the recent past. Reviewers commented independently on the text's good taste and reasonable balance in treating minorities. The reader meets the Grimke' sisters and Harriet Tubman, learns about the foundation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and encounters Topeka's Linda Brown. In contrast to the Silver Burdett and Macmillan books, these people and causes are stitched into a broad fabric of the American past and not magnified at the expense of majority concerns. Their presence amplifies the historical record rather than replaces or distorts it.

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ABSTRACT

United States history as a linchpin in the school curriculum and as a potentially exciting, sometimes electrifying, subject was the conviction underlying this analysis of U.S. history textbooks. This assessment investigates the capacity of leading U.S. social studies and history textbooks to inspire the imagination of students through effective literary, pictorial, and historigraphic techniques. Twelve panelists of historians, journalists, editors, and teachers were charged to act as expert reviewers of textbooks at the fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade levels. The review specifically sought to examine books in depth and to identify and review those texts already established in the marketplace. The reviewers found that many U.S. history textbooks strive for simple, inoffensive prose that often lacks the qualities of good literature and fine history. While these textbooks may be effective reference materials, they are not compilations aimed at inspiring and exciting the reader through vital treatment of subject. Recommendations of the panelists include: (1) scaling down the size of textbooks; (2) rededicating textbooks to the text; (3) hiring better textbook writers; (4) emphasizing primary source materials; (5) putting minority group issues into historical context; and (6) initiating textbook review by independent sources, such as newspapers and news magazines. (SM)

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An Assessment of Quality

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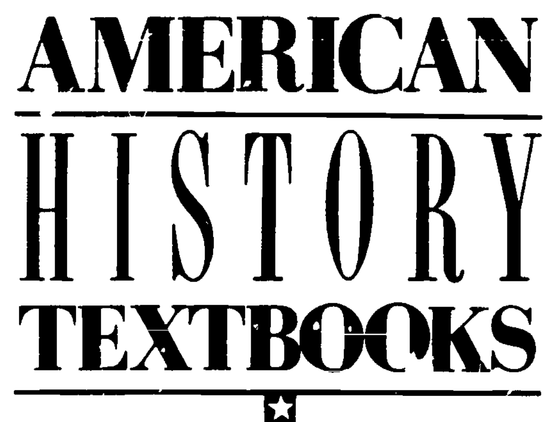

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The American History Textbooks project evolved over two years, benefiting from the contributions of many historians, authors, and textbook experts. Originally conceived by Diane Ravitch of Teachers College, Columbia University, and co-director of the Educational Excellence Network, it was undertaken in March 1986 under the Network's auspices. The project was funded by a grant from the United States Department of Education and organized by Janice Riddell, now of the Olin Foundation, with the initial help of Kenneth T. Jackson, professor of history at Columbia University, and John Donovan, president of The Children's Book Council. The Educational Excellence Network --headquartered at Teachers College, Columbia University--is a confederation of about 300 educators, scholars, and journalists devoted to educational quality and the improvement of American schools.

Special thanks are due to Paul Gagnon, Elaine Reed, and Eileen Sclan for their assistance during the spring of 1986 as each identified leading social studies and American history textbooks at different grade levels. This final report is dependent on the sage critiques of the literature by the Educational Excellence Network's advisory review panel, whose members are listed below. To each of these scholars, again, the Educational Excellence Network expresses gratitude.

James C. Giblin, Bryce Lyon, Diane Ravitch, and Roger Smith all read the report in preliminary drafts and made invaluable contributions to sharpen its focus and improve its formulations. To each of them, I owe a special debt for their erudite observations and their appreciation of good writing. Finally, I thank Lisa T. Rothman, project assistant, for shepherding the completion of the report with unfailing good nature.

Gilbert T. Sewall
October 1987

Copies of this report can be ordered from the Educational Excellence Network for $4.00, Box 32, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, New York, 10027.

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AMERICAN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS: An Assessment of Quality

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I. INTRODUCTION

American history and social studies textbooks have been the object of much scrutiny and analysis during the last decade. Perceptive studies as different as Frances FitzGerald's America Revised (1979) and Herbert London's Why Are They Lying to Our Children? (1984) have noted startling changes in tone, interpretation, and selection of material. Passionate criticism of history textbooks has come from outside the education community itself, wedging itself into political debate and intellectual discourse.

As citizens quarrel over the content of social studies and history, the nation's courts try to adjudicate among differing systems of belief and interpretation. In 1987, a federal district judge (later overruled) ordered the removal of leading social studies and history texts from the Alabama schools for violating the First Amendment, arguing that they subscribed to what he considered to be a religion of secular humanism and a value-free curriculum. State adoption policies and local selection practices discourage improvement of history textbooks. Publishers are increasingly in the business of appeasing willful interest groups.

Like FitzGerald, an increasing number of critics note the disappearance of controversies, conflicts, colorful characters, glories, and tragedies--in short, a national history of passion and voice--since such historiography runs the risk of offending one or another textbook client. In a dubious quest for readability, many textbooks simplify style, mechanics, and vocabulary to produce flat and unmemorable prose without zest or elegance. Meanwhile, according to a 1987 Roper poll of American youth between eight and seventeen, 40 percent of students cite better textbooks as one way to improve the quality of education, compared to 37 percent who cite better teachers as a source of educational improvement.

Research has repeatedly shown that today's students perceive history --and the social studies generally--to be dull subjects. An accumulating body of research indicates that a majority of students consider social studies to be unimportant, redundant, and above all, boring. For example, a study by Schug et al. found that only 17 percent of the students in a joint elementary- and secondary-school sample held social studies to be their most important subject; 13 percent indicated that it was their favorite subject. In contrast, 51 percent selected mathematics or English as the subjects that were most important. Fifty-two percent considered mathematics or English their most enjoyable subject.

Small wonder that most students, certainly by high school, dislike history. Even if most of them are unhappy with the facts and formulas they must memorize and understand in science, mathematics, and even grammar courses, some realize that such skills are a necessary evil if they hope to become doctors, engineers, lawyers, and other professionals, as historian Bryce Lyon has pointed out. But few see much reason to bother with dull,

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fact-ridden history textbooks when they are seldom the gateway to a career or personal future. Yet social studies, and especially the discipline of history, are crucial to students' understanding of the society in which they live and to their preparation for responsible, mature citizenship.

In recent inquiries into textbook quality, the analytical accent has been on content: on what information textbooks include and omit, how that information is slanted, and the impact of such information on the young. Attempts to assess American history textbooks have centered on their accuracy, balance, and representation. Less explored is the literary merit of textbooks, as market forces and clashing ideologies seem to take a toll on elegant, solid, and even honest historical writing. Arguably, the problem of student disinterest toward history lies not with content per se, but in the way it is rolled out and retailed. As indicated by Graves and Slater, textbook passage revisions in accord with the principles of skilled magazine editing--a style of writing employing dramatic style, strong verbs, vivid anecdotes, and rich quotations--seem to result in far higher rates of student recall. Do literary shortcomings in textbooks contribute to a broader problem of successful transmission of American history to young people?

To what extent, and how, might social studies and American history textbooks contribute to the public's diminishing sense of the American past? Do current school-level social studies and American history texts contribute to students' sense of disempowerment, as they feel swept up in vast, impersonal historical forces and movements? These are very important questions. Yet until now no major research project has examined the explicit role of textbook writing in engaging and holding students' interest in their national history.

History textbooks' apparent inability to enfranchise a national audience of young citizens should concern policymakers. If history and related subjects are disregarded or treated by student and teacher with mutual ennui, the resulting historical amnesia does raise the specter of a wholesale loss of national heritage.

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This assessment investigates the capacity of leading American social studies and history textbooks to inspire the imagination of students through effective literary, pictorial, and historiographic techniques. In 1986, twelve panelists were charged to act as expert reviewers of such textbooks at the fifth-, eighth-, and eleventh-grade levels. The following report, based on the panelists' reviews, considers the quality of historical writing in eleven standard American history and social studies textbooks. Finally, this report makes recommendations for textbook improvement and reform.

The selected texts are representative market leaders, used by millions of students each day in public elementary and secondary schools from Portland, Maine to San Diego, California in standard non-remedial courses, the kind that satisfy state requirements for social studies instruction. These widely adopted textbooks are used at the fifth-, eighth-, and eleventh-grade levels, the three ordinary slots for American history in the curriculum.

The assessment tries to answer questions like these: Are American history textbooks likely to make history come alive for students, giving them a vivid and even inspiring sense of their origins? Or does textbook writing contribute to student alienation from the subject? Are these books well

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written? Do they overwhelm with names, dates, facts, and concepts presented in a pedantic fashion? Do they alter or oversimplify history to make foreordained points about American society? Do they convey to the reader a sense of excitement about the past, about human achievements and frailties? Or do they hint that there is little to be learned from the past? Have the color, vitality, and contradictions of past epochs been faithfully transmitted, or rendered arid and neutral in ill-considered quests for readability, balance, objectivity, and sensitivity? Do attempts to satisfy textbook clienteles with clashing opinions create narratives that strain credibility? The panelists were invited to consider such questions.

More than in other subjects, social studies textbooks determine the content of the course and the motivation of students. Too often, the American history textbook acts as a crutch to an ignorant or incompetent teacher: Few elementary-school teachers have had special training in the subject, and the problem of securing able history teachers at the secondary level is well-known. Teacher training and certification procedures rarely prepare college students for their difficult roles as social studies instructors. Not infrequently, instruction in any subject is subordinate to non-academic tasks. Too often, social studies teachers (including the most competent among them) are made to feel that the subject is inferior to mathematics, computer science, language skills, even athletics.

