through the experiences of a young man, Osman, who lives there. In telling his story, it weaves both geographical and historical threads into his life.

> Osman's grandfather, Mamouhd — now almost 80 — remembered the days before the irrigation project. He and his father had no permanent field to plant. Instead they kept large flocks of sheep and goats.
>
> As a young boy, Osman's grandfather took care of the animals. Then when he became an adult, he spent much of his time sitting with the village leaders. They talked about the heat or the lack of rain. Or they wondered about the health of the animals. Sometimes the older men recalled the days when the Mahdi had won a great victory over the invading British soldiers.[4]

Materials which deal with physical geography in this manner also serve another purpose. They call into question stereotypes of Africa. After seeing how people have, for centuries, herded or farmed in arid areas or how they have made their living on the edges of the rain forest, one will correctly begin to doubt the existence of the "jungle" so often associated with Africa.

[3] An example might make this clearer. Look in an atlas at a topographical map of Niger in north-central Africa. The area of the country is 489,189 square miles, which puts it midway between Texas and Alaska in size. Its population is a little over four million people, slightly less than the population of Georgia. Almost all of Niger falls into the Sahara Desert, with highlands in the north and central part of the country, and a river running across its extreme southeast portion. With this much information one can begin to make hypotheses about where the population might be clustered (i.e. the river valley), what the livelihoods might be (farming and herding), and why it is important for Niger to be on good terms with its southern neighbors such as Nigeria or Benin (they control access to the sea). One is also prepared to understand why a drought in the country can be so devastating or to examine the problems of communications, extraction of natural resources, or urbanization.

[4] Leonard Berry and Richard B. Ford. *People, Places and Change.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976, p. 23. Names are sounded out in a pronuciation key while references, such as the one to the Mahdi, are explained in marginal notes and in the teacher's guide.

2. Avoid images of the "Dark Continent" syndrome.

This point is especially important since almost all materials for teaching about Africa still begin with images from the "Dark Continent". The justification sometimes given for this is that stereotypes should be confronted head on. Perhaps. But even in the best of these, stereotypes are not confronted but recited; they are said to be false, not proven to be. In other words, the book refreshes the erroneous notions in the reader's mind but does not erase them. A classic example of this is the following:

> For too many years Africa has been known as the 'Dark Continent', home of Tarzan of the Apes, legendary locale of the search for Dr. Stanley Livingston, and a continent inhabited by ignorant savages living in unbroken jungle. The image of Africa was largely formed by American films, anc often has little resemblance to the vital and turbulent continent that has undergone massive changes over the centuries.[5]

In addition to the surprising error (Dr. Stanley Livingston must be a confusion of Henry Morton Stanley and Dr. David Livingstone) which calls the work's scholarship into question, the paragraph does nothing to eradicate the unfavorable and erroneous stereotypes it conjures up.

3. Natural resources should be described primarily in terms of their value to Africans. Avoid materials that overemphasize wildlife.

In addition to presenting the continent's topographical features, geography texts include information on its natural resources. One of the most fascinating of these to young people is Africa's varied and unusual wildlife. Many texts, especially in their picture sections, concentrate on game or on scenic wonders. The result, however unintentional, is that tourist attractions are portrayed for students as more valuable and interesting than the continent's people.

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[5] Peter G. Kontos, et al. *Patterns of Civilization: Africa*. New York: Cambridge Book Company, 1975, p. v.

People and Cultures, for example, has two sections devoted to Africans: the first deals with the Bedouin of North Africa and Southwest Asia, the second with the Baganda of East Africa. Full page, facing the introductions to both, are pictures of animals -- camels and zebra respectively. In the Baganda section, of the 22 pictures in the opening sequence, nine are of game animals.[6] It would be more appropriate for such a text's pictures to concentrate on the people to whom the section is devoted.

Resources, like other aspects of geography, can most effectively be taught when they are looked at in the context of how they affect people. Many texts use their discussion of Africa's resources as an opportunity to stress their importance for the American economy. While this can be useful, students must have the opportunity to learn what importance Africans attach to their resources. Thus, when teaching about South Africa's gold, Libya's or Nigeria's oil, or Zambia's copper, the resource should be looked at *primarily* in terms of its value to, and benefits for, Africans.

Again, *People, Places and Change* does this. In the chapter "Mining in Central Africa"[7] copper mining is explored through the eyes of Goma, a miner in Zaire. Various facets of the industry, its place in the Zaire economy, the problems of relying on exporting primary products are all brought into this worker's story. At the end, questions are posed comparing the use of this resource to the use of others sketched out in similar stories in the text.

4. Many materials emphasize the cash economies of Africa. Yet to the majority of Africans, the subsistence economies remain the most important.

Closely linked to a discussion of resources is an examination of the various economies found in Africa. At the base of all others on the continent are the subsistence economies in which a majority of the population is engaged. This means that many herders and farmers are able to satisfy their own needs from their major occupation. Their herds

[6] Merwyn A. Garbarino and Rachel Reese Sady. *People and Cultures.* Chicago: Rand McNally, 1975.

[7] Leonard Berry and Richard B. Ford. *Op. cit.* pp. 53-67.

provide them with the basics of food, clothing, and shelter, or their food crops make up the major portion of their diet, the remainder being sold or bartered for the other items they want. Curiously, this does not receive much attention in our texts. Instead, cash crops and extractive industries get more page space. Yet to most Africans land is their most important resource and subsistence their most important economy. While many Africans also engage in other economic pursuits, the subsistence sector remains the most vital. In a study of economies, it is essential that this point be made.[8]

5. Urbanization can best be viewed from the perspective of the people who live and work in cities.

While a large proportion of the continent's population remains in rural areas, a growing number of people are moving to the cities. This truism is found in most texts. Rarely is it explored in detail. Cities are the centers for political and economic decision makers. They offer the attractions of new jobs and life styles to people in rural areas. Moreover, events there generally have an impact throughout the countryside that surrounds them.

For high school students, *Tradition and Change in Four Societies* contains a thorough study of urbanization, drawing material mainly from Nigeria to illustrate one method for urban analysis. What makes it especially attractive is that it discusses ancient and modern cities, compares village life with city life, and outlines some of the many problems urban expansion creates. In addition, it reports African views of why urban areas are such magnets.

> '(I go) in search of jobs; it is in the big cities where one gets many customers if one is a trader or food-seller.'
>
> 'There are many jobs to be done for money. Money cannot be had in the villages. . . .'
>
> 'Less and less foodstuff is got from the farms these days. People go to the cities to get money to buy more food to feed their families.'
>
> 'The educated people do not get jobs to do in the village.'[9]

[8] A high school text which discusses subsistence farming clearly and concisely is Leften S. Stavrianos, Loretta Kreider Andrews, et. al. *A Global History of Man.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon. At present, the revised edition is in press so I am unsure which pages are relevant here. The book does have chapter sub-headings, so the section should not be difficult to locate when the book is released in late 1976.

[9] Richard B. Ford. *Tradition and Change in Four Societies.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974. pp. 55 A 62-63

Comments such as these are a gold mine not just for studying urbanization in Africa but for putting the subject into a world perspective. They could lead to a discussion of the growth of cities in the United States and to a comparison of urbanization here with urbanization in Africa.

One aspect of city life in Africa that should not be overlooked is the existence of numerous occupations from which Africans derive a livelihood but which are generally not found in the United States. These jobs are often missed by our texts. *People in Change: Africa* shows a picture of an outdoor laundry in Tanzania, complete with a long row of cement tubs built into the ground and numerous clotheslines massed in the background. The caption notes that "unemployed city dwellers make a little money by washing clothes by hand."[10] From the looks of the picture, the laundry is a small scale industry. The men engaged in it are not necessarily "unemployed" either. Rather they are working at an occupation that has virtually disappeared here because of the widespread use of washing machines in homes, and at automatic laundries. These men like food venders, market women, car-guards, people who run clothes-ironing shops, sell soda, deliver kerosene or do any of a thousand other jobs are often self-employed business people.[11]

Moreover, a study of these occupations lays the groundwork for studying the ramifications that technology and development projects hold for Africans. Many of Africa's leaders note that their need is for technologies which are labor-intensive. This is because they do not have the capital or the trained manpower necessary for highly sophisticated projects. What they want are programs that will employ their large numbers of semi-skilled and unskilled laborers. A picture such as the one just mentioned can be used to stimulate a discussion of these points; it can be examined while considering why washing clothes is organized in this way and how the introduction of washing machines would affect these laborers.

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[10] Bryan Strong, Carolyn Clark, Charles B. Myers. *People in Change: Africa.* Menlo Park: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1975. p. 118.

[11] Three excellent sources for case studies of people in various occupations are: *Africa Report*, Vol. 18, No. 6, November-December, 1973, which contains about a half dozen biographies; Richard B. Ford, *Tradition and Change in Four Societies*, mentioned earlier; and Naguib Mahfouz, *Midaq Alley*, London: Heinemann*, 1975, a novel about urban working class Egyptians. All of these are suitable for junior and senior high school students.

*All Heinemann books mentioned in this essay are available from Humanities Press in Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey. See bibliography for complete address.

6. Economic development in Africa is more than an African problem. It should be seen within the context of the world economy.

Materials often follow their chapters on urbanization with one on economic development. These treatments of the subject describe how countries have drawn up plans setting out their priorities and strategies. Most point out that industrialization is a desired goal, often taking note of how difficult this is to achieve. Many even touch upon the problems facing a country with a single cash crop economy. The following illustrates a typical treatment of some of these topics:

WHY INDUSTRY HAS NOT DEVELOPED

Africa has not developed industry for many reasons.

First of all, for industry and manufacturing to grow, there must be people who want to buy and can pay for what is made. Most Africans are subsistence farmers. They produce much of what they need themselves. They have little or no money to buy manufactured goods.

Second, to build industry there is great need for capital. Money must be saved by the people to invest, or to be given to the government in the form of taxes. When a new nation starts with very little in the form of capital, development is slow and difficult. The average yearly income in Africa, south of the Sahara, is often not higher than two hundred dollars per person and, in some countries, is as low as fifty dollars. With this as the fact, little money can be saved or taxed to make industry grow.

Climate also has held back industrial development. The high temperature and humidity are harmful to both man and machines. Workers find it difficult to work in the heat, and machines rust and break down more quickly. In drier climates, sand and dust get into machinery and cause breakdowns.

Industrial development needs skilled workers. Most Africans have not had the opportunity to go to school and learn the skills necessary to aid industrial development.

Without a good system of transportation and communication there can be little industrial and economic development. Africa's present road and rail system are clearly not good enough for modern industry. . .

Finally economic development can only happen when there is peace and stability in the African states. Yet, as we have seen, tribal rivalries and tensions exist in many nations. Rival political leaders are fighting for power. This situation does not lend itself to outside investment necessary for development. Nor

does it allow for continuous planning and policy for development.[12]

An explanation such as this does not go far enough.[13] It fails to touch upon the very real problems all Third World countries face trying to change the configurations of the world economy. The selection stresses the African aspects of development, but these are only part of the issue. Most African countries derive a major part of their income from their exports of primary products. Zambia, for example, gets a large share of its capital for development from copper exports. When the world price of copper falls, as it has in recent years, the country's income is curtailed. The prices of copper and other commodities are not set by the producers but are determined by the demand for the products. Thus what can Zambia, or any other African country, do when it has little control over the price of its goods?

There is another important factor to consider here. Generally, Westerners who have development capital are willing to go into mining, agricultural and other ventures only to the extent that they fit the profit and planning objectives of their individual corporations. Rarely do these objectives coincide with the development objectives of African leaders. Cognizant of this, many Africans are calling for a new world economic order and talking of organizing commodity cartels so that they can have a more powerful voice in marketing their own products, controlling their own resources, and directing the growth of their own industries. Educational materials which do not include these dimensions of economic development problems overlook an aspect essential for an understanding of the subject.[14]

[12] Erwin H. Rosenfeld & Harriet Geller, *Afro-Asian Culture Studies*, Woodbury, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1973, pp. 189-190.