Most elementary and intermediate schools see themselves as an exploratory stage in student learning: History is conceived as a component in a larger schema, "social studies," a sixty-year-old concept of debatable merit that melds sociology, economics, geography, civics, citizenship, law-related education, and individual psychology into one course. The National Council for

the Social Studies' guidelines of 1984 give no special place to history in the education of social studies teachers.

Even when slotted, fifth- and eighth-grade American history may comprise only one-fourth or one-half of the curriculum. Discrete courses in American history exist in all comprehensive high schools, although many students at this level are sidetracked early into non-historical and life adjustment-type courses. Other students who take American history courses before high-school graduation encounter "inquiry" and "critical thinking" courses that stress decision making, problem solving, and historical dilemmas. Some such courses are geared less toward the advancement of historical understanding than toward the induction of student skepticism about the nation's past and its traditional social institutions.

The object of this project has been to bring the issue of history textbook quality--in writing and presentation--to the attention of publishers, policymakers, and the public. It is designed to produce a clearer assessment of the degree to which widely used textbooks enliven the subject of history and inspire further learning or, alternatively, contribute to student disinterest in the subject.

Underlying this considerable effort, over eighteen months and by many individuals, has been the conviction that American history is a linchpin in the school curriculum and that it is a potentially exciting--sometimes electrifying--subject. This assessment of quality in social studies textbooks assumes that without history, especially that of our own nation, vaunted knowledge in other disciplines might be for naught, that without history, the nation might begin to resemble a ship of fools, without anchor or compass, foundering and unable to set a course. The textbooks used to teach American

history in elementary and secondary schools, then, warrant close inspection, attention, and constructive criticism.

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II. METHODS AND DESIGN

Text Selection. In the spring and summer of 1986, the Educational Excellence Network consulted with leading editors, historians, school districts, and states to create a list of widely adopted textbooks at different grade levels.

It became quickly apparent that each grade-level market has its own contours. In elementary schools, for example, major "el-hi" publishers have created grade-by-grade social studies book series. Such a coordinated set of volumes, called a "program," has no real author, only development teams, and publishers themselves refer to the "product" by company name, not by author or titl.. One fifth-grade unit, Silver Burdett's The United States and Its Neighbors, has a huge market share, in some states an estimated 70 percent. In the fifth-grade market, where social studies instruction is universal, the book's success suggests the lucrative possibilities of textbook publishing and the potential reach of one successful textbook or series.

At the eighth- and eleventh-grade levels, the content of social studies textbooks reflects widening student aptitude, achievement, and academic interest after elementary school. These variances create more highly

differentiated markets. At tne intermediate level, the list of major textbooks widens, as eighth-graders are regularly mandated to take American history but teachers ace students of mixed abilities and interests.

In some eleventh-grade programs, only college-bound students take genuine U.S. history courses. The line between eighth- and eleventh-grade textbooks is blurred. For example, while this assessment takes Bragdon and McCutchen's History of a Free People to be a senior high-school text, some elite schools use it in the eighth grade. Garraty et al.'s American History is frequently used in junior high schools, although it is popular among some high-school instructors as an effective text for less able eleventh-graders. High-school courses leading to the satisfaction of the social studies requirement are often history-free: In the case of this assessment, the task of selection was made easier by the inclusion only of American history textbooks.

The project's selection process tried to create an accurate, even emblematic cross-section of leading history and social studies texts lately produced by major publishers. The selection could not be made through precise calculations of sales volume and revenues: Such proprietary information is guarded. Especially at the eighth- and eleventh-grade levels, the possible choices were considerable. The logic has been to concentrate on a few leading examples of the medium rather than to examine a large number superficially. Inclusion was limited. The review specifically sought to examine books more deeply than widely; it sought to identify established texts in the marketplace, not new challengers about which textbook executives often make extravagant claims.

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Because of Silver Burdett's dominance at the elementary level, three fifth-grade books were selected for review. From over twenty eighth-grade books considered, the field was narrowed to four. And from a dozen leading eleventh-grade American history texts, another four books were chosen. Any textbook excluded from the review should not be taken as an unrepresentative, inferior, or minor product. In order to examine selected texts in depth, omissions were inevitable: The absence of any single text should not be taken as evidence of diminished presence or prestige.

Review Panel. The project entailed the formation of a panel of twelve individuals--six historians, two journalists, two editors, and two teachers--to evaluate the extent to which American history textbooks presented interesting, spirited, and balanced accounts of important events and individuals. These panelists were commissioned to review up to six textbooks and draw general conclusions about American history textbooks based on the books they reviewed.

The compilation of reviews and critical statements as a means of textbook assessment was necessarily subjective: Reviews depended on the critical powers, sensibilities, and interests of individuals. No formula exists to measure superior literary and historiographic qualities of a text, and none was proffered to the panel. The validity of design then rested on the selection of reviewers with wide experience in the field who have made contributions to the literature themselves, panelists of differing outlooks and talents, but all with strong opinions and voices of their own. The assessment makes no pretense of scientific objectivity; panelists were invited to judge these books by the criteria of literary merit that they would apply to a book under review in a daily, weekly, or monthly journal.

Special care was taken to ensure that every reviewer assessed textbooks produced by different publishers, for different grade levels, with different approaches to the subject. While some general guidelines were laid out, and are elaborated below, the reviewers were not given any set of hypotheses to test or confirm. Instead, the assessment strove to give each individual a high degree of liberty in exploring the texts and reaching critical conclusions about them.

In January 1987, each of the reviewers submitted extensive critical analyses of their assigned books, along with an overall summary and conclusions about the quality of American history textbooks extrapolated from their findings. As a result, each of the eleven books selected was reviewed three to five times by individuals of varying backgrounds and views. As expected, panelists' conclusions were sometimes different and occasionally contradictory, although reviewers tended throughout to find the textbooks used at the eleventh-grade level much more adequate than those used in eighth- and fifth-grade classrooms. The findings below result from a compilation of these reviews, reflecting the panel's consensus and highlighting some sage observations made by individual reviewers.

<u>Project Guidelines</u>. While reviewers were urged to react independently to the textbooks they surveyed, this study set out some initial questions they might choose to answer. Re textbooks, at whatever grade level:

o Do social studies and American history textbooks contain adequate examples and explanations? Are there vignettes that make history memorable? Does the narrative show rather than tell? Are details and featured stories enlightening and appropriate or silly, trivial, or trendy?

o Does the narrative flow? Or is the language choppy and stilted? Is there a style, verve, sense of drama in the text? Or has the story been stripped

down in order to make it more "readable"? Have searing events in history been diminished by jargon or abstraction? Are controversial issues treated in a listless, lapidary way so as to avoid controversy or complaint? Or is there a sense of the emotional, sometimes majestic nature of political, economic, and social change? Does the past come to life? Or is the past sanitized through a neutral, adoption-safe prose style?

o Does the text have thematic coherence? Is the narrative organized to give some sense of wholeness to the subject matter? Is it clear why topics have been included or excluded? Are books vague about events and episodes that are interesting and significant? Too specific about details that no one will remember? How adroit is the sequential organization of material?

o What about instructional design? Are tables of content, chapter titles and subheads, opening paragraphs, and chapter summaries able to provide a structure that promotes learning and retention?

o Do content questions at the end of chapters review appropriate material? Do they focus on insignificant details or ask for sweeping generalizations beyond the maturity of students? Are the vocabulary exercises and other review tools useful?

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In short, reviewers were encouraged to determine what was good and what was bad about the textbooks they reviewed, to use specific examples to illustrate their opinions, and to reach some overall conclusions, first, about the writing in leading American history textbooks, and second, about its impact on effective teaching and learning.

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III. MARKET CONDITIONS

Before considering the literary qualities of American history textbooks, it is necessary to describe the market conditions that determine their content and style. Textbook publishers are not in business for their amusement or for some abstract notion of the public good. Profits count. "In many ways textbook publishing is like any other consumer-products industry," The Wall Street Journal noted in 1985. "What is different is that because [textbooks] shape lives and understandings, they are critiqued more than most consumer products."

Textbook publishers must create products that sell. Net income, not textual quality, is the primary concern. Education analyst Raymond English has said of the textbook industry: "Profit is the aim, and profit, when you are serving a quasi-monopoly, is made by satisfying bureaucrats and politicians and by offending as few vocal and organized interests as possible."

This is a harsh judgment. But market conditions conspire against superior historiography. Textbook adoption and selection systems at all levels undoubtedly discriminate against originality and brilliance in textbooks. A few boutique publishers _do_ provide superior, literary texts, mainly to

upper-end public and private high schools. The mass-market textbook is developed, sold, and consumed in a different scholastic universe. It is this universe that most American students encounter in their passage from kindergarten to high-school diploma.

To understand why textbooks look and read the way they do, we should recall four interlocking forces that influence the production and marketing of social studies textbooks.

Adoption Procedures. The major publishers of "el-hi" social studies textbooks are market-driven units located within titanic public corporations. They are the aggressive slaves of the formal process of textbook adoption and of the informal, widespread practice of deal-cutting between publishers and local selection committees. Fierce competition for consumer appeal, market share, and specific, lucrative markets (e.g. adoption states, local districts with large student populations) results in high stakes and extreme sensitivity on the part of publishers to publicity and trends. Publishers face fifty different states and the District of Columbia, some of which are "open territory" and others, "adoption states."

In open territory, any local district can choose any text or textbook program according to locally developed procedures; text choice may be made by a district-level official, a school-level curriculum director, or a classroom-level teacher. In the twenty-one adoption states and District of Columbia, decisions about which texts local districts can choose from are first made at a higher level. State adoption committees then act as filtering agents, claiming themselves to be clearinghouses that ensure textbook quality throughout all districts.