[13] The quote also contains some questionable statements and assumptions. Many scholars, for example, argue that outside investment has often hindered, not promoted, economic development in Africa. For one such view see Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1972.

[14] Leon Clark's study of Tanzania in Volume VI of *Through African Eyes*. New York: Praeger, 1970 can be used with high school students to show how one country is basing its economic development mainly on the efforts of its own citizens. This could be supplemented by the short pamphlet by M. J. Schultheis, *The United States and the Changing Economic Order*, Washington, D.C.: Interreligious Taskforce on U.S. Food Policy, April, 1976 which deals with the United States' perspective on the Third World's call for a new economic order. In addition, newspaper articles on the May 1976 Nairobi Conference, UNCTAD IV, and its follow-up could be used. Up-to-date economic information can also be gleaned from issues of *Africa Report* and *African Development*, two magazines which high school students will find readable.

7. Africa's people are often divided for study by racial classifications. Since race is a disputed concept, linguistic divisions offer more accurate and usable categories.

Perhaps the most important aspect of any country's geography is its human geography. Reflecting this, many texts on Africa devote an opening section to the people of the continent. But it is here that the greatest number of difficulties occur. The problems that arise are generally rooted in a confusion of race, language, religious or ethnic group classifications. The *Teachers Guide for Africa Today,* a set of masterprints, gives the following information:

> ANGOLA AND CABINDA.
> Ethnic composition: 90% African, chiefly Bantu; 10% white.
> BURUNDI.
> Ethnic composition: Hutu and Watutsi tribes.
> CHAD.
> Ethnic compositon: north, Moslem: south, Bantu.
> EGYPT.
> Ethnic composition: Arabic of Hamitic origin.
> GHANA.
> Ethnic composition: Black Sudanese and Ashanti tribesmen.[15]

Bantu is an adjective describing a family of languages; Arabic is a language. White and black are colors often associated with race; Hutu, Watutsi, and Ashanti are ethnic group names, and Moslem is a word describing religious affiliation. Sudanese in this context probably refers to the geographical term, Sudan, sometimes used to describe part of West Africa. "Hamitic origin" is a term that has been throughly discredited as meaningless by scholars.

Even texts that are aware of this confusion do not seem able to get around it. The *Teachers Guide for World Studies Inquiry Series: Africa* claims that its lesson "Greet Some Africans" has "avoided the racial stock controversy."[16] Some of the captions from its student texts are excerpted here:

> The young miner is a member of the Zulu tribe in South Africa. He is a Bantu, one of the main types of African people.
> These boys are Ethiopian students. . . . The boys are Cau-

[15] *Teachers Guide for Africa Today.* New York: Educational Masterprints Company, 1974 p. 1

[16] *Teachers Guide for World Studies Inquiry Series: Africa.* Palo Alto: Field Educational Publications, 1969, p. 9

> casians. Some people think all Caucasians are white. But Caucasians in Ethiopia have dark skins.
>
> Another dark Caucasian. The young girl lives in Somalia. . . .
>
> This tobacco farmer is a native African. He was born in Rhodesia. His parents were English.
>
> These Ashanti women live in Ghana. The Ashanti form a very large group in West Africa.
>
> This Mtusi is a member of the Tutsi (sic.) tribe. A group of these people would be called Watusi.[17]

While the "racial stock controversy" may have been avoided, another, equally confusing and absurd, may be generated by the captions: Are Caucasians a tribe like the Tutsi or a type like the Bantu? More importantly, isolated tidbits such as these provide students with little information about the people. The pictures alone would have suggested differences among people and presented clues to their various origins and backgrounds.

Problems like those in these two examples need not arise. If our students know anything about Africa, they know that the majority of the population is dark-skinned. What does skin color tell about people? Not very much. Furthermore, the concept of race, with which skin color is often associated, is one whose definition is disputed.[18] Consequently, as terms to describe or divide people for study in a geography class, skin color and race fall short of being useful.

This is not to argue that race is not a concern in African studies. It is, because the concept based on it, racism — the myth of superior-inferior peoples, has been a significant force in modern African history. *Africa: Tradition and Change,* a text for high school, puts it this way:

> The idea of race as a way of grouping people in terms of unchanging biological traits emerged as Europeans expanded overseas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It became an important political concept. Closely linked with the concept of race was the idea that the white race was superior to the others.
>
> Today the idea of race in biological terms is no longer very useful. But the political concept of race is becoming increasingly important, both in Africa and in other parts of the world. That

[17] Stephen Marvin. *World Studies Inquiry Series: Africa.* Palo Alto: Field Educational Publications, 1969. pp. 10-12. Even more up-to-date texts exhibit problems with these terms. In Allan O. Kownslar and Terry L. Smart's *People and Our World.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977. p. 698 the reader finds "confrontations between the Bantu and Zulus. . . ."

[18] A brief discussion of the term race — its history and definitions — can be found in chapters 1 & 2 of Robert Froman *Racism.* New York: Delacorte Press, 1972.

there are minor physical differences among people is not significant. What is important is that some people *consider* them significant.[19]

Thus, when discussing the slave trade, minority rule in southern Africa and similar topics, it becomes important to discuss race and racism. But for categorizing people, we need another perspective.

A Global History of Man suggests Africa's people be divided for study by the languages they speak, "for language reveals a people's culture and how it grew." In addition, this method can provide students with insights into how people perceive and relate to their environment.

> Naturally people who live together and share the same culture have to use the same words and ways of putting words together to explain things. This is the only way they can understand each other. The language of a culture has a word for everything or idea which the people who speak the language think is important. Thus when a new food or a new way of counting is introduced into a culture, a name is given to this item: so as a culture changes its language also changes. If a people who share a common culture separate and the two groups live apart, the language will change differently in two places as they create words for their new experiences. This is why American and British English differ from each other. . . .
>
> In addition 'loan words' tell us about outside influences upon a culture. For instance words of African origin in the American language, such as jazz, yam and cola show some ways in which Africa has influenced our culture.[20]

The language classification contains a number of subdivisions[21] so that it lends itself to a comparative study. This is advantageous for it allows flexibility — one can look at how people live in different geographical areas, or study neighboring peoples of different cultures. The possibilities are many.

8. Life styles of minorities are not typical of all Africans. Avoid materials which concentrate on minority groups.

When classroom materials do discuss how Africans interact with their environment they often exhibit one or both of the final two problems presented in this section. The

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[19] Evelyn Jones Rich and Immanuel Wallerstein. *Africa: Tradition and Change*. New York: Random House, 1972. p. 34.

[20] Leften S. Stavrianos, Loretta Kreider Andrews, et. al. *Op. cit.* As noted earlier, the revised edition of this work is currently in press. This quote is from the 1974 edition, p. 545.

[21] *Ibid.* p. 545.

first is that they concentrate on minority groups. *Your World and Mine* contains an example:

> *Pygmies*[22] *of the Congo.* Most of the people of tropical Central Africa are Negroes. But there are several groups of natives living in the Congo Basin called Pygmies. They are little people not growing much more than four feet tall, with skin somewhat lighter than that of the Negroes.
>
> The Pygmies have no agriculture and no cattle, but depend for their living on just what they may find in the day's roaming. They gain their food and escape from their enemies by putting their wits to work. They trap large animals such as elephant, buffalo and leopard in cleverly hidden nets or in pits covered with branches and leaves. Then with poisoned arrows or spears it is easy to kill the animals.[23]

The opening sentence notes that the Mbuti are not the majority people in the area; why not give some space to describing the majority? Would a text present a culture such as the Amish as the only example in a section on the United States? When looking at how different African communities live, it is a good idea to note just how much attention is given to minority groups such as Mbuti, San (Bushmen), Masai, Tutsi and related peoples.[24] When they receive more than a minority of exposure, the item distorts reality.

9. African societies have not remained untouched by change. Rather, like all cultures, they are dynamic.

Traditional African cultures are frequently portrayed as static. One text proposes a "special report" designed to bring this home to students:

> 5. The way of life of many of the Bantu-speaking peoples of East and South Africa has changed little for many centuries. Consult an encyclopedia, a history, or a geography of Africa and find out about the way of life of some of these peoples.[25]

[22] Pygmy is a generic term which can be used to describe a variety of living things that are less than an agreed upon "average" size. It is more accurate to refer to these people who live in Zaire by the name they call themselves, Mbuti.

[23] Grace S. Dawson. *Your World and Mine: Neighbors in the Air Age.* Lexington: Ginn, 1969. p. 489. Another middle school text which presents the same problem is Phillip Bacon's *Regions Around the World.* Palo Alto: Field Educational Productions, 1972. Here the Masai are juxtaposed to farmers in the American great plains.

[24] United Nations figures estimate the total population of Africa in 1975 to be about 391 million people. Included in this figure is, at the very most, a total of 2½ million of the ethnic groups mentioned here. Clearly, they should not be portrayed as representing all Africans.

[25] Michael B. Petrovich and Philip D. Curtain. *The Human Achievement.* Morristown: Silver Burdett, 1967. p. 512. Two newer books also exhibit this problem. "The African Experience," Book I of *Black in White America.* New York: Macmillan, 1974 presents Ibo culture as a background for understanding the slaves' African heritage; yet the culture is presented as static. The African Curriculum Development Project for Duke University is responsible for *African Profiles: Mbuti, Somali, Zulu.* New York: Sadlier, 1975. In this text students are cautioned that the cultures are changing but the descriptions of them do not point out this dynamism.

Unfortunately, the exercise would probably work because encyclopedias and other reference works are also premised on this fallacy. One interesting way to challenge it is to examine African diets.[26] People's eating habits are usually quite difficult to alter. Students can appreciate this when they consider how hard it is for them to substitute fruit and nuts for "junk" food even when they understand the nutritional differences and values. Many of the various foods found around the continent are not indigenous to it; rather they originated in other parts of the world. In other words, Africans have found new food over the years, adopted them and adapted them to their taste. If Africans could and did change their food habits over the years, isn't it likely that they changed other aspects of their lives as well?

A Global History of Man counters the assumption that African societies were unchanging in another way:

> The third thing we should remember in speaking of 'traditional' cultures is that, like all cultures, they changed over the years. When people describe 'traditional' African cultures, they are usually describing what the colonial rulers found when they arrived on the scene not very long ago. But each of these cultures had become what it then was as a result of a long history. For example, Hausa towns only began to develop into the famous city-states with strong governments between 1350 and 1500 A.D. as they became important in the trans-Saharan trade. They followed indigenous African religions until their ruling families adopted Islam in the 1400's. They came under the rule of the conquering Fulani in the 1800's. Other groups also changed, moving from place to place, changing their forms of government and inheritance and many other customs.[27]

To conclude this discussion, one point bears reiteration: Central to any examination of Africa's geography is the study of its people. Whatever aspects are chosen for classroom work — resources, economies, urbanization or others — they will take on meaning and interest for students only when people are the focus.

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[26] A good source for teachers is Michael Latham's *Human Nutrition in Tropical Africa*. Rome: FAO, 1965.

[27] Leften S. Stavrianos, Loretta Kreider Andrews, et. al. *Op. cit.* 1974 edition. p. 581.

HISTORICAL APPROACH

If one were to categorize and count all the materials on Africa produced for schools in the United States, it is likely one would find that those devoted to the continent's history outnumber those dealing with any other aspect of African studies. Unfortunately, this does not mean that there are a large number of accurate, comprehensive or balanced materials for teaching African history. There are only a few. Most of the history materials have major shortcomings, seven of which are discussed in this section.