State adoption policies originated about sixty years ago as part of a Progressive-era attempt to ensure product quality and curb abusive selling practices. Whether or not the system now helps to achieve these ends is an open but unprofitable question: The practice is so entrenched that the chance for root-and-branch change is minuscule or non-existent.

While many public policies influence the selection process, few address the quality of texts. These policies may address quality indirectly through the composition of textbook committees and controls on the behavior of publishers. But political considerations are the overriding concern.

Group Pressures. Consolidating pressures within the textbook industry benefit publishers whose products fill many niches and appeal to the widest common audience. That audience includes many groups who want acknowledgment or notation, coverage or mention, usually in flattering ways, each group potentially offending or antagonizing some other group, or at least reducing its textual representation.

The substance of American history textbooks arrives through a politically charged minuet of publishers, state and local bureaucracies, and citizen groups, all actively interested in the way history is presented to the next generation. From evangelical and pentecostal groups come demands to endorse creationism and an absolute set of traditional ethics; more secularized conservatives may seek textbooks that glorify private associations and capitalistic markets and that advance student patriotism. From a loose coalition of internationalists, environmentalists, relativists, and statists come demands for new political and cultural catechisms, militantly secular and often anti-nationalistic. Less broadly, and with more single interest, come

demands from ethnic groups, feminists, homosexuals, sex educators, church-state separatists, affective-learning enthusiasts, nuclear disarmers, and others.

No group hesitates to make its interests known to officials responsible or influential in textbook selection. Each exerts pressure tactics to obtain the kind of representation it wants. Advocates try to obtain revisions of history that prove that their group was better than anyone else or suffered more than anyone else, that their ideas were more noble or their travails, more poignant, that history is pointed toward one or another determined end.

Reacting to assorted demands for interpretation or representation, market researchers convey the conditions of the field to editors, whose job it is to appease these interests, resulting in distorted, sometimes dishonest history writing. Striving not to offend, publishers collaterally hesitate to throw any historical condition or episode into high relief, fearing that someone will feel slighted. The result is often blandness, omission, and elusiveness of style.

The Social Studies Approach. An essentially non-historical pedagogy outlook--which textbook writers, editors, and publishers tend to share along with social studies professionals--emphasizes such topical issues as the family, race relations, urban rot, and the world around us, subjects often presented in the dry, abstract, "objective" style of sociological writing. The individuals who comprise the culture of the field often lack appreciation for history. Being more interested in the present and future, they are sometimes antagonistic to the study of the past.

This approach mimics a neutral, social scientific prose style, a kind of writing that lends itself to committee writing and boring prose. It uses an Annales-like methodology to make, so it is said, historical writing more exact and less biased. In the hands of skilled economic historians like Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel, the amount of light these methods can shed on long-term historical forces is enormous. But in the hands of textbook publishers, heroic individuals and engaging stories are subsumed in grander, or at least more general, political and economic movements.

Trends, theories and movements dominate the canvas, pushing aside the memorable behavior of individuals, whether heroic or villainous. Gone is the bold narrative of American historians such as Francis Parkman and Samuel Eliot Morison. Historiography departs fully from epic stories of La Salle, Frontenac, and Montcalm and Wolfe and from salty tales of maritime Massachusetts, narratives that bring history to life. The stories of individuals and landmark events that once dominated the fare of American history give way to portentous movements of ideologies, social classes, and cultural groupings, abstract and indeterminate.

Social studies experts seem highly comfortable with creating theoretical, grade-by-grade matrices of competencies and skills. At the same time, they shrink from the animated writing that reveals a human voice, arguing that the results will be biased and value-laden. History writing is always subjective, of course, depending on the historian's background, interests, associations, and reading of the records. As the late Arnaldo Momigliano warned, sound historiography is best guided by fidelity to evidence. Sometimes, social studies textbooks lose that evidence in reaching to remake the past in accordance with conventional wisdoms and client wishes.

Unwittingly, the social studies approach--even as it calls itself scientific and objective--may be highly biased in its advocacy of change and its well-intentioned efforts to advance some scenario for individual, social, or global action.

Readability Scales. Because of wide negative publicity surrounding these decades-old gauges of how difficult textbooks are to read, many state and local officials profess disinterest in them. Demands for them are often informal, unspoken, and unwritten. Nonetheless, readability scales remain enshrined in the adoption process and sometimes in formal guidelines. Why? Because classroom instructors and selection committees insist on knowing what readability scale and what calculated level of difficulty a publisher uses in producing a text. In making selections, educators and selection committees are profoundly influenced by them. Required to or not, publishers therefore engage in scrupulous textual analyses, made all the more exact through the introduction of software systems that do readability tests by computer. Such formulas, be they the Dale-Chall, Spache, or Fry, measure the length of sentences, check vocabulary against approved word lists, monitor word length, and count the number of syllables.

Artificial indices of readability lead to abuses of writing and can interfere with real understanding. Polysyllabic words--in fact all words not contained in a 2,000- to 4,000-word checklist--are likely to disappear during the editing process. Complex sentences are broken up, purportedly to ease reading comprehension. Paragraphs are shortened. The circumlocutions and stylistic flourishes that often make for exciting reading vanish, replaced by straightforward, pedestrian exposition. Each sentence may stand. But losing its connectors, the meaning of a sentence may become less comprehensible and

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harder to understand. Subject matter may become cryptic. Students may lose any model for good writing. An student's introduction to historical writing may become dull, even tortuous.

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The Process. In the formal textbook selection process, for adoptive states and many large districts in open territory, a specially appointed textbook director--who serves as a link between selection committees and publishers, and who theoretically exerts no individual power of adoption --expresses an intention to revise the textbook list to publishers every five or eight years.

Already attuned to state and local timetables, major publishers respond to the textbook director's call, submitting samples and bids, trying to follow whatever guidelines the director has made available. Later, at formal hearings, publishers make their presentations. Meanwhile, some state and local education agencies hire outside reviewers to check publishers' products against curricular guidelines and legislative mandates.

Publishers typically plan their strategies years in advance of the formal adoption process. Sometimes they take the opportunity of a coming major adoption (say, in California, Florida, or Texas) to create a new series ("program") or blockbuster textbook. This process involves intense market research, ordinarily done by former salespeople and schoolteachers. Publishers analyze what already exists in the field, trying to find out what teachers like about the books currently being used and what, ideally, they want in a new textbook. House research staffs may run focus groups and distribute

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questionnaires, asking teacher-consultants how they react to sample materials and lesson plans. At the same time, publishers conduct internal meetings to become more familiar with the current market. The more innovative the text, the riskier the investment and the more costly the field research and writing process.

Social studies textbooks are rarely written by their featured authors. Final editorial control is the prerogative of the publisher. In preparing a text, a publisher may approach a well-known teacher or historian, who may do an outline, review and comment on the preliminary text, and suggest changes during the writing and rewriting process. But publishers are ordinarily more interested in purchasing an author's name in exchange for royalties. The writing is usually done by in-house writers, not historians, then revised by editors. Even staff writers (who may have considerable experience with historical writing) are disappearing. To contain editorial costs, the industry relies ever more on outside "development houses." farming out writing, editorial, and design responsibilities, allowing publishers to concentrate their expenses in marketing.

Panelist Jean Karl recalled her experience in a textbook house. "Authors did not write books," she said. "Hired writers and people in the office did. The authors simply set the pattern for the material and read over what was done and made suggestions for change. I was editing material written by outside writers hired to do the writing of social studies texts. The writing was very bad. Most of it needed to be rewritten entirely, but I was not allowed to do that much work on it, only to deal with the very worst of it."

The publisher's concern is not merely the running text. In the end what counts is the final "teacher resource package," boxed and ready to use. Fifth-

and eighth-grade social studies teachers are not likely to have had special training in American history. Not unexpectedly, they are centrally interested in the teacher's guide. Many teachers look for convenience and a slick, television-competitive format, one with ample four-color graphics and white space. The successful resource package cannot be ugly or hard for teachers to understand. At the elementary level, texts are tied together into a multi-grade-level "program" providing a continuous curriculum from the first through sixth grade, a curriculum that is meant to be "teacher proof" and effective in any classroom.

The complex and time-consuming production system by which textbooks are created involves a huge initial capital outlay, often in the millions of dollars for a social studies program and $15 million or more for a multi-grade basal reading or mathematics program. Textbooks do not have to cost this much. It is doubtful that such classic American history texts as Beard and Bagl y or Muzzey cost a fraction of this. Even today, boutique publishers produce textbooks and teaching materials at minimal cost for high-school and college classrooms, relying on the scholarship and inventiveness of individual teachers and professors. But such books rarely have the high-caliber, finely bored distribution channels available to major textbook producers.

Economies of scale benefit large publishers in terms of sales staffs, marketing cost , the lity to make favorable arrangements with districts, and the resources to send consultants into schools to explain how texts are used. Stiff barriers to market entry exist. Besides development costs, many states and districts require publishers to post performance bonds, pro ide free samples, maintain depositories, and employ local agents. These

requirements limit market participation to companies that can make large front-end investments.

The capital outlay involved reflects the filtering process by which textbooks are rendered "safe," that is, with a common denominator broad and low enough to appeal to audiences potentially in the millions. This costly process--removing voice, homogenizing language, testing for response, tarting up the ever-important package--may result in a slick product of diminished substance, one that might turn into a publisher's cash cow for a decade or more.

Why do publishers care to make this investment in such a competitive market? It is crucial to understand that textbooks comprise a very steady and profitable return on investment, an estimated 20 percent, one that can be projected in advance through demographic analysis with some precision. Tried and true textbooks throw off large amounts of cash, and textbook revenues are expected to increase. Before 1992, elementary-school enrollments (after annual declines between 1972 and 1985) are expected to increase 13.3 percent to 35.8 million.

In addition, the nation is now comparatively interested in educational improvement, a concern that often focuses on the quality of instructional materials. A Brown Brothers Harriman & Co. analyst recently forecast in Fortune magazine that such forces will translate into a 53 percent boost in textbook sales during the 1990s, from about $1.6 billion this year to $2.6 billion per year in the next decade.

The appealing economics of textbook publishing--all the more attractive as a division of a diversified communications company--help explain the

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consolidation of the industry during the last ten years, in which independent textbook companies have been acquired by vast and self-contained communications empires such as Gulf & Western Inc. (Simon and Schuster) and Time Inc. (Scott, Foresman and Company). Huge corporations like thes regard textbooks as potential profit centers. Textual quality is not discouraged by corporate officers, should it happen and sell. But for the textbook publishing industry, sales are the main point, in keeping with the fiduciary interests of shareholders.

IV. FINDINGS: Elementary School Textbooks

The United States and Its Neighbors. Morristown, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Company, 1986.

The United States and the Other Americas. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985.

The United States Past to Present. Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1985.

Silver Burdett's The United States and Its Neighbors is a current phenomenon within the world of textbook publishing, part of a blockbuster social studies series that has captured an estimated two-thirds share of the adoption-state market during the 1980s. By calculation, just over one million fifth-grade students in the twenty-one adoption states and the District of Columbia used the book in 1984-85, and from it, were introduced to American history and the social studies textbook. In addition, thousands more fifth-graders used the book in open territory, as the Silver Burdett program is also selected at the classroom, school, or district level.

Because of its share, The United States and Its Neighbors constitutes a text and package that de facto approach a national curriculum. The book's high marginal profits--safe to say, its capital costs were recaptured by earlier editions--would suggest that it is a lucrative addition to the Silver Burdett

list. (Silver Burdett is a textbook subsidiary of Simon & Schuster, a consolidated publisher and communications company owned by Gulf & Western. According to the most recent edition of the Literary Market Place, Silver Burdett introduced 574 titles in 1987 and has over 5,000 titles in print.)

Given its reach, the book deserves special consideration. In order to please two groups of potential buyers--the first oriented toward American history, the second toward social studies--the book's contents are broken in half: Eleven chapters are devoted specifically to American history, first, what it is, and then, its pre-Columbian civilizations, the age of exploration, colonization, and United States history. The second half of the 502-page book, eight chapters, is a treatment of economic and physical geography by region, a kind of child's travelogue of uneven quality, concluding with an obligatory two-chapter unit (insulting in its superficiality) on Canada and Latin America.

As with other leading textbooks at the fifth-grade level, the design is bright and the graphics outdistance the grey history textbooks of the past. The book goes into considerably more subject detail than standard textbooks used in elementary schools at mid-century. In spite of heralded student ignorance of geography, the textbook devotes much space to the subject. The United States and Its Neighbors, like other fifth grade textbooks, contains many more topics and exercises than the texts of students' parents. No one can argue that the book's "coverage" is inferior to fifth-grade social studies textbooks from the past. But the text is a mere cafeteria of information, not a directed and engaging narrative.

The Silver Burdett book is glossy and colorful. There are over seventy-five four-color maps in the book and myriad average temperature

charts, time lines, and special interest materials (e.g., metric measurement, rules of the road, regional interdependence). Each chapter has a skills section at the end, containing such units as using a library, interpreting a cartoon, reading a map, and learning pronunciation symbols.

The United States and Its Neighbors opens with promise, starting with map-reading exercises, moving from a macro- to micro-view, introducing map symbols, roads, mileage, and measurement. Then, in a slightly amazing non sequitur, the text moves to the subject of mass transit and bus schedules without pausing to make a transition or make a point. Of twenty-nine pages in the chapter, about sixteen total pages are text; pages are almost always less than one-half textual. The historical chapters in the book tend to have fewer breaks, boxes, sidebars, tables, graphs, diagrams, photographs, drawings, and other distractions from the running text than the social studies chapters. Some of the book's graphics are educational and informative; this and other fifth-grade social studies texts are adroit in illustrating structures and technologies. But with all these sections and breaks, the central narrative begins to get lost very quickly. At an early point the discerning adult reader grows perplexed: Where _is_ the running text? Where _is_ the story?

The text is easy to read. The United States and Its Neighbors and other books in the Silver Burdett series are known in the industry for what is politely called a "low concept load." What The United States and Its Neighbors fails to do is impart any sense of excitement, adventure, saga, imagination, or human nature to the investigation of history and society.

Even when the text attempts to animate itself (and comply with readability formulas), the results are wooden:

> Now let us look at one exciting event in the life of a Pueblo girl.
> "Run! Run! The Navajo are coming!" Tuma was washing her hair in a little stream. But she ran home as quickly as she could. The Navajo were another tribe who lived nearby. They tried to raid Pueblo villages in search of food and other supplies. The peace-loving Pueblo did not like to fight. But they could not allow their food to be stolen. They would fight for their food.
> "Hurry, Tuma," cried Yonga, her older brother. Tuma scrambled up the ladder. Yonga pulled it up after him.
> Tuma's building was like an apartment house.

In Tuma's case, she hugs her kachina doll inside as Yonga goes out to fight, giving the textbook a chance to declaim on kachina spirits, Tuma's home, and Pueblo customs. Amazingly, the text's writers take the reader on a boring anthropology excursion into Tuma's dark "apartment" when there is a battle going on outside. The reader remains with Tuma, while Yonga is chasing Navajos. Whoever chose this imagined anecdote seems to have little understanding of or stomach for fifth-grade tastes. It is significant that children's book editors and authors repeatedly note that boys and girls of this age are attracted to action-packed, even gory stories of adventure. The story ends:

> A sharp bang frightened Tuma! It was Yonga. He had dropped his club in returning from the roof. He was out of breath but happy.
> "The Navajo have gone away," he said. "They used tree trunks to climb our pueblo. But we drove them away--this time."
> Tuma gave her kachina doll a hug. She was happy too. She knew why the Navajo had been driven away. She must remember to thank the good spirit who protected her people.

A chance for real drama escapes: Any accomplished storyteller or moviemaker knows that the action, what will elicit interest, at least at this moment, is with Yonga. The chance even to focus dramatically on the supernatural rites and arcane mysteries of the Pueblo, also potentially interesting to fifth-graders, is lost. Instead, the reader (who has been

promised an exciting event) obtains a limp lesson in pre-Columbian life adjustment.

Here and elsewhere, The United States and Its Neighbors neutralizes. There is no verve, no gripping story styled to the appetites of ten-year-olds. Cursory, sometimes artificial efforts--such as the use of the second person voice--are made to involve. Sometimes the reader receives a nugget in passing. ("Can you imagine how hard it was to live in dugouts and sod houses? When it rained, mud oozed from the walls and dripped from the roof, and the floor became a puddle. Dust was everywhere in dry times. Dirt fell from the roof and walls onto the beds, chairs, tables, dishes, and food. Gophers, snakes, and other creatures burrowed through the walls into the rooms. No wonder some families could not take it [sic] and moved back East.") But the book's tone is generally lifeless, monotonic, without feeling; accordingly, a bus schedule and the Vikings are treated with equal passion.

Consider this textbook's treatment of the pioneers in Oregon Country, an epic drama in America's mid-nineteenth-century past, ripe for storytelling:

> The Southwest was not the only place of growth and activity in the 1840s. People from all over the East caught "Oregon fever." They had heard reports of the beautiful land and plentiful game found in the Oregon Country. The Oregon Trail was made up of hopes and dreams of men and women who wanted to start new lives in Oregon. With every thing they owned in covered wagons, people took on the challenges and dangers of the rugged 2,000-mile (3,200 km) journey west. "Oregon or Bust" was the slogan of the day. Thousands moved to Oregon. Many died trying.

Not only can this style of writing produce a coma-like state of boredom. The passage never really focuses. Nothing seems to occupy center stage or have special significance. It describes a world of generalities and collectivities. Excitement, momentous events, people seem not much to matter.

In The United States and Its Neighbors, Abraham Lincoln warrants two paragraphs, slightly more than Molly Pitcher, a minor heroine of the Revolutionary War. Valley Forge goes unmentioned. The production of potatoes, blueberries, and cranberries in New England receives approximately the same coverage as the history of the Progressive movement. World War II is covered in less than four pages, introduced with the subhead "Another War." And why exactly is the reader introduced in a large four-color photograph to someone named Toney Anaya, not mentioned in the text, who was governor of New Mexico from 1982 to 1986?

The evident, grim answer is that Anaya is of Hispanic birth, thereby providing Silver Burdett a chance to score political points even if it shortchanges more significant individuals and events in the process, distorting the content of history. This willingness to distort in order to mention and appease various interest groups marks many of the history textbooks assessed in this study, much to the consternation of this assessment's reviewers, who repeatedly noted how crude and obvious, not to say meretricious, most of these efforts were.

The United States and Its Neighbors finishes its historical section by telling students that "Americans must realize what a wonderful place this is to live," and that "It is our responsibility to continue to build our country and fulfill the dreams of the brave men and women who have gone before us." These are true and noble statements. But the abstract, disembodied quality of these very statements reflects the book's hesitancy to show students (not tell students) why these statements might be noble and true, if not absolute.

In the concluding historical chapter, the text reminds students: "People and events have come together to change the way our country thinks and acts."