1. African history should begin with the evolution of mankind there.

African history should be just that, the story of man's development in Africa. Since it is now believed that humans have inhabited this continent longer than any other, the obvious place to start is with the evidence for this belief, the findings of Mary and Louis Leakey and their son, Richard, in eastern Africa. Most texts devote space to the elders' findings in Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania but their son's discoveries at Lake Turkana have been so recent that they have yet to be written up in their entirety.[28] Also, his work is still going on. The publishers of *National Geographic* offer some remedy to this problem. They have been following his work in periodic articles and have filmed some of his explorations. A look through their offerings should produce ample colorful and up-to-date student materials for this topic. In addition, using them allows one an experience with the various methods scientists practice in documenting their discoveries.

One will also want to examine early man in Africa, his migrations to other parts of the continent and the world, the development of cultures and the beginnings of agriculture. For

[28] Richard Leakey's findings at Lake Turkana on the Ethiopia-Kenya border tentatively put man's origin 2.6 million years ago.

this, there are several sources for high school students. *Africa: Tradition and Change,* for example, offers three readings — "African Culture in the Stone Age", "The Sahara as a Culture Bridge", "The Beginnings of Agriculture in Africa", plus a host of activities, projects, exercises, and other supplementary material.[29]

2. As much attention should be given to Africans who did not organize themselves into kingdoms as is given to those who did.

Generally one of the aims for teaching about Africa is to impart to students a sufficient background knowledge of the continent so that they can intelligently interpret current events. To achieve this, most educators want materials on how Africans lived before colonial rule because these older social, political and economic institutions continue to influence peoples' lives today. Finding materials for this is not easy for most of the texts concentrate on the kingdoms, ignoring the people who did not organize themselves in this manner. *Living World History* exemplifies this type of presentation:

> *Some advanced peoples built cities.* Archeologists have found evidence of a few important African cultures. One of these, in Nigeria, is known as the *Nok* culture and existed from 800 B.C. to 200 A.D. The people developed a beautiful form of glazed sculptured clayware. Although generally in the Neolithic stage of development, they did work tin and iron.
>
> * * *
>
> Another promising African civilization flourished in Ethiopia between the first and seventh centuries A.D. This kingdom of Aksum was the legendary home of the Queen of Sheba, the Ethiopian queen who visited King Solomon. The people of Aksum were converted to Christianity in the fourth century.
>
> * * *
>
> The most important early cultures of Africa appeared in the geographical region called the *Sudan.* . . . Beginning in the eighth century, Moslem merchants began to cross the Sahara in trade caravans in order to obtain gold in West Africa.

[29] Evelyn Jones Rich and Immanuel Wallerstein. *Op. cit.* Unit II, Chapter 3. pp. 76-94. Two other high school texts useful here are: E. Jefferson Murphy's *History of African Civilization.* New York: Dell. 1974 and Richard W. Hull. *Munyakare: African Civilization before the Batuure.* New York: John Wiley. 1972. "Munyakare" is Shona meaning the traditinnal way of life; "Batuure" is Hausa meaning European or white man.

> Moving southward from North Africa, these traders set up important kingdoms. Their black African subjects borrowed much of the Moslem culture, such as methods of warfare, the Islamic religion, and the Arabic language. The blacks gradually absorbed their conquerors through intermarriage and became the rulers themselves.
>
> * * *
>
> Outside the areas of advanced cultures, the great majority of African people lived a primitive tribal existence, with few of the tools and skills needed for civilization. They had no system of writing or counting, and no knowledge of the wheel or the sail.[30]

There are three major problems with these passages: the first is the distortion of known history; the second lies in some of the implications; and the third is found in the language. The most obvious historical distortion has to do with the West African trading empires. There is little argument among scholars that these trading empires were rooted in West not North Africa. To claim that Northerners set them up is to deny the Westerners their own inventiveness.[31] Faulty scholarship of this nature has no place in a junior high text.

While the paragraph on Ethiopia is an interesting one, it contains a rather ethno-centric implication. What was so "promising" about the kingdom in the first and seventh centuries? From this reading students might well assume it was the fact that Ethiopians had contact with Jewish culture through King Solomon and converted quite early to Christianity. This is implied because the paragraph gives no other information. The implication may be unintentional, but such a superficial treatment invites misinterpretation.

Yet it is the language of these paragraphs that presents the greatest difficulty. Well-meaning materials that want to highlight our African heritage often present "advanced people" and "advanced cultures". Does this mean, however, that the people who did not organize themselves into kingdoms, the examples of "advanced cultures" here, were "backward"? This is suggested by the passage for it emphasizes what they did *not* have — the wheel, the sail, writing and

[30] T. Walter Wallbank and Arnold Schrier *Living World History*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1974, pp. 249-250, 253

[31] Another junior high text which makes a similar error — it attributes the kingdoms to people from the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates River valleys — is *Eleven Nations* by Bani Shorter, Nancy Starr, Leonard S. Kenworthy. Lexington: Ginn, 1972. p. 261.

counting systems.[32] Students would learn more about these Africans by reading about what they did have, what they valued and what they accomplished. Descriptions such as this last not only lack educational value, they also reflect biases that should not be passed on to students.

Perhaps the root of the problem of overemphasis on African kingdoms lies in our own education. Kingdoms are political phenomena that we easily recognize. The European history we have been taught is dotted with kingdoms and empires, many of them remembered for their technological, artistic, and political innovations and achievements. Consequently, when we look at African history it is the kingdoms that attract our attention. We recognize them as embodying familiar institutions.

But this raises two considerations to bear in mind when studying African history. First, all kingdoms and empires are not alike. Comparisons of African and European empires often overlook the unique qualities of the African empires. Second, if only the kingdoms are examined, a great deal of African history and of African contributions to the world will be missed.

A high school text which provides a balanced presentation of African history by examining a variety of forms of political and social organization is *Munyakare.* It has the added advantage of being written from the traditional African historian's point of view:

> Modern historians are deeply concerned with chronology, partly because of our Western tradition of dividing time into seconds, minutes, hours, days, and so on. By contrast, traditional African historians took little interest in the measurement of time. Instead, it was the event that counted most: the event, its cause, and effect. Chronology was irrelevant. Furthermore, traditional historians examined society in its totality. And they utilized a wide media, song, dance, seulpture and the like, to relate and explain past events. Here I shall discuss the African past in the manner of the traditional historian.[33]

One final note on sources for this part of a history study: The Ibo of eastern Nigeria are an ethnic group for whom authority traditionally resided in patrilineal clans. Leadership

[32] There are factual problems here, too. For example, see Claudia Zaslavsky's *African Counts: Number and Pattern in African Culture* Boston: Prindle, Weber and Schmidt, 1973 for information about African counting systems

[33] Richard W. Hull. *Op. cit.* p. 7.

was generally exercised by adult males in family councils and village assemblies. Middle school and junior high students could study the Ibo drawing mainly upon two books by Nigerians from this ethnic group: *The Way We Lived* and *Things Fall Apart.*[34]

3. Slavery in Africa is often assumed to be the same as slavery in the United States. Since the two institutions differed greatly, distinctions between them should be made.

Perhaps the most difficult topics to teach in African history are slavery and the slave trade. This is because they are subjects whose moral overtones continue to arouse strong emotions. Yet it is essential that they be included in an African history course. They not only form part of the history of our own continent but, more pertinent to the discussion here, they contribute to an explanation of population, trade and later colonial patterns in Africa.

Most texts take a moral stance on the issue of slavery and the slave trade noting that these were grave injustices done Black Africans by White Americans and Europeans. But this admission often turns defensive when slavery is examined in detail. It is not unusual for a discussion to open with statements such as these taken from two texts:

> Like many parts of the world, the kingdoms of West Africa had 'domestic' slavery. The slaves included prisoners of war, persons bought from slave traders, and men and women who were unable to pay their debts. Children of slaves were often trained to do skilled work. Some slaves rose to high positions. Many gained their freedom.[35]

* * *

> Historians do not know exactly when or where African slavery began. But they believe it grew out of the need of certain African groups to enforce their own laws. Sometime in the now-forgotten past, these groups began making slaves of criminals, troublemakers, and prisoners of war. In some cases they were sold to distance groups. Whatever their fate, few of them were held in bondage for a lifetime. Sooner or later most were set free.[36]

[34] Rems Nna Umeasiegbu. *The Way We Lived.* London: Heinemann, 1969. Chinua Achebe. *Things Fall Apart.* Greenwich: Fawcett, 1974.

[35] Lands of Africa. *Op. cit.* p. 62.

[36] Allen R. Boyd and Jack Nickerson. *Tropical and Southern Africa.* New York: Scholastic Book Services, 197 . 103.

Both passages say that slavery had long been practiced in Africa. But what is described bears little resemblance to what we call slavery in the United States. Africans brought here as slaves were not necessarily transgressors against societal rules or prisoners of war. Rather what counted to the slave traders was that they were able-bodied. Moreover, while some were able to gain their freedom, the majority remained enslaved. Even their children had little hope of raising their status. On top of all this, states had laws barring slaves from becoming educated. Clearly, slavery in Africa and slavery in the United States were two quite different institutions. Students examining slavery should be made aware of this distinction.[37]

4. African involvement in the Atlantic slave trade should be presented within the wider context of White American and European involvement and control. The results of this trade in Africa must also be examined.

When dealing with the Atlantic slave trade, many texts again exhibit problems of emphasis. Instead of discussing the trade as a whole, they stress African participation in it. While it is true that Africans played an important role by capturing people to be enslaved, the stimulus came from outside the continent. If White European and American traders had not provided a market for slaves, the Africans would not have been engaged in these activities. One writer puts the case quite forcefully:

> Some historians go so far as to say that the Africans took the major part in the slave-trade. Any enemy of the African people would happily take this view, as a way of excusing the inhuman behavior of the Europeans by placing the blame and responsibility on the Africans. Nothing could be more incorrect and ridiculous, because what happened in Africa was only one side of the whole story. The Atlantic slave-trade was organized and financed by Europeans . . . Africans had absolutely no control over the European side or the American side of the slave-trade. . . . Nevertheless, for Africans looking at the Atlantic slave-trade, one of the most important things is to recognize the very

[37] Richard W. Hull *Op. cit.* prefers the terms "servants" and "servitude" when he is speaking of slavery in the African context. See pp. 82-83. Leon Clark, Volume II, *Op. cit.* uses the word slave in quotes in his discussion. See p. 68. Perhaps you will want your classes to discuss this idea further. Comparisons could be made, then, between slaves in Africa and serfs in Europe or indentured servants in this country.

painful and unpleasant fact that there were Africans who aided and partnered the Europeans in enslaving other Africans.[38]

The slave trade, then, is another issue which should be taught within a world context. Emphasis should fall on its outside impetus and control and its effects in Africa. Among the latter, students should examine how it contributed to the depopulation and devastation of whole areas, exacerbated tensions among ethnic groups, and in general, disrupted dramatically the patterns of African life.[39]

5. European exploration of the continent did more than enlighten Europeans about Africa. It contributed to changing trade patterns within the continent and prepared the way for colonization.

If one considers the brief period of European exploration in Africa, as compared with the whole of the continent's history, one finds that most materials devote too much space to the exploration period. Also, the emphasis of these items is often placed on the period's importance to Europe, not Africa. It is important to be aware of these problems because many texts romanticize the period thereby misinterpreting its meaning for Africans.

> Those were the days of such men as David Livingstone, the Scottish missionary, who explored central Africa and who fought against the slave trade; the Englishman, Sir Richard Burton, who explored both East and West Africa; and the great French conquerors, Louis Lyanty in Morocco and Joseph Galliani in West Africa and Madagascar.[40]

It is doubtful that most Africans would sigh "Ah, those were the days" when remembering the deeds of "great French conquerors".