Then, leaping from topic to topic, the chapter ranges from the 1976 Bicentennial celebrations to Theodore Roosevelt to synthetic fibers to automobiles to the Great Depression to Franklin Roosevelt to Martin Luther King, Jr. to human rights. In terms of tracking, that is, using one topic to embellish the next so that the sum total of a chapter is more than its components, the chapter is very hard to follow. Easy to read, sentence by sentence, yes; but taken as a whole, incoherent.

In order that The United States and Its Neighbors contain some message, as reviewer David Blight suggested, an annoying assumption runs through the book--that things in the United States are getting better through some providential or grand social scientific design. The text does reach the following conclusion: "The movement toward equality is a process that has been carried on throughout history. It will not end until all Americans can say for themselves the words carved on Dr. King's tombstone: 'Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I'm free at last.'" The text's epilogue culminates in a frank, vacuous endorsement of personal choice: "We must choose what kind of world we want, and work for it."

An unrestrained use of the doctrine of progress, of course, may help children look to history for hope. But such historiography does not help them understand the cyclonic human struggles over politics, wealth, religion, and ideas that give history its edge. Reviewer Jack Beatty applauded the book's preoccupation with questions of race, given the peculiar institution of slavery as a centerpiece of nineteenth century history, while questioning its unwillingness to confront the current plight of an urban underclass. "You don't want to dash the morale of the young black student, nor encourage white students in their negative stereotyping of blacks," he says. "On the other

hand, you want to put the young child in touch with reality." When unpleasantness occludes the sunlight, The United States and Its Neighbors shrinks from it. The book frequently seems to view the world with an attitude that crosses Candide's with Edward Weston's The Family of Man. Only accredited victim groups suffer, and then they suffer absolutely. When realities are bloody and vicious and complicated, the why of history is avoided. "Children need truth to steer their way successfully around this world," Beatty concluded. "This book, at too many points, prefers to keep them dumb."

Macmillan's The United States and the Other Americas, a second leading fifth-grade social studies reader, seems an imitation--almost a clone--of the Silver Burdett book. Again, the Macmillan text breaks the subject matter of the book into two, deemphasizing American history and trying to strike a duality between history and descriptive social science, with the obligatory chapters on the remainder of the hemisphere again stitched to the end.

The style of writing? Reviewer Eric Rothschild characterizes it as "happily ever after" in tone, warping truth in the process. As with the other fifth-grade texts, statements are reductive, misleading, and sometimes deterministic. The Macmillan text, for example, concludes: "The equal rights movement has made many gains. The movement will continue until all the people in the United States enjoy full equal rights." Re Latin America: "Better housing is being built. Industry is increasing. Most important, education is improving." It is all quite vague--and only partly correct.

The truncated prose in The United States and the Other Americas is intended to advance clarity. Yet confusion may result from superficiality, as in the text's introduction: "The United States was settled by people from all over the world. Many of them became naturalized citizens. Most immigrants

settled on the East Coast, a crowded part of the country. In the 1970s, Americans began moving to the Sunbelt."

In the latter section of the book, geared toward social studies, the writing becomes noticeably thin. "Suppose that you lived in the southeastern part of the United States," the book reads. "You would have a great deal of rainfall during the year. It also would be warm or hot all year round. Therefore, your climate would be described as wet and warm or hot all year round."

Individuals are trivialized. For example, Thomas Jefferson is never treated as a leading political philosopher and seminal democratic theorist. "The Declaration of Independence shows to all how well he wrote," the text says, before turning to Jefferson's inventions, the swivel chair and the dumbwaiter, "used to carry food and other small items from one floor to another." Jefferson comes across as a slightly cranky inventor who just happened to be a great national leader.

Avoiding complicated religious, political, and economic concepts that might be beyond the grasp of the fifth-grader may be natural and proper. But the bland treatment of heroic individuals and exciting situations, rendered lifeless in these texts, does no service to student learning and must surely dampen enthusiasm for history.

As in the case of the Silver Burdett book, the Macmillan text is clearly more comfortable treating social studies subjects outside history, content to create a pleasant combination of travelogue, economics, and social science in the second half of the book. In explaining cotton production and processing, or in taking a trip through the Great Lakes, for example, the text becomes

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animated and engaged. It does not seem accidental that these sections succeed in part because they deal with things and processes, not with human beings and their beliefs. Safe topics, they are approached directly, without timidity or cryptic vagueness.

By contrast, reviewers generally admired D. C. Heath's The United States Past to Present. They praised the text for its historical (not social studies) approach, densely enough woven to give a full-bodied portrait of the national past. In anchoring the text in history, focusing on the American story from Christopher Columbus to the space industry, the D. C. Heath book avoids the disjointed, bifurcated quality that the reviewers found so distracting in the other two fifth-grade social studies books.

A straightforward American history, again with token chapters on the remainder of the hemisphere, this text concentrates on the earlier periods of American history and compresses post-World War II history into mere outlines. "Events do not, for the most part, just happen," reviewer Jean Karl said of the book. "They come about as a result of events that have gone before."

Directness and clarity in this text sometimes comes at the expense of fine writing, however. Especially for brighter students, some explanations and definitions may seem tedious. Some review questions, such as "List two beliefs that are part of the pioneer spirit," are fuzzy and banal. "Some students will be put off," reviewer Jack Beatty noted. "Others will find it helpful to have a 'fort' and a 'stockade' defined for them." He concludes: "It is probably a good idea to be elementary in an elementary-school textbook. We can all remember not knowing the enabling rules of a subject, and thus being utterly out of it in any discussion that assumes mastery of those rules."

In The United States Past to Present, such assumptions seem to benefit historical understanding: The book defines a constitution, for example, as a "plan of government." The book succeeds with other details as well. "The windows around the big hall were tightly closed so that no one outside could hear what was going on inside," it says, describing the writing of the Constitution inside the sweltering hall where the Founders worked through the torrid Philadelphia summer.

The D. C. Heath book is not venturesome. The language of the book is not literary. Like other fifth-grade textbooks, its prose tends to be monotonic. ("It was a long, hard journey. About 4,000 people died along the way. The Cherokee called the journey the Trail of Tears.") But the text is generally clear, concise, and, in places, lively. Paragraphs are well constructed. Main ideas are set out, explained. No attempt is made to weave the material into a paean to progress or student self-development. Relatively speaking, the running text has coherence, style, and interest.

In the case of westward expansion, for example, we join a travel party:

> Once the pioneers were on the road, each wagon train followed the same routine. Every day the travelers woke at about four o'clock in the morning. They fixed breakfast, packed up their bedding, and rounded up their animals. By seven o'clock, the wagons began to move out.
>
> The guide and half a dozen men went ahead with picks and shovels. Their job was to smooth the way for the wagons. They removed stones from the path and cleared away brush. Several other men left the wagon train to hunt for buffalo and deer. The rest of the group stayed with the wagon train.

In The United States Past to Present, women, blacks, and other groups come into the story, not as artificial "add-ons," but in ways that help reflect the fact that they were excluded or segregated in public arenas until

the recent past. Reviewers commented independently on the text's good taste and reasonable balance in treating minorities. The reader meets the Grimke' sisters and Harriet Tubman, learns about the foundation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and encounters Topeka's Linda Brown. In contrast to the Silver Burdett and Macmillan books, these people and causes are stitched into a broad fabric of the American past and not magnified at the expense of majority concerns. Their presence amplifies the historical record rather than replaces or distorts it.

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V. FINDINGS: Junior High School Textbooks

Buggey, L. Joanne, Gerald A. Danzer, Charles L. Mitsakos and C. Frederick Risinger. America! America!. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1987.

Drewry, Henry N., Thomas H. O'Connor and Frank Freidel. America Is. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1984.

Garraty, John A., Aaron Singer and Michael J. Gallagher. American History. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1986.

Ver Steeg, Clarence L. American Spirit: A History of the United States. Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1985.

In contrast to the fifth-grade market, no single textbook dominates the eighth-grade field. The market is in fact highly fragmented, making it impossible to identify market leaders with precision. Among eighth-grade American history textbooks, many plausible selections could be made. In this assessment, four representative texts were selected to suggest conditions in the field as a whole.

According to the reviewers, John Garraty et al.'s American History was the most successful among selected texts in creating an engaging narrative of the national past. "The book's style is winning throughout," said reviewer Robert Nisbet. "The sentences tend to be direct, in the active rather than passive, and brief, though not to the point of monotony."

For example:

o European leaders were more amused than annoyed by Monroe's speech. If the United States could not even protect its capital city from a raiding party, how could it police the whole Western Hemisphere? The new Latin American republics felt the same way.

o It was a moving scene. Lee was dignified in defeat. Grant gracious in victory. "I met you once before, General Lee, while we were serving in Mexico," Grant said after they had shaken hands. "I think I should have recognized you anywhere."

o Wilson thought the United States should help other nations and try to make life better for their people. His trouble was that he was convinced he knew what was best for the rest of the world.

o What did it feel like to be among the first humans to reach this great empty land? We know what the first astronauts experienced when they set foot on the moon.

To Garraty's credit, the book is willing to raise moral questions on controversial issues. In his account of the Nat Turner rebellion, Garraty writes:

> To whites who knew him, Turner had seemed the last person who might be expected to resort to violence. He was mild mannered and deeply religious. Yet in 1831 he and his followers murdered 57 people before they were captured. Historians still argue about whether or not Turner was insane. The point is that nearly every slave hated bondage. Nearly all were eager to see something done to destroy the system.