One significant outcome of this period was a change in some of the centuries-old commercial patterns in Africa. Once the Europeans were familiar with the West African coast, they

[38] Walter Rodney. *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade.* Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967. p. 7. See also Edward A. Alpers. *The East African Slave Trade.* Nairobi: EAPH, 1967. Both of these are available from African Imprint Library Service in Bedford, New York. See the bibliography for a complete address. Another source, also available from AILS, is "Slavery and the Slave Trade" by J. C. Anene in *Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries.* J. C. Anene and G. Brown, eds. London: Nelson, 1966. Junior and senior high school students can get a first hand impression of slavery and the slave trade from Olaudah Equiano's autobiography, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano.* London: Heinemann, 1969.

[39] See the source in the preceding footnote plus E. Jefferson Murphy, *Op. cit.* pp. 290-295.

[40] David Hapgood. *Africa.* Lexington: Ginn & Company, 1974. pp. 24-25.

sailed there to trade. This meant coastal Africans no longer had to look to the interior for commerce; instead they could trade directly with Europe. *History of African Civilization* describes this shift:

> In the fifteenth century, when the first Portuguese ships began calling, the center of economic activity in Western Africa lay along the Sudan, in favorable areas at the headwaters of the Senegal, the Gambia, and the Niger, at convenient termini of the trans-Saharan trade routes, and at natural crossroad sites . . . where goods from the forest regions converged for transshipment to the Sudanic markets. Most of the states that lay in or near the forest regions were on the far periphery of this commercial network although they were part of it . . .
>
> Most of these states were small and poorer than the more favorably situated states of the Sudan, which were at the center of the commercial network. (Benin was the exception. . .) European trade created a situation hitherto unknown in West Africa: goods could flow relatively short distances from the southern parts of the Sudan and from the forest region to markets on or near the coast. For the first time the states of the coast and of the forests were at the center of an important commercial system. The Atlantic trade encouraged a shift in the flow of goods. Gradually the flow of goods north to the Sudan diminished and that south to the Atlantic increased. This shift took place over the centuries and never completely destroyed the inland commercial centers.[41]

Books whose scope is limited to sub-Saharan Africa[42] frequently overlook this change. However, an understanding of this realignment of trade routes prepares the way for an understanding of how deeply direct contact with Europe and, subsequently, colonialism affected African economies.

6. Avoid materials which stress the "benefits" of colonialism. Look for ones which show how Africans resisted the imposition of colonial rule and why they did not perceive it as particularly "beneficial".

While it is certainly an important period in African history, the colonial era is also a relatively brief one. In many places, it lasted less than one hundred years. A time-line would be useful in making this point.

[41] E. Jefferson Murphy. *Op. cit.* pp. 266-267.

[42] Materials which use the Sahara as the dividing line to delineate their area for study are too numerous to mention. When this division is employed, it becomes difficult to teach about the early trade routes which linked the north and south. Moreover, it cuts Egypt out of the study. This means that the diffusion of ancient Egyptian civilization to the south will also not be considered.

When Europeans began to impose colonial rule, they met with strong opposition all over the continent. In addition, resistance continued throughout their period of tenure. That Europeans were able to gain and maintain control over such a large area is a tribute to their command of a superior military technology.[43] One text observes succinctly:

> There is a myth that Africans accepted colonial rule passively, even eagerly, and were happy in their faith that European civilization would relieve them from misery. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only African rulers, but thousands of ordinary people, bitterly opposed the establishment of colonial rule and its subsequent administration.[44]

Nevertheless, many texts gloss over African reactions to colonialism. A common device for this is a "balance sheet" in which the legacy of the period is evaluated. *Africa: History, Cultures and People* devotes two pages to "What did Europe do for Africa?". In the first part, the "evils of colonialism"[45] are listed; in the remaining one and a half pages the benefits are sketched out. Since the amount of space devoted to the period's advantages is three times that devoted to its disadvantages, the "balance" comes out in Europe's favor.

Yet the evidence presented in the section hints at opposite conclusions, as this excerpt reveals:

> While Africa suffered many abuses under the colonial system a good argument can be made that Africans also received some important benefits under the system. For instance, the Industrial Revolution was introduced into Africa after the discovery of its rich resources. The diamonds and gold in South Africa, the copper in Rhodesia and in the Congo, and the iron ore in Liberia attracted engineers and administrators. Hundreds of thousands of Africans were hired and trained to operate the machines that took the wealth out of the ground. Railroads and new roads were built to carry these products to nearby ports, thus increasing the number of native workers. Stores, houses, schools, hospitals and other types of buildings were constructed; here again were more chances for employment.[46]

[43] There is a rather telling observation on Europe's military might in a review of John Ellis' *The Social History of the Machine Gun*. New York: Pantheon, 1976 by Trumbull Higgins in the *New York Times Book Review*, February 8, 1976, p. 6 Higgins notes that the maxim gun was considered too brutal for use in European wars. It was, however, used by Europeans in their conquest of Africa.

[44] E. Jefferson Murphy, *Op. cit.* p. 345.

[45] Milton Jay Belasco and Harrold E. Hammond, *Africa: History, Cultures and People*. New York: Cambridge Book Company, 1971, p. 79.

[46] *Ibid.* p. 80.

The passage notes that Africans worked in the mines extracting gold, diamonds, copper and iron ore; the resources were then sent over the railroads and roads they had built to the ports, and then out of their countries. In other words, the fruits of their labor were enjoyed by the colonial powers. It should not be surprising to learn that Africans did not define this kind of development as a "benefit".

This passage also illustrates another problem found in African materials: Africans are portrayed as recipients of the actions of others, not actors. This is accomplished by the use of the passive voice. "(T)he Industrial Revolution was introduced into Africa. . .", "Hundreds of thousands of Africans were hired and trained. . .", "Stores, houses, schools, hospitals. . . were constructed. . . ". But who worked in the industries, built the buildings, and paid fees to go to school? Africans. By concentrating on what they received, rather than on what they gave to their countries' economic and social development, the passage minimizes African contributions. In the process, it provides students with a less than fair picture.

Some high school texts which present a valid balanced view of the colonial period have already been cited in this section.[47] Junior and senior high school students could investigate the subject even further using two fictionalized accounts by Africans of actual events. *On Trial for My Country*[48] tells the story of a clash between Lobenguela, an African king, and Cecil Rhodes in Central Africa; *God's Bits of Wood*[49] is a novel about a railroad strike in Senegal when it was part of French West Africa. For a view of North Africa, they could read *A Life Full of Holes*[50] which is the autobiography of a Moroccan who grew up under French colonial rule.

[47] E. Jefferson Murphy, *Op. cit.*; Evelyn Jones Rich & Immanuel Wallerstein, *Op. cit.*; Leon Clark, *Op. cit.*; J. C. Anene & G. Brown, *Op. cit.*

[48] Stanlake Samkange, *On Trial for My Country*. London: Heineman, 1966.

[49] Sembene Ousmane, *God's Bits of Wood*. London: Heinemann, 1969.

[50] Driss Ben Hamed Charhadi, edited by Paul Bowles, *A Life Full of Holes*. New York: Grove Press, 1964.

7. Materials often tell how Europeans "prepared" Africans to rule themselves and "granted" them independence. However, it has been more common for Africans to organize themselves — against colonial opposition — and sometimes even to fight to regain their freedom.

The study of colonialism lays the groundwork for an examination of two other topics. For, imbedded in the colonial situation, were the roots of nationalism and the movement toward independence. As more Africans attended western schools, cultivated cash crops, worked for the government or in industries, and fought in European wars, the numbers demanding self-rule increased. Africans participating in the colonial system saw clearly the contradictions between the concepts of democracy and freedom espoused by Europeans and the way these were side-stepped in the colonial situation. After World War II, the African demands could no longer be ignored. In the late 50's and early 60's many Africans formed political parties to regain their independence; some eventually had to resort to fighting to achieve their aims as in the cases of Algeria and Kenya; others were able to do so more peacefully.

Too many texts, however, present these topics from the European point of view. They tell how the colonial powers "trained" people to take over democratic governments.[1] But they fail to point out that the governing institutions were foreign not traditional African democratic institutions. In addition, they do not note that the essence of colonialism was anti-democratic. It was a rule imposed by outsiders, not one selected by or answerable to the people governed. Africans were to serve the European power that claimed them not vice versa. They were even forced to pay for alien rule by the taxes imposed upon them. Groups who opposed the colonials were put down militarily. Even individual Africans were denied access to the channels Europeans normally used to seek redress from their governments. A majority of the early nationalist leaders spent time in prison merely for bringing their people's demands for equality to the attention of the colonists. In short, for Africans the colonial experience was an encounter with authoritarianism not democracy.

[1] See, for example, William D. Allen and Jerry E. Jennings, *Africa*. Grand Rapids: Fideler, 1972, p. 74. It notes: "Toward the end of this period, the British and French tried to train some Africans to take over positions in the government. However, in most new countries, far too few Africans were prepared to take over the work that had been done by Europeans for so many years."

This fiction is often associated with another one: Africans were "granted" their independence by colonial governments. But all over the continent, Africans either agitated vigorously or fought outright to regain their freedom. Europeans had no intention of turning over the reins of government to Africans. After World War II, however, African pressure, supported by the international community, intensified and forced them to end their control.

A book that deals with both Nationalism and Independence is *The Africa Reader: Independent Africa.* It presents readings which not only trace the development of these movements but which also lay stress on their positive nature:

> The selections and extracts in this volume, most of which are by black Africans, present dynamic articulations of the African struggle for independence from foreign domination and control. These articulations are not merely statements of rejection of foreign domination, not simply demands for independence from that control. For to reject or to demand alone, since each is a counteraction, would be an expression of an essentially negative dynamic process. The positive dynamic process is the African peoples' own reassessment of their institutions, the revitalization of their heritage, the reaffirmation of the meaning of human rights and the establishment of total African hegemony over their own continent.[52]

And this "positive dynamic process" is threaded through the whole of the continent's history. It is this process, with Africans as the actors — whether developing cultures, organizing empires or fighting for independence — that is central for an African history course.

[52] Wilfred Cartey and Martin Kilson, eds. *The African Reader: Independent Africa.* New York: Random House, 1970. p. xv. This could be excerpted for high school students.

CULTURAL APPROACH

The problems encountered in the cultural or culture area approach to African Studies most often occur in discussions of aspects of behavior, values or human relationships which are preceived to be different from our own. Many materials oversimplify or misinterpret such topics as polygyny, traditional religious beliefs and their expressions, the meaning of "tribe", when they try to relate them to the students' own experiences. The result, then, is not a picture of African cultures which students recognize as different but valid, but one which presents them as somewhat strange and exotic. Eight of these problems are considered here.

1. The vocabulary used to describe Africa and Africans frequently reflects unfavorable attitudes toward, and images of, the continent and its people. Avoid materials which use language having pejorative, condescending or otherwise negative overtones.

Perhaps the biggest stumbling block in materials about Africa is the language used to describe the continent and its people. Consider, for example, this description of an African rebellion:

> Basically, Mau Mau was as much a religious uprising as it was political and in a desperate effort to evict Christian doctrines while protesting the loss of land, Mau Mau members reverted to *savage* practices belonging to their own *primitive, pagan* past. New Mau Mau members were forced to take oaths of a *diabolical, obscene* nature *and to swear that they would murder every European with whom they had contact.* Lonely families on isolated farms were *haunted* constantly with a fear of the unexpected. The quiet footfall in the dead of night could be a *vengeful prowler come to slay them*—or destroy their pedigreed cattle —or to fire their homes. Their employees, though benign in behavior, could have concealed about their person pangas as sharp as razors. Nor were Africans loyal to the British spared. *They went about their duties in constant dread,* for they, too, were subjected to *barbarous* punishments if their Mau Mau masters

suspected them of disobedience. Ironically, the Mau Mau uprising injured more black Kenyans, morally and physically, than it did the whites.[53] (Emphasis added.)

Here we are not concerned with the nature of "Mau Mau"[54] but with the words used to describe the Africans involved and their actions. The charges implied in the paragraph and set off by the italicized words and phrases are serious indeed. Yet not one is substantiated! Clearly, the passage is propagandistic not educational.

Two words, especially, should be discussed in detail. "Primitive" and "pagan" are among the most abused terms in African materials. "Primitive" generally describes people who live in rural areas without all the conveniences that we have; "pagan" usually denotes people who are not members of a world religion. The two words are somewhat negative, stressing African deprivation; they do not tell us anything about what Africans have or believe. Both should be dropped from the materials.

Besides these words and similar adjectives in the last passage, there are a host of other words that must be challenged. Why are the continent's people "natives", not Africans? Why do Africans always live in "huts", rarely in homes or houses? Why are traditionally trained military men "warriors", not soldiers? Why are African rulers "chiefs", rarely kings, or simply leaders? Why do Africans wear "costumes", not clothing? Why are Africans who militarily opposed European rule called "warlike", rather than independence-loving? Why are people who refuse to trade in their traditions for western ways dismissed as "backward"? The list could go on. These are sufficient, however, to sensitize one to the problems. Words used to describe Africans (and Third World people, generally) which we would not also use to describe ourselves should be examined quite carefully. Too often, they carry pejorative connotations and work against our students' efforts to learn about the continent.[55]

[53] Edna Mason Kaula. *The Land and People of Kenya.* New York: Lippincott, 1968. p. 65.

[54] The Kenyans' fight (called "Mau Mau" by Europeans) to regain land alienated and rights abrogated by Europeans is described at length in *The Myth of the Mau Mau* by Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham. New York: Praeger, 1966. This is an excellent book for teachers which could be excerpted for high school students.

[55] See E. J. Rich. "Mind Your Language" in *Africa Report.* September-October, 1974, for a more extensive treatment of this subject.

2. Materials on Africa abound with references to "tribes" and "tribalism". But the labels' connotations vary. More space must be devoted to examining why people identify themselves as a group and what interests they hold to be common.

"Tribe" is a little like the word "race"; that is, experts do not agree on its meaning. *Africa South of the Sahara,* a text for high school students, puts it this way:

> It is easy to say that the basis of traditional life in Africa is the 'tribe', but it is far more difficult to define what is meant by the term. Often a tribe is regarded as a group of people who speak the same language, share common customs and ways of life, have a degree of political unity, and believe that they are descended from a common ancestor. This is a useful definition, but on this basis one could just as well regard the people of the United States as constituting a 'tribe' rather than a nation (except they they do not believe they have a common ancestor). Some European nations — for example the Hungarians — still have a folklore that claims they are originally descended from one 'founding father'. It is also true that not every African tribe was or is politically united . . . and within a tribe there are sometimes linguistic and cultural differences. It is more accurate to say that a tribe is not only a group of people who in some degree share language and customs but who also *feel* that they *belong* together. . . .[56]

The author then goes on to substitute the word "people" for "tribe" noting that many Africans object to the term "tribe" because it has pejorative connotations. And this is precisely the point. The way our materials tend to use the word conjures up pictures of partially clothed, unsophisticated people clinging tenaciously to their past, unwilling or incapable of participating in today's complex world. These are false and misleading pictures.

Since "tribe" is such a loaded word we might replace it with a more neutral term. "Ethnic group" can be a suitable substitute. After all, we use this expression to describe ourselves, even though it also eludes a precise definition. But substituting words is not enough. It is time that materials went beyond labeling Africans and investigated what primary attachments various groups hold and what these mean to them.

[56] Philip J. Foster. *Africa South of the Sahara.* New York: Macmillan, 1968. pp. 2-3. See also David Brokensha's "Traditions and Tribes" in *African Arts,* Vol. IX, No. 3, April, 1976, pp. 70-72.

Derivations of the word "tribe" also dot our materials and, unfortunately, our press. One theme interprets "tribalism" as a force working against people giving allegiance to a nation.[57] Another reduces "tribal rivalries" or "tribal hostilities" to inter-group hatreds:

> Present African boundaries resulted from the colonial period, causing many present political problems and conflicts. In some cases rival tribes lived in the same territory. For example, many of the nearly 300 Nigerian tribes dislike each other. The Hausa hate the Yoruba; the Yoruba hate the Ibo; and the Ibo hate the Efik. The Nigerian civil war showed how deeply the Ibos resent other tribes. Similar tribal hostilities exist elsewhere.[58]

As startling as this statement is, it can be dissected rationally. To claim that Ibos seceded from Nigeria merely because they deeply resented other citizens is to ignore the political, social, and economic circumstances surrounding the civil war. Our own history is dotted with incidents that have overtones of inter-group animosities. Look, for example, at the role these had in the United States' Civil War. Yet, we are aware that such tensions are rooted in other conditions and would not think of reducing the explanations of such situations to inter-group hatreds. Similarly we cannot do this when studying others.

Rather than learning to designate events in Africa as evidence of "tribalism",[59] our students should be investigating the circumstances giving rise to these events. In the process, they might even begin to question why it is that we use such an ambiguous term to describe situations generally in the Third World.

3. Avoid materials which explain African events in Cold War terminology or which evaluate them primarily by our values and standards.

Language problems are often symptomatic of another problem found in materials on Africa, that of bias. In this

[57] Erwin H. Rosenfeld and Harriet Geller. *Op. cit.* p. 180 discusses "Tribalism and Nation-Building".

[58] Esko E. Newhill and Umberto LaPaglia. *Exploring World Cultures.* Lexington: Ginn, 1974. pp. 153-154.

[59] Robert W. Strayer in his high school text, *Kenya: Focus on Nationalism.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975 presents a useful discussion of "tribalism". In addition, he points out another meaning for the term. In the Kenyan context it sometimes refers to the desire of the Somali people in the north to have their land incorporated into Somalia, not Kenya. See pp. 98-103.

instance, bias means that what is presented is what we in the United States — but not necessarily Africans — consider important. Also it means that the information is interpreted in terms of its implications for us, not for Africans. The result is that many materials reflect our preoccupations but lack an African perspective.

One such bias is indicated by the use of Cold War terminology. *The Story of West Africa* notes that at its independence. . .

> Guinea got freedom and it got poverty also. It lost its trade with France and had to find new markets for its products. This was not easy. Toure had to borrow money to run the government. After getting a large loan from friendly Ghana, he turned to Russia and China to get help. *For reasons of their own,* these Communist nations offered better trade agreements than the Western nations did. They also sent experts into the country to work on new projects.[60] (Emphasis added.)

What does "For reasons of their own" mean? It seems reasonable to infer that the aid was supposedly given to persuade Guinea to support or adopt Communism. What such a phrase does, whatever its meaning, is inject our fear into the interpretation of African events. It is we who see the world in opposing camps, Communist vs. non-Communist. While Africans are aware of this conflict, their primary concerns are their own development problems. When they accept aid, they generally accept it from donors who offer the best terms. Acceptance of aid does not mean to them acceptance of the donor's ideology.[61]

There is, in addition, an irony here that deserves mentioning. In recent years, the govenment of the United States has taken numerous steps to improve our relations with countries of the Communist world. Yet some leaders who support these moves continue to talk about Communist influence in Africa. Africans might well find our concern patronizing and be insulted. It implies that we know, better than they, how to deal with Communism.

Another more subtle bias pervades many of our materials on Africa. Africans are described in terms of the values held

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[60] Queenie M. Bilbo. *The Story of West Africa.* Cincinnati: McCormick-Mathers, 1969. pp. 131-132.

[61] For an excellent discussion of this see Paul Bohannan and Philip Curtain's *Africa and Africans.* Garden City: Doubleday, 1972. While this book is written for general readers, it could be used by high school students.

by the majority of Americans. *Looking at Nigeria* portrays people in this manner:

> The Ibos, who live in the region bounded by the Niger, Benue and Cross Rivers, are a very vigorous, go-ahead people. . .
>
> These proud, independent people (the Fulani) have their own language, 'Fulfulde'. Their light skins, wiry bodies, thin features and straightish hair suggest that their blood may be more Arab than negro. . .[62]

Descriptions such as these do not offer insights into people and their cultures. But they can contribute to the formation and perpetuation of stereotypes.

Often this bias is carried even further when Africans are judged by how like us they are or are becoming. Examples abound where people are portrayed as "progressive" if they adopt Western dress, enthusiastically take up cash cropping or convert to a world religion. On another level, a country is seen as "developing" in so far as it begins to use agricultural machinery on farms, build textile mills and other factories, to adopt computers for business and government operations, to sell more radios or televisions.

The danger with this bias is that it obscures what is actually taking place. It assumes that Africans are becoming more like us culturally and materially. It also posits that "progress" and "development" are changes in the direction of the way we do things and that they are in opposition to traditional African ways. But the African who begins to wear a suit, shirt and tie may find that he is very uncomfortable in a tropical climate; if he returns to wearing his older, loose, flowing robe, is he less "progressive" or more "practical"? Or, look at any of the countries with a per capita income of about $200 a year. Would we judge the leaders mistaken if they decided to finance a program to improve village clinics rather than to computerize record keeping in the Ministry of Health? In other words, our biases should not be transferred to our study of events in Africa; rather the events should be looked at on their own terms.

African Cultures, a book of readings for high school students, contains a section entitled "Tradition and Change". The theme of the chapter is not the juxtaposition of these two forces but their integration. It stresses the flexibility of African traditions pointing out how old and new blend together. An

[62] Colin Larchem. *Looking at Nigeria*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1976. pp. 30 and 47.

excerpt from a reading on modern Ghanaian festivals can demonstrate this:

> Traditional drumming and dancing ensembles perform everywhere in streets and open spaces. Everybody — young and old, Christian and non-Christian—goes to town dressed in his best . . . People come from near and far to take part — from forest hamlet and from city factory. . . .
>
> (T)here are traditional sports as wrestling and marksmanship, and in fact the festivals offer young people and those from the cities an opportunity to get to know the traditional activities. . .
>
> Ballroom dances have become a regular feature, and brass bands may draw some attention from the traditional ensembles. . . At night, highlife groups take to the stage and play the latest pop music. . .
>
> In recent times, Christian services have become part of the festivals. On the Sunday, which ends the celebrations, Christian and non-Christian, chief and commoner, attend a harvest festival service and make offerings in cash or kind that are later spent on development projects both religious and secular.[63]

What comes through this description is how Africans have adopted Western influences and institutions to serve their needs. It is this perspective that we should share with our students.

There are many other materials for enlarging the African perspective. For elementary schools, the *Concepts and Values Series*[64] integrates aspects of African cultures with its studies of other cultures throughout its K-8 materials. For junior and senior high school, there are materials for delving into changing child rearing practices in East Africa,[65] for examining the melding of rural and urban cultures in a residential area near Egypt's iron and steel complex,[66] for seeing how a young man in colonial French West Africa got his education after he dropped out of school,[67] for studying other topics related to changing African patterns of life.[68]

[63] A. A. Opoku, "Festivals Change to March Today's World" in Paul Thomas Welty, ed. *African Cultures*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1974. pp. 77-78.

[64] *The Social Sciences: Concepts and Values Series*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Javonovich, 1975. Additional story book materials are listed in the bibliography.

[65] Lorene K. Fox, ed. *East African Childhood*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

[66] Hani Fakhouri. *Kafr El-Elow: An Egyptian Village in Transition*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972. Should be excerpted for students.