American History knows how to talk to young readers in a clear and cogent style. Early on, writing about the motives of the English colonizers, Garraty mentions the adventure, honor, and fame that upper-class gentlemen like Raleigh and Gilbert sought, then brings the reader "down to earth" with this weighty paragraph:

> There were more practical, down-to-earth reasons. Many people were out of work in England. Because of a rising demand for woolen cloth, many landowners had stopped farming and begun raising sheep. They fenced in, or enclosed, their fields and planted them in grass for the sheep. This was known as the enclosure movement. Raising sheep took much less labor than growing grain, so many serfs and

> tenants who had farmed the land now had to look for work elsewhere. Some found jobs in the towns. Others wandered about the countryside, often stealing and disturbing the peace. These people, put out of work and home by the enclosure movement, drained strength from England. Perhaps they could be resettled and make useful workers again in American colonies. People who thought this way saw America as a safety valve to get rid of troublemakers and keep English jails from overflowing.

Garraty, who always seems to dominate American History as its main author, is probably at his best when writing about periods of special interest to him. In dealing with the Great Depression, American History s text is replete with examples:

> These cold figures tell us little about the human suffering and discouragement that the Great Depression caused. Thousands of shopkeepers who had worked for years to develop their businesses lost everything. Other thousands of people lost their savings in bank failures. Millions of workers who had risen through the ranks to well-paid jobs found themselves unemployed. Those who had developed skills found that their skills were useless. Students graduating from schools and college could find no one willing to hire them.
>
> The weakest and poorest suffered most. Most married women lost their jobs [illegible] use employers thought they did not need to work. Unemployme[illegible] far higher among blacks and other minority groups than among [illegible]s. In the southwestern states thousands of Mexican-born [illegible]m laborers who were unable to find work were rounded up and shipped back to Mexico.

Reviewers also applauded the book's choice and reproduction of artwork --first rate and often unexpected. Jack Beatty, not a fervent admirer of the book's prose, noted some very effective images: Gilbert Stuart's portrait of James Madison. A desk made by an anonymous Pennsylvania Dutch craftsman which depicts General Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans, a quaint object that tells all one really needs to know about the cult of Jackson in the early Republic. Louis Schultz's portrait of Dred Scott, showing the formidable strength of will possessed by this ordinary man.

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A lithograph of Custer's Last Stand helps a student understand how this grim event came to capture the public's imagination, Beatty notes. A photograph of Jane Addams radiates pity and purpose. Jonas Lie's "Dawn at Culebra" is a splendid Impressionist painting, hinting at the immense engineering task involved in cutting a canal through the Panamanian jungles. A war poster makes the rush to join the colors in 1917 compelling and real. FDR's smile, an American DC-6 flying over the rubble of Berlin during the 1948 airlift, Joseph Welch's eloquent despondency--such photographs are "resonant statements, mirrors to their time and windows on the common past," said Beatty.

The three eighth-grade texts other than American History elicited generally negative comments, first, because of their dreary writing, and second, because their format is so compartmentalized and broken up into skills components that the running text ceases to provide a guiding narrative.

Of the four eighth-grade books under review, Clarence Ver Steeg's American Spirit, designed in accordance with newer social studies strategies, provoked the widest range of criticism and some of the most vituperative responses. Said Robert Nisbet: "Perhaps Professor Ver Steeg actually did write this book--in contrast to general direction of content coupled with veto power. But, on the basis of a cursory survey of some of his scholarly works in the library, I have to conclude that he did not write this book. His style of writing in the scholarly works is for the most part more graceful, more evocative than it is here."

American Spirit, like most other social studies textbooks, is written by committee. Four teacher consultants are listed in the introduction: One is identified as a curriculum specialist; another as an instructional

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coordinator; a third as a teacher/member of the Illinois Commission on the Status of Women; and a fourth as a teacher/consultant, Cockrell Child Parent Center.

If there has ever been any professional relation between any of these four and the field of history, that fact is unreported. So is the answer to the question, who in fact actually wrote the book. "I mean the hard, demanding, crucial work of making words into sentences and sentences into paragraphs which will aid, rather than impede, the reader's interest in American history," Nisbet said. "I have the strong feeling that neither Professor Ver Steeg nor his four 'teacher consultants' wrote the book. Every sign suggests it was assembled by anonymous word processors--human as well as mechanical--working ingloriously in the recesses of the publishing factory, their work--beyond possibility of redemption--to be turned over in the end to the consultants and the nominal author. Every conceivable element of personality, taste, judgment, and character has been removed--or studiously avoided--in order to give it the quality of 'not touched by human hands' that is so prized in the meatpacking industry."

Dick and Jane, rumored to have died from a backlash of alienated young minds, are alive, communicating their special genius to history-book writers, said Nisbet. Consider the very first paragraph of the book:

> In this section you will take a walk through the pages of American Spirit. You will examine the parts that make up your text. You will discover what job each part is meant to do for you. You will see how each part relates to every other part....Start your walkthrough with The Table of Contents. It begins on Page 5. The Table of Contents is a locator and an organizer. As a locator, it tells you where to find any important part of your text. As an organizer, it shows the parts into which your text is divided. Flip through the pages of The Table of Contents. See how the text is divided into large sections called units and into smaller sections called chapters.

Can anyone imagine a more effective way of deadening interest in history or any other subject than by using words and sentences like these, Nisbet asked.

For Nisbet, another troubling aspect of the book was the publisher's unconscious condescension in presenting American history to an adolescent audience. Thus, in a section on Paul Revere, th following anecdote seems more than familiar and finally inappropriate: "Revere suddenly discovered that he had forgotten to bring some cloth to muffle the creaking of the oars. So one of the men stopped at the home of a woman friend and borrowed a petticoat. The petticoat did the job." Nisbet concluded: "The bright will merely yawn and keep searching for something in this book that elicits and evokes, stimulates and exhilarates. Their quest is hopeless."

Reviewer Jean Karl lamented the oversimplified style of this book. For example:

> Many Texans wanted their republic to become a state in the United States. But many members of Congress did not want Texas in the Union. They knew Mexico might fight for it once again. Adding Texas to the Union raised another problem. In 1836 half the country's twenty-four states allowed slavery; the other half did not. Admitting Texas as a slave state would upset that balance and lead to conflict. Statehood would have to wait.

All of this is new, Karl notes. The book has not yet really approached the slavery question and how it divided the nation. Nor has it presented the idea that Congress did not want to go to war with anyone. So what results is a salad bowl of new subjects and ideas, some of them complex, presented in a chain of simple declarative sentences that the authors and consultants probably think of as being quite easy for a reader to read. "But instead it is

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difficult because the ideas are not backed up. And the sentences themselves are dull and easily passed over altogether," said Karl.

The subject matter of American Spirit is heavily weighted toward social history. It repeatedly focuses on minorities such as blacks, women, and native Americans as well as on social reform movements. Thus, Indian Removal in 1830 warrants more attention than the Bank Controversy. South Carolina's nullification of the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 and the consequent constitutional crisis anteceding the Civil War almost disappear, to be replaced by Thomas Gallaudet and Dorothea Dix.

In Ver Steeg's American Spirit, the concept of a central textual narrative seems to have disappeared altogether. Each unit contains a "Lifestyles" chapter, a potpourri of short takes. In one such chapter, for example, Thomas Edison is featured as a hearing-impaired inventor, the Sears, Roebuck and Company catalogue is introduced, Jacob Riis and Charlotte Perkins Gilman make the scene, Booker T. Washington's and W.E.B. Du Bois' improvement programs for blacks come under scrutiny, and Grover Cleveland signs a bill making Labor Day a national holiday. In another, the reader encounters "Sesame Street," Satchel Paige, and Beatlemania.

In addition, American Spirit emphasizes "skills," in keeping with the broad-based pedagogic fashion of the last decade. For example, the text highlights a system called The Decision-Making Process (DICE), by which students identify and choose "options," employing such examples as Frederick Douglass' "decision to try for freedom" and Nez Perce' chief Joseph's decision to make peace with the United States Army and place his tribe on a reservation.

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The study exercises vary in quality. Some of them are ambitious and abstract, also politically charged. Although couched as neutral, some questions seem loaded. The correct student response seems foreordained. For example:

> In 1817 Great Britain and the United States agreed to limit the number of warships on the Great Lakes. Was this a good move? Would it be a good move if the world's nations today could agree on limiting arms and weapons of all kinds?

Other exercises are of mixed interest, successful in the hands of the dextrous teacher, odd or potentially disastrous in the hands of the inept:

> Write a help wanted ad that might have appeared in an American newspaper anytime between 1870 and 1914. The ad should be for a job created by a new discovery, a new invention, or a new industry. Your ad should describe the job and should mention such job needs as experience, training, and work hours. When drawing up your ad, use at least five of the[se] words: energy, communication, invention, corporation, competitor, assembly line, stock, trust, holding company, lab ', union, enterprise.

One reviewer found considerable merit in American Spirit. Children's book author and historian Milton Meltzer called the quality of the writing "better than usual because it leaves room for personality and knows how to take dramatic advantage of conflict." Take the opening lines on the coming of the American Revolution, he notes, illuminating a many-sided approach to that event:

> The war between Great Britain and its North American colonies can be called by several different names. Each nam highlights a different way of viewing the war. The name War for Independence shows the colonies fighting to separate from their parent country. The name American Revolution shows the colonists working toward a new form of government. Called a world war, the fighting in the colonies becomes part of a much larger conflict. In this conflict other European nations were trying to limit the world's most powerful nation--Great Britain.

> The struggle can also be called a civil war, a war among citizens of the same country. British from the homeland fought against British in the colonies. Colonists fought against one another, sometimes, against close neighbors or family members. By the end of the war, about 25,000 colonists--nearly 1 percent of all the people in the colonies--had died in battles, in camps, and as prisoners.