[67] Mongo Beti. *Mission to Kala*. London: Heinemann, 1964.

[68] Others listed in bibliography.

4. Polygyny is often portrayed as an exotic custom men practice as a display of wealth. If discussed at all, the subject should be placed within its societal context.

One topic that all cultural studies of Africa include is polygyny. This would lead one to believe that the custom is practiced by the majority of men. It is not. While exact statistics are hard to come by, most experts on the subject agree that only about 10% of African men have more than one wife. Since it is the practice of the minority, it is time that less attention was paid to this subject.

Yet many texts devote whole sections to polygyny and little, if any space, to monogamy. The rationale for the practice is often given as follows:

> *Polygyny is common in Africa.* Almost all African societies permit polygyny. The Pygmies are one of the few exceptions. Most men have only one wife because they cannot afford to have more. Having several wives is evidence of a man's prosperity.
>
> Some anthropologists say that polygyny is common because women out-number men. Men have a higher mortality due to hunting, warfare, and other dangerous activities. Other scholars reject this explanation. They say that childbirth in Africa is as dangerous for women as the other activities are for men.
>
> A surplus of females is not necessary for polygyny to exist. In Africa women marry very young, as early as fourteen or fifteen. Because men must earn the necessary bride wealth, they may be thirty years old or more before they marry. In some societies they must serve in the army before they can get married. As a result many women become widows early and then later remarry.[69]

While status and age differences at marriage may contribute to polygyny there are more compelling reasons for the custom's practice. *Africa South of the Sahara* suggests another plausible explanation.

> One of the least understood customs in traditional Africa is that of polygyny — the marriage of one man to more than one woman at the same time . . . Actually, although this arrangement is found throughout Africa, not more than about 10% of African men are polygynous. The most important reason for polygyny in Africa is the need for children and many of them. Women are of economic assistance in the fields, but above all they are potential mothers. The descent group (see footnote) to

[69] Esko E. Newhill and Umberto LaPaglia. *Op. cit.* p. 136.

> survive must have children. Without offsprings, a man has no one to honor him, no one to assist him in his old age, and no one to perform rituals for him after his death; his name only lives on through his descendants. Similarly, a woman without a husband and children is an object of pity in African society. She has no one to support her and must often turn to relatives for assistance . . . Polygyny under these circumstances is a form of social security that ensures that everyone has a family and home.[70]

In this quotation, the practice takes on meaning. Its social and economic reasons are set out. Moreover, it is phrased in terms that students can grasp: within certain belief systems, polygyny can be viewed as a form of social security.

These passages point out an other issue to bear in mind. It is that any culture's customs, beliefs, values — no matter how exotic they may appear — have a rationale within that culture. This can be brought home to students by an analogy. Suppose an author was telling African students how we honor our dead. He might describe how we dress the body, put it in a casket and surround the box with flowers after which friends of the dead person come to look and comment on how "good" the body looks. Africans reading the description would probably think we have strange customs indeed; we, in turn, would be irritated at how superficial this information is. This is precisely the problem with much that is written about Africans. Rather than looking at a custom as a quaint manifestation of a culture, we must direct our students' attention to its context — why people live as they do. This direction is essential if we expect our students to continue to learn about and from others for it is an exercise in *how* to learn.

5. A common myth is that African women do the majority of work while men do very little. An examination of the division of labor in African societies can dispel this notion.

Often a discussion of polygyny is followed by a section on women. Too often it reads something like this:

> African women work harder and longer than the men. Their work is hard all year round and they have no machines to help them. The visitor often sees the men sitting in the shade, but the

[70] Philip J. Foster. *Op. cit.*, pp. 83-84. Descent group is defined in this text in the preceding section.

> women seem to be always working, caring for their children or doing one of their many [illegible][1]

That African women, especially those involved in subsistence agriculture, work hard is undoubtedly true. To assume that "men sitting in the shade" are not working is not necessarily true. There is often a strict division of labor in African societies with men doing the clearing of land before planting and women tending the crops. In some areas, too, women are responsible for year-round food crops while men are responsible for the seasonal cash crops and the group's politics. Thus, when a visitor sees women doing physical labor while the men sit under a tree talking, they may be following rules the visitor knows nothing about — women attending to food, men settling a dispute.[72]

6. African religious systems can best be understood if looked at as they affect people's behavior, values, and relationships with one another and the world.

Another topic included in cultural studies is religion. *Exploring World Regions: Eastern Hemisphere* describes "tribal religions" in Asia, Africa and the Pacific Islands all together in three paragraphs.

> The religions of tribal peoples usually have no sacred writings. Beliefs are passed on by word of mouth from father to son, from mother to daughter, or from a chief or witch doctor to members of the tribe.
>
> Almost every tribal religion teaches the existence of an all-powerful all-knowing being that created heaven and earth. This being still rules heaven and earth, but takes no interest in the lives and affairs of human beings. This high being is not usually worshipped as a god. Instead, the tribal worshippers call on spirits to help them in their daily lives. It is believed that these spirits can approach the high being and ask for favors. The spirits of dead chiefs are responsible for the tribes they led while living. The spirits of dead fathers help govern the lives of family members they left behind.

[1] David Hapgood. *Op. cit.* p. 44.

[72] There are many sources on African women for junior and senior high school students. Try Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* or *Idu*. London: Heinemann, 1966 and 1969, respectively. Asare Konadu. *A Woman in Her Prime*. London: Heinemann, 1967. For looking at women today, see *Ms. Africa* by Louise Crane. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1973, and *Second Class Citizen* and *Bridleprice* by Buchi Emecheta. New York: Braziller, 1975 and 1976 respectively. Teachers will also find an excellent discussion of women and the division of labor in Colin M. Turnbull's *Man in Africa*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1976 pp. 45-51, and in *Women of Tropical Africa* edited by Denise Paulme. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

> Most tribal worshippers are found in Africa, Asia, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean. In some places missionaries of other religions have brought changes in tribal beliefs, but ancient tribal teachings still continue to affect the lives of millions of people.[73]

Generalizations such as these drawn from a multitude of religions contain oversimplifications of complex beliefs and provide no insights into them as living belief systems.

Texts do not lump Christianity, Judaism and Islam together in a similar manner; yet they could. All three of these are religions of the book, believe in a Supreme God, set down rules to guide people's lives. It is their differences, however, which separate them. If we do not know how each is unique, then we do not know these three religions. The same is true of the traditional religions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

The Zulu of South Africa devotes a whole chapter to religion.[74] It opens with the story of how God sent death to earth and moves on to make distinctions between "witch doctors", diviners and other intermediaries. This is followed by more legends, a description of musical instruments, a harvest festival and similar topics ending with a description of funeral practices and surrounding beliefs. Nowhere, except in the final section on death, is there an indication of how religion affects people's lives. This is a serious omission which most materials repeat.

Traditional religion has always been closely intertwined with traditional society. The behavior of people who follow traditional beliefs very much reflects their religious tenets. They have set standards of morality and behavior that define their relationships with one another and the world around them and which influence their perceptions of themselves. This aspect of African religion must be presented to our students if we expect them to derive any meaning from the study.[75]

Finally, both of these items refer to "witch doctors". Usually the men and women so designated are either priests, ritual specialists, or medical doctors; often they are all three.

[73] Ralph Sandlin Tohe, Gilbert A. Cahill, Herbert H. Gross and Charles F. Gritzner. *Exploring World Regions: Eastern Hemisphere*. Chicago: Follett, 1975. p. 432.

[74] Sonia Bleeker. *The Zulu of South Africa: Cattlemen, Farmers and Warriors*. New York: William Morrow, 1970. pp. 62-78.

[75] John Mbiti. *African Religions and Philosophy*. New York: Praeger, 1969. This work is quite extensive; it could be excerpted for students. Another source for junior and senior high school students is Camara Laye's *The Dark Child*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969. Laye discusses the influences of both traditional religion and Islam on a young boy's life.

They are usually highly educated and highly skilled. They spend considerable time, generally as apprentices to masters of the field, learning their environment, its herbs, roots and plants that can be used for medicine. They also realize that illness is more than just physical, involving a psychological component as well. They therefore learn to surround their practice of medicine with ritual that will affect their patients' emotional needs. Because Westerners do not understand these practices, their value has long been overlooked or dismissed as useless. Practitioners have been labeled "witch doctors" or "sorcerers". Clearly, a new vocabulary is needed as we begin to delve into their complex roles and training. Interestingly, Western doctors just recently became aware of the knowledge and skill of these traditional professionals; programs where the two work together, learning from each other, have begun in some parts of the continent.

7. Too many materials ignore the religious and social functions of African art. To encourage appreciation for this art, these functions should be stressed. Beware of materials that note only the arts as African contributions to world cultures.

Closely integrated with religion in Africa are the arts — music, dance, the plastic arts, and literature. Many texts fail to make this connection clear as these two excerpts show:

> The very essence of East African tribal life. . . is expressed in its music and dance. Religious ceremonies, births, marriages, deaths, harvest festivals, and the time of the full moon are all occasions for vigorous rhythmic dances accompanied by drums, gongs, rattles, piercing ululating shrieks, handclapping and even wind and string instruments. The costumes worn on these occasions show the skill and inventiveness of tribal artisans in converting animal horns and bones, shells, and hair, feathers and skins into dazzling headdresses, garments and body ornaments.[76]

* * *

> Music and dance are important elements in the life of the typical Nigerian. Traditional instruments, such as drums, flutes, or various stringed instruments, are played in the countryside. . . .
>
> The traditional medium for the visual arts most commonly associated with Nigeria is wood carving or wood sculpture. But

[76] Lila Perl, *East Africa*. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1973, p. 48.

> decorative and symbolic forms have been incorporated by Nigerian artists and artisans into their weaving, pottery, and architecture as well. Indeed, practically all of the traditional artistic pursuits which have had such influence on Western art have been put to some utilitarian or religious use.[77]

It is instructive to read that African artists are skilled and creative, but the major functions of African arts in the religious and social spheres are not indicated. Simply mentioning the links or evoking an atmospheric moonlit night with the air filled with "piercing ululating shrieks" distorts the arts' vitality and meaning. We would be better informed if we knew more about the artists — how they fit into their societies, how they learn their arts, how their creations are used and how the arts are intertwined with one another and ingrained in the various cultures.[78]

There are a number of sources where students of all ages can find out more about the arts in Africa. For elementary school, *African Animals Through African Eyes*[79] and *Songs and Stories from Uganda*[80] are especially appropriate. For older students, *African Arts*[81] magazine is an excellent resource. In addition to its articles on the arts, this magazine carries book reviews and notes on art shows which will point out other items for classroom materials and activities. There are also numerous collections of African literature available for students.[82]

Finally, the second passage quoted in this section on the arts noted that Western painters and sculptors have been influenced by the work of Africans. Almost all materials make this valid and welcome point and many also make connections between African and Western music. However, the same items rarely point out how additional aspects of African life — language, science and other areas of knowledge — had impact on the world. Few, for example, note that the oldest universities

[77] John Schultz. *Nigeria in Pictures*. New York: Sterling, 1975. pp. 52 and 54.

[78] A source for teachers is Francis Bebey's *African Music: The People's Art*. New York: Lawrence Hill, 1975. Christine Price's *Made in West Africa*. New York: Dutton, 1973, could be used by high school students.

[79] Janet and Alex D'Amato. *African Animals Through African Eyes*. New York: Julian Messner, 1971.

[80] W. Moses Serwadda. *Songs and Stories from Uganda*. New York: Crowell, 1974.

[81] *African Arts* quarterly magazine, published by the African Studies Center at UCLA. Full address in bibliography.