A third book under review, Buggey et al.'s America! America!, has four authors and four reader consultants, notes reviewer David Blight. "Students will certainly not gain a sense of a living author." The running text is impersonal, neutral, committee-written prose. Special features and exercises dominate the book. Its most prevalent feature is a "Developing Skills" section at the end of each of thirty-six chapters.

Indeed, America! America!, like Ver Steeg's text, seems obsessed with building skills, willing to discard content. Some skills exercises are certainly beneficial, such as one on "Using Historical Terms" and another on "Primary and Secondary Sources." But then, seven different exercises focus on "Interpreting Maps," three deal with reading different kinds of graphs, and "Reading for Main Ideas" is distinct from another section by the same title which adds the notion of "Supporting Details." The authors seem to have been groping for skills exercises to tack onto each chapter. "Reading Bar Graphs," "Using Your Library's Card Catalogue," and "Using Reference Books" presented outside the context of actual use are likely to bore the student without offering any redeeming value.

The running text does not bring the book together; nowhere does a backbone exist to organize diverse events. "The chapters overlap in time, but you never know this," said reviewer Jean Karl. "What is here is interesting. But each chapter--and even each section within a chapter--stands on its own. We see only what fits the unit and the chapter. Jefferson as President makes

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the Louisiana Purchase and doesn't do much else. Jackson wins at New Orleans and is heralded as the people's president, but that is it. Monroe makes his doctrine. Madison can't stave off the War of 1812. Harrison wins at Tippecanoe. Elections come and go, but we know nothing of them. Cause and effect is sometimes briefly stated, if it fits. If it doesn't fit, it isn't there. Relationships between events in different chapters are sometimes pointed out, but more often not. History is like a series of short disjointed sentences."

The remaining eighth-grade text received even more negative reactions from the panel. Drewry et al.'s America Is offended universally for its undiluted dullness. "This is surely one of the most boring textbooks in the field," said reviewer Milton Meltzer. For some reviewers, the book epitomized the problems evident in other books under review at the eighth-grade level, especially in its committee-written prose assembled by a staff with no apparent training in history and in its "skills" orientation that stresses process instead of content.

According to Meltzer, the preface promises much--to present "the needs, wants, hopes, and choices" of the American people so that the student will understand "the connections among people, events, and ideas." But, he says, the "life of Americans is the very thing lacking in the text. The language is dead: one fact dragging after another in simple sentences that have no color of life or surprise. It is 800 pages of sawdust."

Consider, said Meltzer, a typical paragraph, in this case about the Western frontier:

> Life on the frontier was hard and rugged. There were no luxuries, fine manners, or fancy clothes. Most frontier settlers lived

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isolated lives....Families had to rely on themselves for their material and spiritual needs. They cleared their own land and built their own one-room cabins. They made their furniture, raised their food, and made most of their clothes. There were no schools, and children had little formal education. Frontier families were usually very large. Children had regular duties on the farm and in the home.

Of America Is, reviewer Jean Karl said: "It has no drama and very little human interest. It is facts, facts, facts, all stated in the most mundane fashion. In fact, it reads more like an outline than a completed work." The problems begin with sentence structure, according to Karl. "The sentences are short and stubby. They have no rhythm and no color. One declarative sentence marches after another with little change of pace."

Consider the entire account of the Lewis and Clark expedition:

Very little was known about the area west of the Mississippi River. In 1804, President Jefferson sent a United States Army expedition under Captain Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark to explore the new territory. During their travels, they hired Sacajawea, a Shoshoni Indian, and her husband Charbonneau, a French fur trapper, to guide them. The group with Lewis and Clark made its way up the Missouri River and into the wilderness beyond. After crossing the Rocky Mountains, the expedition traveled down the Columbia River, reaching the Pacific Ocean in 1805. Lewis and Clark returned to St. Louis in 1806, bringing with them valuable facts about the lands west of the Mississippi. A whole new frontier was opened to American settlement.

"There is no grace and charm in this writing," Karl reiterated. "It is simply fact after fact. And not the most interesting facts at that."

To use another example:

President Wilson felt he had good reason for using force in the Caribbean. But his use of force did not please the people of Latin America. Mexico had gone through several revolutions. In February 1913, the president of Mexico, Francisco Madero, was killed by agents of General Victoriano Huerta, the leader of the army in Mexico City. Huerta then made himself president of Mexico.

"There is no excuse for the material being written in this fashion," Karl concluded. "A little effort would have produced something that made sense."

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VI. FINDINGS: High School Textbooks

Boorstin, Daniel J. and Brooks Mather Kelley. A History of the United States. Lexington, Massachusetts: Ginn and Company, 1986.

Bragdon, Henry W. and Samuel P. McCutchen. History of a Free People. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1981.

Davidson, James West and Mark H. Lytle. The United States: A History of the Republic. Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1986.

Todd, Lewis Paul and Merle Curti. Triumph of the American Nation. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1986.

It is ironic that the American social studies textbooks that contain the best examples of effective history writing are not likely to be used by a large percentage of high-school students.

Of the four American history books considered at the high-school level, none should be taken as universal fare in a required high-school social studies program. In contrast to fifth- and eighth-grade students, who all study some form of U.S. history in social studies courses, many high-school juniors and seniors can complete their diploma requirement in social studies by taking courses with no history component. Virtually all academically tracked, college-bound high-school students take an authentic two-term American history course. Other students are tracked (or probably closer to the

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mark, track themselves) toward civics, speech, psychology, health, and other general courses to satisfy stated social studies requirements.

The four high-school history textbooks surveyed in this repo are uniformly more sophisticated than fifth- and eighth-grade fare. Less constrained as to readability, assuming some general cultural and geographic knowledge among readers, each of the four books serves as a creditable guide to the terrain of American history. The writing is professional. History has reasons.

Several reviewers familiar with the plight of history and the humanities in the nation's schools registered pleasant surprise at the quality of the books at this level. The stylistic atrocities and butchered historical narrative disagreeable to the panelists at the fifth- and eighth-grade levels were not so blatant or disturbing. Yet problems observed in lower-grade-level textbooks extended to the high end of social studies. The greatest problem observed was publishers' felt pressure for wide "coverage" and "mentioning," resulting in the tendency for textbooks to read more like catalogues and almanacs than as narratives.

Todd and Curti's Triumph of the American Nation is a classic leader in the high-school market. It has existed for decades in various incarnations. The current edition has been assembled by a committee of consultants. The textbook, referred to by its nominal authors, is in fact a nationally known brand name, 1060 pages long, owned by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Twenty-seven pages are required to complete the table of contents alone, where Roberto Clemente and Woodrow Wilson, Sarah Winnemucca and Claude Pepper are parts of an endless list of units and chapter titles, vignettes,

biographies, and primary source materials. This cluttered format, to be found in most of the textbooks reviewed, elicited complaints from reviewers, who jointly considered this text less satisfactory than at least two of the other books inspected in this assessment. The reviewers tended to agree that Todd and Curti's book suffered from a compulsion to "mention" at the expense of weaving a national story.

Todd and Curti is broken up into many sub-sections: "Americana" includes profiles from Andrew Jackson's Hermitage to the Selective Service System; "American Profiles" presents short biographies; "Decisive Moments" does short takes on putative turning points in American history from the invention of the cotton gin to the banning of DDT. The book has a recurring section called "This Changing Land" that treats economic and geographic topics in elegant and original ways. Extensive sections explain how to develop history study skills. Documents from the Magna Carta to Martin Lurther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech are highlighted with glossaries. Charts, tables, graphs, time lines, maps, demographic data, views from space, and federal operations paradigms are all included: The sophistication of the package is exhausting.

Individually some of these short takes are very effective. The problem is that the student is ultimately distracted from the narrative by a crazy quilt of distractions and one-liners. "There are too many commercial breaks in the show, too many stop signs in the road," reviewer David Blight said. In one textual sequence, for example, a chapter starts with the Second Continental Congress and the opening battles of the Revolution. Meanwhile, Patrick Henry asks for liberty or death, while on the opposite page a thumbnail sociology lesson describes the problem of aging in the 1980s. The drama of the Minutemen

at Concord Bridge segues to a graph projecting population changes up to the year 2030.

In the running text, the glacial, mandarin voice that Frances Fitz Gerald claimed had disappeared from textbook writing remains. The writing committee has conducted its affairs here prudently, bloodlessly. As panelist William Chafe pointed out, "The writing is competent above all else. No drama, no excitement. Not passionate or evocative. But readable, fluid, and calm."

Todd and Curti include the name of virtually every explorer from Columbus to Vespucci. But the reader does not receive much sense of who Columbus was nor of the great drama of his voyage. As panelist Kenneth Jackson did, it is instructive to compare the renditions of the tale of Christopher Columbus by two leading texts, Todd and Curti and a second high-school textbook examined by this review, A History of the United States by Daniel Boorstin and Brooks Mather Kelley.

According to Todd and Curti:

> While Portuguese sailors were exploring the African coast, an Italian named Christopher Columbus set out in 1492 under the flag of Spain on the first of four great voyages. Convinced that the earth was round, a knowledge shared by many informed people of the day, Columbus believed that if he sailed far enough to the west, he would reach Asia. In trying to prove his point, Columbus made a key contribution to what has been called the Geographic Revolution ....The expedition led by Columbus included three small ships, the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. The able crew of these ships were mainly Spaniards.

Now, Boorstin and Kelley play the same scene:

> [Columbus] altered the records of distances they had covered so the crew would not think they had gone too far from home. He convinced them to go on. Still, on October 9, Columbus agreed that if they did not find land in three days, he would turn back. But by

> then there were more and more signs of land--birds in the air, leaves and flowers in the water.