[82] References to these are scattered throughout this discussion. More are listed in the bibliographies.

in the world are found in Africa. In other words, the contributions that are acknowledged are limited to those in the arts, thus subtly supporting the old stereotype of the Black with "natural rhythm", excelling in the arts and athletics, but with little other expertise.[83]

8. The image of the "Man of Two Worlds" is an exaggeration.

Earlier it was observed how many texts portrayed African cultures as static. The conclusion was that it would be better if their dynamic qualities were shown instead. Texts which deal with contemporary changes affecting these cultures often overstate them giving rise to a new misconception: Africans are people "caught" between two worlds.

> Africa is in the midst of a conflict between two worlds. Most Africans live in the world of the village. But, more and more Africans have been influenced by European ideas. Although colonial rule has ended in most of Africa, the impact has not.
>
> * * *
>
> Africa, therefore, is going through a period of deciding what it wants for itself; whether or not it must choose between two worlds. The conflict will not be resolved easily. Nor will the period of decision be painless.[84]

But, we, too, are "between two worlds" constantly facing decisions about what in our past is worth conserving and what we must set aside as we encounter new ideas and technologies. The decisions are not without conflict and pain. Newspapers accounts of educational reforms and their opposition, labor disruptions as industries seek to streamline production, and other issues affirm this. Moreover, a glance at our best seller lists with their numerous manuals on self-realization yield clues to the pervasiveness of alienation in our own society. Africans face similar problems. Traditional African life styles and relationships are often at odds with the demands of inherited bureaucracies, new industries, and agricultural techniques. But the conflicts we experience are not necessarily

[83] See Richard W. Hull. *Op. cit.*, Chapter 8, especially, for other areas of African contributions. Basil Davidson. *The African Genius*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1969, goes into this in depth for teachers and could be excerpted for students. Fahim I. Qubain's *Education and Science in the Arab World*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1966, provides excellent material on North Africa.

[84] David Hapgood, *Op. cit.* p. 53.

magnified in the African context. Why do we overstate them so? As students read through the materials already suggested in this section they will realize that the majority of Africans, like the majority of Americans, manage to accommodate change belying the "man of two worlds" image.

Finally, what good materials on the continent's cultures all seem to highlight is that there are probably as many similarities as there are differences between Africa and United States' cultures. As students learn about how Africans live, what they believe and what they value, they can compare and contrast these with their own world views. In this way, they will do more than just learn about other people; they will learn about themselves, too.

CASE STUDY APPROACH

One major advantage of a case study is that it offers the opportunity for a careful and thorough examination of a selected subject. What is so disappointing about many case studies of Africa is that they lack this dimension of depth. Too often they contain large amounts of descriptive information but little in the way of explanation or analysis. Five of the problems discussed here relate to this tendency; the first, however, concerns the availability of case study materials generally.

1. Case studies tend to focus on a handful of English-speaking African countries. More are needed which discuss French- and Protuguese-speaking countries and which deal with regional groupings.

Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Zaire seem to be the most popular African countries in United States' educational materials. One explanation for this may be that all four are well-documented in general and scholarly literature. The first three are likely attractive because they are English-speaking countries. This makes gathering data on them easier. On the other hand, French-speaking Zaire is one of Africa's largest and most populous. Another reason why these countries are so often studied may be their generally good relations with the United States.

What this concentration means, however, is that our students have few resources for learning about Chad, Guinea, Mozambique, Libya, and a host of other African countries.[85] This is regrettable because students might incorrectly infer that since there are no materials on these areas nothing very significant is going on there. This would be wrong. A lack of materials can also inhibit students' ability

[85] Nancy J. Schmidt in a recent examination of over 800 children's books on Africa found none available on Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea (Bissau), Guinea (Conakry), Afars and Issa, Mauritania, Senegal, Spanish Sahara, Swaziland, or Togo. See her book, *Children's Books on Africa and Their Authors*. New York: Africana, 1975. p. xiii. A new series that will help teachers find case study materials is Jon Woronoff, ed. *African Historical Dictionaries*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press. The series plans a volume on each African country; write for a listing of those available now.

to make comparisons among countries. How can they, for example, investigate the similarities and differences among governments in Portuguese-, French- and the English-speaking areas when little is available on the former two? What is most unfortunate about this imbalance is that it keeps students from getting a full picture of the rich variety of experiences found on the continent.

While there are materials which deal with the various regions of the continent, there are few good ones.[86] More are certainly needed. Regional studies offer students several advantages. Because they include a number of countries, they have a built-in comparative dimension. In addition, they can demonstrate cooperative efforts of African countries to solve common problems.

One other type of case study should be mentioned. In elementary materials, a case study often means an examination of a child or a family within a particular country. Unfortunately this type of case study also has drawbacks. *People in Families,* for example, is an elementary text which is largely pictures. The carefully planned teacher's manual presents a framework for studying families generally and provides background, stories to tell and questions to ask about the pictures, follow-up activities and extra resources. The problem with this book lies with the pictures. The majority of the photographs of "The Kuria Family of Kenya" are black and white and poorly reproduced; those of "The Williams Family of Minnesota", on the other hand, are in color and of better quality. What is more, the only two full page shots of Mrs. Kuria show her looking distracted or unconcerned. In two other pictures, it is impossible to make out the expression on her face. The overall result, then, is an unfavorable image for the Kenyan family.[87]

2. Civil wars are often equated to a summary or chronology of their events. Emphasis should be shifted to their causes.

When presenting Zaire and Nigeria the materials give some attention to the civil wars which have taken place in

[86] We have already noted some of the poor ones earlier. One of the best regional studies for junior high school is Harry Stein's *Southern Africa.* New York: Franklin Watts, 1975. As a teacher resource, see *A Bibliography on African Regionalism* by Jane Martin. Boston: Boston University African Studies Center, 1969.

[87] Mary I. Shindelus and Mary C. Durkin. *People in Families.* Menlo Park: Addison-Wesley, 1972.

these countries. Too often these accounts turn out to be little more than a recitation of dates or events.

Enchantment of Africa: Zaire in describing the background of this country's post-independence war notes:

> Kasavubu and Lumumba disagreed about the best way to solve the country's terrible problems. Each tried to force the other out of office. Their quarrel completely halted operation of the government. The Congo, only a few weeks old, was splitting apart. If the country was to be saved, someone would have to act quickly. Someone did—a young army colonel named Joseph Desire Mobutu.
>
> With the army behind him, Colonel Mobutu announced that he was taking command of the government. He named a group of people to run the country. The group was called the College of Commissioners. Most were recent college graduates or students, and a few were members of Lumumba's government.[88]

Over what issues did Kasavubu and Lumumba disagree? Some of the people in Lumumba's government were reappointed by Mobutu; how did they differ with Lumumba? How did Mobutu himself differ in his beliefs from the other two leaders?[89] In other words, while the events are clearly laid out, their causes are not.

3. African leaders who have differed with Western leaders are frequently unfavorably portrayed. Focus should be on their roles within their own countries and how they are evaluated by Africans.

It is frequently in case studies that one finds biographies of African leaders. These people, like all national leaders, have a great impact on events in their countries. Therefore, it is important for students to examine them — their philosophies, policies, and deeds. Many materials, however, do not aid students in this task. Instead of telling students about the leaders, they pass judgment on them. This is particularly true of leaders who have differed with Western leaders. Thus we find all too often that Nasser, Nkrumah, Toure, Lumumba

[88] Allen Carpenter & Mathew Maginnis. *Enchantment of Africa: Zaire.* Chicago: Children's Press, 1973. p. 41. It should be noted that this series is, on the whole, the best available for upper elementary and older students. Included in it to date are about a dozen case studies of African countries. For an example of a description where wars are reduced to a chronology of events, see *The Afro-Asian World of Cultural Understanding* by Edward R. Kolevzon. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1972, p. 62.

[89] Teachers will find Edward Bustin's *A Study Guide for Congo-Kinshasa.* Boston: Boston University African Studies Center, 1970, a useful tool for background on this war and subsequent events.

— to name just a few — are portrayed as "poor" leaders. This excerpt from *A Plague of Europeans* illustrates a typical way this is done:

> Lumumba was in his early thirties, a fiery orator, a good political organizer, but a man of unstable personality . . . A moderate nationalist up to early 1960, Lumumba then began to suspect Belgian intentions for the Congo. He advocated a centralized Congo state. Sudden power as Prime Minister may have corrupted him; he saw himself as the 'national' leader of the Congo: 'I am the Congo, the Congo made me. I am making the Congo.' He was frenetic, unpredictable, impatient and rude in his dealings with the Belgians, the United Nations and the African states. He was murdered in Katanga in early 1961.[90]

No evidence is presented for Lumumba's instability or in support of the characterization of him as "frenetic, unpredictable, impatient and rude". Nor is the student told why he suspected Belgian intentions; it is quite possible, given the Belgian colonial record in the country, that he had good reasons. Moreover, there is considerable evidence in other sources that he had a national following and was a "national" leader. Had the text presented more specific examples of his behavior, students would have gained insights into the man and been able to evaluate him for themselves.[91]

4. African Socialism is rarely discussed in detail. Since it is a philosophy espoused by many of the continent's leaders, its interpretations and practice need to be examined.

Many African leaders have attempted to formulate nationalist philosophies based on the premise that the burdens and rewards of development should be shared equally by all citizens. Rather than delving into these socialist ideologies and analyzing them in terms of the programs governments have mounted to realize them, too many materials assume that African Socialism means that leaders have adopted Soviet and Chinese models.[92] This assumption then becomes an excuse for not discussing the ideology's meaning and practice.

[90] David Killingray. *A Plague of Europeans*. New York: Penguin, 1973. pp. 93-94.

[91] For a view different from that of the quotation used, see Patrice Lumumba's poem "Dawn in the Heart of Africa" in Fred Burke, ed. *Africa: Selected Readings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969. pp. 206-207. This book of readings is especially for high school students.

[92] See, for example, Edna Mason Kaula's *The Bantu Africans* New York: Franklin Watts, 1968, p. 63. This book does not even mention a name for the philosophy behind bank and business nationalizations in Tanzania but notes that "President Nyerere has listened extensively to Chinese Communist advisors."

The best way to avoid this problem is to have students look at how African leaders themselves have defined socialism and how they are trying to put it into operation. To begin, students could look at statements by Leopold Senghor (Senegal), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Tom Mboya (Kenya) or Agostinho Neto (Angola).[93] Students could then do an in-depth study of one or more of these men and their countries to see how the philosophies translate into programs and the problems governments face in realizing their ideals. Magazines will be indispensable tools for this.[94]

5. One party and military governments also receive little attention. Discussion of these forms of government must be extended.

Because so many African countries have single party or military governments we would expect educational materials to examine these carefully. Unhappily, this is not the case. One text, for example, notes that by 1973, one third of Africa's population was under military rule but it devotes barely one page to the subject.[95] As with African Socialism, the subjects are mentioned but not discussed in depth.

Generally, too, such governments are described as "undemocratic" perhaps because the word democracy implies a two party system to many Americans. Yet, a look at how the single party works in Tanzania will help students see another interpretation of this word.[96] They could examine some African rebuttals to this description such as the following by Tanzania's President:

> The traditional African society, whether it had a chief or not —and many, like my own did not—was a society of equals and it conducted its business through discussion. Recently I was

[93] See Evelyn Jones Rich and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Op. cit.* pp. 405-409 for Senghor and Nkrumah; Julius K. Nyerere. *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1968; Kenneth Kaunda. *The Humanist in Africa.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1968; Tom Mboya. "African Socialism" in Fred Burke, ed. *Op. cit.* pp. 211-212. Agostinho Neto's speeches are available from the MPLA Mission to the U.N. See bibliography for address.

[94] *African Development, Africa Report, Southern Africa* will be useful here. Details on these are found in the bibliography.

[95] Fred Burke. *Africa.* revised edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974. pp. 306-308. The passage begins at the bottom of p. 306 and ends at the top of p. 308. Half of page 307 is a picture. See Evelyn Jones Rich and Immanuel Wallerstein. *Op. cit.* pp. 383-387 for a more detailed discussion of the role of the military.

[96] See, for example, Leon Clark's study of Tanzania. *Op. cit.*

reading a delightful little book on Nyasaland (Malawi) by Mr. Clutton-Brock; in one passage he describes the life of traditional Nyasa, and when he comes to the Elders, he uses a very significant phrase: 'They talk till they agree.'

'They talk till they agree.' That gives you the very essences of traditional African democracy. It is a rather clumsy way of conducting affairs, especially in a world as impatient for results as this of the twentieth century, but discussion is one essential factor of any democracy; and the African is expert at it. . . .

To the Anglo-Saxon in particular, or to countries with an Anglo-Saxon tradition, the two-party system has become the very essence of democracy. It is no use telling an Anglo-Saxon that when . . . (the) hundred people (of a village) have sat and talked together until they agreed where a well should be dug they have practiced democracy. The Anglo-Saxon will want to know whether the talking was properly organized. He will want to know whether there was an organized group 'for' the motion, and an equally well organized group 'against' the motion. . . .[97]

The argument here is not that all African governments are democratic. Many in fact are not. Rather the plea is for an examination of how these governments operate. For only when military and single party governments are looked at carefully—how and why they came to power,[98] their composition, the problems they face and the solutions they are attempting—can their accomplishments and failures be identified.

6. Since race relations are at the center of life in South Africa, they must be at the center of a case study of this country.

Case studies of the Republic of South Africa have more problems than any others. These stem from the materials' emphasis as they attempt to present a full picture of the country. Most start by describing the White minority government's policy of separate racial development, "Apartheid". Most point out that the majority of the country's population —Black, Coloured and other non-Whites—is not only disenfranchised but denied fundamental rights. Many then try to explain the minority position by putting it into a historical or economic perspective. It is here that they encounter difficulties. *People and Regions of the World* uses the historical approach.

[97] Julius Nyerere. "Democracy in Africa" in Fred Burke, ed. *Africa: Selected Readings. Op. cit.* pp. 213-216

[98] A novel for junior and senior high school students that deals with this theme is Chinua Achebe's *Man of the People*. London: Heinemann, 1966.

> The traditional political and social development of Southern Africa followed the same general pattern as that of Subsaharan Africa. However, civilizations in this region did not develop as fully as did those in Subsaharan Africa. . . . After the arrival of the Europeans in the 17th century, political and social development moved slowly as the Europeans gradually spread across the region. One of the most significant developments before the twentieth century was the struggle between the Dutch and the British for political control. Another was the emergence among the Europeans of certain social attitudes toward the non-Europeans who also lived in this region.[99]

The focus here is on the Europeans and their role in the area's development. The Africans' role is first minimized ("civilization in this region did not develop as fully") and then overlooked. The result is a distortion of history. Rather than contributing to an explanation of minority control, the passage subtly suggests its justification: If Europeans are responsible for the area's development, why shouldn't they control it? Especially in studies of South Africa, history must focus on African developments.

The other common difficulty appears in discussions of South Africa's economy. Statements such as the following are often made.

> South Africa is so rich that, even under 'apartheid', the Africans are better off economically than the people of other African nations.
>
> • • •
>
> Its European population lives better than do most people in Europe and its African population has a higher standard of living than other Africans on the continent.[100]

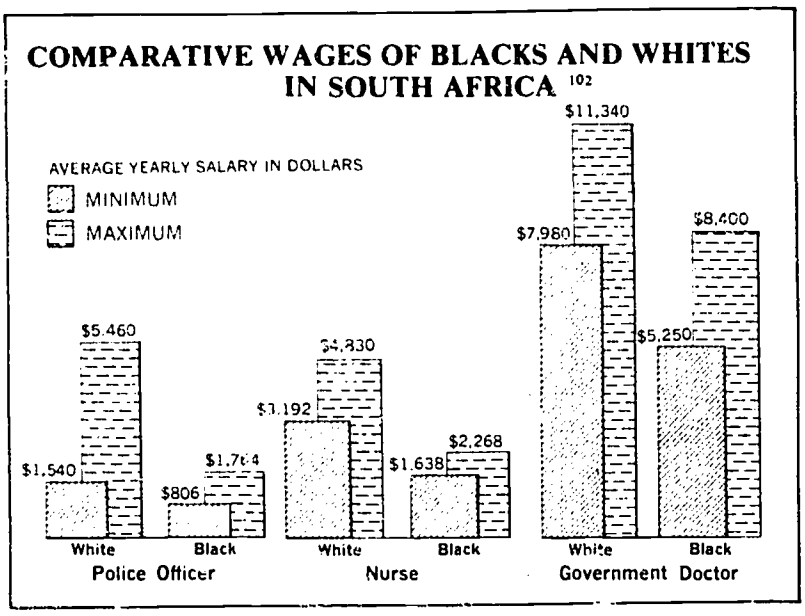
No proof is presented that Black Africans are "better off economically" or that they enjoy "a higher standard of living than other Africans." More important is the fact that the comparisons are not valid ones. South Africa is at present the most industrially developed country on the continent. As such it offers more jobs than any other. Therefore, comparisons cannot be between Black South Africans and Africans in other countries but between Blacks and Whites in South Africa. If these comparisons are made, a very different picture emerges. Students can use the following tables to observe this.

[99] Carl Oliver and Robert Sobel. *People and Regions of the World.* River Forest, Ill.: Laidaw, 1973. p. 159.

[100] David Hapgood. *Op. cit.* pp. 31, 36. See also Edward R. Kolevzon and John A Heine's *Our World and Its People.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc. 1972, for a similar treatment.

WHITE AND BLACK CONDITIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA[101]

	White	Black
Percent of population	17.5	70.2
Pecent of land reserved	87.0	13.0
Average per capita income per annum	$2,100	$ 148
Average wage in mining industry, monthly	$ 467	$ 27
Average wage in manufacturing industries	$ 441	$ 73
Average wage in construction industries	$ 456	$ 69
Government expenditure per pupil in school	$ 213	$ 20



It is important to remember that the central issue in South Africa, permeating all aspects of life, is race relations. A person's race, as defined by the government, determines a person's place in the society, including where one lives, what schools one attends, what jobs one can get. Because this is the pivotal issue, it is central for case studies of the country.

[101] Marylee Wiley and David Wiley. *The Third World: Africa.* West Haven, Connecticut: Pendulum Press, 1973. p. 140. This is a text for high school students.

[102] Leonard Berry and Richard B. Ford. *Op. cit.* p. 97.

Ample materials are available for junior and senior high school students examining South Africa. Both of the texts just cited include case studies on this country. *Southern Africa,*[103] the text for junior high school students mentioned earlier, puts the Republic into a regional context. These could be supplemented by biographies and novels of South Africans[104] and by magazine articles.[105]

As is perhaps already obvious, it is in the area of case studies that the materials are weakest. The problems discussed here, especially the first four, cannot be solved by relying on our traditional educational materials. To avoid the problems, a teacher has to adopt an eclectic style, borrowing readings from a book here, a magazine there. While this is generally a good teaching technique, exposing students to different resources and points of view, it is not always the easiest to use. Financial and time considerations often inhibit or prohibit it. Yet if we want our students to learn about Africa through case studies, this technique is, at present, our only choice.

[103] Harry Stein. *Op. cit.*

[104] For starters try: Peter Abrahams. *Tell Freedom.* New York: Macmillan, 1970. Nelson Mandela. *No Easy Walk to Freedom.* London: Heinemann, 1965. Bessie Head. *When Rain Clouds Gather.* New York: Penguin, 1971. Ezekiel Mphahlele. *The Wanderers.* New York: Macmillan, 1970.

[105] *Africa Today* and *Southern Africa* are particularly good resources here. In addition to articles on this area, they point out other items of interest for teachers and students, including magazines which represent the views of the liberation movements active in the area.

CONCLUSION

The thirty problems identified here are by no means the only ones found in materials for teaching about Africa. In fact, some of them hint at other difficulties. An item, for example, that implies polygyny is not more widely practiced mainly because men cannot afford more than one wife is also likely to define brideprice incorrectly as "buying" a wife. The problems presented here, however, appear to be the most serious and widespread.

Viewed as a whole, they suggest two generalizations. First, too many materials offer a superficial treatment of African Studies. Items which attempt a broad overview of their subjects often are not selective about what they include. Consequently, they overload their presentations with unimportant information or fail to define and describe essential aspects of their topics in a meaningful way. Other books continue to display a fascination with the unusual in Africa; in highlighting game or romaticizing minority life styles, they lose sight of the average, everyday, and ordinary on the continent.

Second, too many materials exhibit "tone" problems. "Tone" problems are evident in the language used to describe Africans and in ethnocentric interpretations of events. They are also uncovered in items which show Africans as recipients of the actions of others rather than as actors themselves. If we expect our students to develop respect for Africans, these biases must be eliminated.

Overcoming these problems is not impossible. To add a dimension of depth, materials need to include more on subjects Africans consider important. Discussions of these should then be developed drawing heavily on what Africans themselves think and feel about the topics. To correct biases, more African sources should be consulted when producers are preparing books. African opinions of manuscripts should also be solicited and heeded. Publishers are already moving in this direction in Women's Studies. It is time for them to do so in African Studies.

These conclusions are similar to those reached by the Asia Society and the Middle East Studies Association reports on the treatment of their subject areas in United States' textbooks. (See *Asia in American Textbooks*, p. 29 and *The Image of the Middle East in Secondary School Textbooks*, pp. 26-28.) Both concluded that the majority of texts are deficient in knowledge and understanding of the unique qualities of the cultures and areas on which they focus. While these findings are distressing in themselves, they also raise serious questions about exactly *what* our students have been learning from the available Third World materials.

Both of these reports have called for closer collaboration among teachers, area studies specialists and publishers to improve the quality of educational materials. African Studies materials could also benefit from such collaboration. These efforts must be encouraged. For, unless basic classroom tools are improved, our students will be severely restricted in their efforts to learn and understand the world in which they live.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

These two bibliographies — one for educators, one for students — include only works whose positive features outweigh their drawbacks. Outdated, heavily biased or inaccurate materials are not listed. Many given here have already been cited in the text. Those added are generally resource materials. All have been given a brief annotation. Materials published abroad are starred. Three addresses where they can be obtained in the United States are given at the end of the bibliographies. Magazines have been placed at the end of the students' book list.

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News items, interpretive essays, book reviews, etc. Broad overview of continent.

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Cross section of opinion and interpretation of current African affairs. Includes lists of new materials, organizations, activities.

African Arts. (quarterly). African Studies Center; University of California; Los Angeles, California 90024.
Graphic, colorful presentation of African art, music, literature.

African Development. (monthly). African Buyer and Trader Publications; Wheatsheaf House; Carmelite Street; London EC4YOAX England.
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National Geographic. (monthly). National Geographic Society; P.O. Box 1640; Washington, D.C. 20036.
Informative features on the Leakeys' work. Use this magazine with care for its articles too often highlight the exotic and spectacular in Africa.

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Magazine for young Zambians containing comics, stories, historical and scientific features, puzzles and games.

Southern Africa. (monthly). Southern Africa Committee; 244 W. 27th Street; 5th Floor; New York, New York 10001.
Articles and newspaper items focusing on ex-Portuguese and White-ruled areas of Africa.

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*Books published abroad can be obtained from:

Africa Agency, 639 Massachusetts Avenue; Suite 335; Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139.

African Imprint Library Services; Guard Hill Road; Bedford, New York 10506.

Heinemann books are available from Humanities Press; 171 First Avenue; Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey 07716.