By the reviewers' consensus, Boorstin and Kelley's A History of the United States was the most literate and effective narrative of the eleventh-grade ooks surveyed. Why? It should be noted that this particular textbook--as in the case of classic college-level texts and Advanced Placement-type high-school textbooks--emerges less from the hand of a committee and more from the authors themselves, who maintained an active and executive position in its creation, reportedly much to the consternation of the publisher.

The voice of the authors resonates with vivid description, active narrative, and strong point of view. In contrast to Todd and Curti, Boorstin and Kelley make textual narrative the book's primary focus. Some writing is quite dazzling. In the case of Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe in 1519-22, for example, the student encounters a tale full of courage, glory, and tragedy. Cape Horn was a "perilous, twisting, mountain-lined waterway" which took five weeks to traverse. The voyage was "frightening" to the crews, caused mutinies, and forced dying sailors to eat "mouldy biscuits which swarmed with worms" and to chew "leather of the rigging and...[eat] sawdust." Magellan himself was "hacked to death" in a petty skirmish in the Philippines. But one ship with eighteen sailors made it back to Spain. The Pacific Ocean had been discovered, conquered, and named. In a few lines, the authors manage to invoke the Age of Exploration's romance and pathos.

Jumping ahead four centuries, a similar air of drama circulates around the Watergate scandal. Boorstin and Kelley do not shun conflict. The break-in at Democratic headquarters in the Watergate apartment complex represented only

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part of "a series of illegal acts" by the President and his advisers. The tapes demonstrated "hat Nixon had lied all along when he knew of the cover-up and that he had, in fact, personally ordered the cover-up," the authors conclude. The whys of history, so often evaded or treated circuitously in other textbooks, are prominently displayed in this text.

Boorstin and Kelley's lively writing style arouses and provokes. Thoughout the text, as reviewer Kenneth Jackson pointed out, the authors utilize topic sentences cleverly to hook the reader into the unit, chapter, and section. For example: "The discovery of America was the world's greatest surprise" or "At the time of the War of 1812, it took 75 days for a fully loaded wagon pulled by four horses to travel the 1000 miles from Worcester, Massachusetts to Charleston, South Carolina. Letters and news traveled little faster. Could any union last if its people and their produce were so hard to bring together?" or "FDR was the greatest frierd of organized labor who ever lived in the White House."

The authors, according to Jackson, also convince students that the text has meaning for them: "This is a book about us," it begins. At the same time it lays out a theme: "We must discover what puzzled and interested and troubled earlier Americans. What has been especially American about our ways of living and earning a living? Our ways of making war and peace? Our ways of thinking and hoping and fearing, of worshiping God and fighting the Devil? Our ways of traveling and politicking, of importing people, of building houses and cities? These are some of the questions we try to answer in this book."

The deliberate use of parallel construction as a drumbeat to alert the reader is representative of the carefully orchestrated arrangement of words and phrases. Written in a conversational tone, the prose mixes literary grace

with immediacy and warmth. It is dressed in flesh and blood, benefiting from the insertion of delicious details:

> Someone said that no one could really be as great a man as [Daniel] Webster seemed to be. He was not only one of the nation's most skillful lawyers, but in the style of his time he was a tireless orator. He had a rich, deep voice and held his audience spellbound. His high forehead, thick eyebrows, burning eyes, and powe ful form made him overwhelming and impressive in debate--a "great cannon loaded to his lips," Ralph Waldo Emerson called him.

Or:

> Wearing a high stiff collar, he [Hoover] was a stiff man who inspired respect but not love. He had none of William Jennings Bryan's eloquence, nor any of Theodore Roosevelt's pep.

The authors are equally adept at recapturing the drama of the moment, again with the lavish use of description as in the account of the Jefferson Day dinner of 1830, when rumblings of a South Carolina-led secession plagued the nation:

> When Jackson was invited to the celebration he realized that if the evening went off as Calhoun [of South Carolina] and his friends had planned, it might menace the stability of the Union. So he carefully prepared a toast to deliver at the dinner. When he was called on, he lifted his glass, looked at Calhoun, and proposed, "Our Union, it must be preserved." The Vice-President rose with the rest of the audience and drank the toast, but his hand trembled visibly....The news of the dinner and of Jackson's toast was soon out, and a wave of nationalism swept the country. Calhoun was observed in the Senate looking "crinkled and careworn."

These behind-the-scenes views are sprinkled throughout the text and breathe life into what could have been cardboard overviews. They often allow the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. For example:

> Then President Wilson made his fatal decision to appeal directly to the American people. In early September, 1919, though already ill in health, he traveled 8000 miles, visited 29 cities, and gave 40 speeches in 22 days. At Pueblo, Colorado, he collapsed and had to be taken back to the White House. There he suffered a stroke. For nearly eight months he could not even meet his Cabinet. Edith

> Wilson, his wife, carried messages back and forth from everbody else to the President. It was never quite clear which messages actually reached him.

As this passage indicates, statistics are well placed throughout the text to establish credibility. They indicate to the reader that the authors have done their homework and know what they are talking about; yet an overabundance of statistics does not numb the reader's ability to draw meaning from them. In speaking of the contribution of blacks in the Civil War, Todd and Curti merely state: During the war more than 2 million soldiers, including 186,000 blacks, served in the Union forces." Boorstin and Kelley give more specifics:

> In time, more than 185,000 blacks were enlisted in the Northern armed forces. And some 38,000 were to die from sickness or wounds... They did all sorts of things--a small number were officers of black units, some were spies in the South, many were laborers or garrison troops. They showed their bravery in battle, for example in July 1863, when the 54th Massachusetts charged Fort Wagner outside Charleston, South Carolina. Black troops had the satisfaction of being present when the war came to an end at Appomattox Court House.

And there are memorable vignettes that bring the past vividly alive as in the account of the Deerfield Massacre that took place "one cold night in February 1704," when "300 inhabitants of the frontier village of Deerfield, Massachusetts were sound asleep":

> Suddenly the silence was broken by French and Indian war cries. Within a few hours 50 settlers were dead and 17 of their houses burnt to the ground. One hundred and eleven settlers (including the town's minister, John Williams, his wife, Eunice, and one of his children) were taken prisoner. Eunice Williams, weakened by recent childbirth, could not keep up with the group as they hastened north through the winter snow. She and others who fell behind were tomahawked and left to die.

What are the summary qualities in A History of the United States that make it, if not exactly an easy read, a superior example of textbook history

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writing? Its running text is dominant and uncompromised by ancillary sections. Artistry in word choice and skill in sentence structure are often combined to give insight into both human achievements and frailties. The movement of history seems to take place in imaginable settings, made graphic through artful description. The authors evoke the flavor of differing American regions and interests, especially in the nineteenth-century chapters. The graphics are luscious without being overwhelming. The narrative moves briskly, especially through the Colonial and early national periods, devoting half of its 880 pages to the twentieth century.

Henry Bragdon and Samuel McCutchen's History of a Free People is a third leading American history textbook, another classic that, like Todd and Curti, has been in high school history classrooms for decades. Like Boorstin and Kelley's book, this text elicited favorable reactions from the review panel. While the format is slightly old-fashioned (that is to say, not as slick as newer entries into the market), its clarity is comforting.

Bragdon and McCutchen is written in a style and voice more elementary than either Todd and Curti or Boorstin and Kelley, yet with a flair for the illuminating example and the no-nonsense explanation. The book is "never condescending," noted reviewer Robert Nisbet, praising the voice of the authors contained in the narrative. "It is intellectually impressive both for its level and its stylistic strengths in making a high level assimilable, written in a relaxed and idiomatic prose that never diminishes or cheapens, or for that matter inflates."

The most winning qualities of History of a Free People, according to several reviewers, included simplicity, a sense of restraint, honesty, and a textual legibility that the reader is likely to find intellectually sound and

emotionally welcoming. Four-color graphics are eschewed, used only occasionally. Almost all the photographs in the book are in black and white. For this reason alone, the running text stands out and has a prominence missing from other books reviewed. Maps, tables, and charts are easy to understand--and full of illuminating statistical material.

Bragdon and McCutchen's text has horsepower. To use one example:

> After Lee's defeat at Antietam in 1862, Lincoln announced that he would free the slaves of the Confederacy at the start of the next year. On January 1, 1863, he issued the famous Emancipation Proclamation, acting under his authority as Commander in Chief. This document did not immediately free a single slave, since it applied only to those areas behind Confederate lines. An English editor remarked that the principle behind it "is not that a human being cannot justly own another, but that he cannot own him unless he is loyal to the United States."

The authors' eye for the telling quotation is sharp. And they are willing to use quotations to make a point. Thus, for example, they include writer Robert Sherwood's assessment of Franklin Roosevelt:

> Being a writer by trade, I tried continually to study him, to try to look beyond his charming and amusing and warmly affectionate surface into his heavily forested interior. But I never understood what was going on in there....He could be a ruthless politician, but he was the champion of friends and associates who for him were political liabilities...and of causes which apparently competent observers assured him would be political suicide. He could appear to be utterly cynical, worldly, illusionless, and yet his religious faith was the strongest and most mysterious force that was in him.

In treatment of religion, some reviewers singled out History of a Free People for special attention. Robert Nisbet, for example, noted the adroit comparative treatment of the American and French revolutions, giving special attention to their differences in handling religious toleration. And contrary to the content of some texts, religion does not disappear from the American scene about the time of the Civil War: Bragdon and McCutchen note directly

that John Kennedy's Roman Catholicism was a political issue in the election of 1960, as it had been for Al Smith in 1928.

If History of a Free People is slightly old-fashioned, the fourth high-school American history textbook reviewed, James Davidson and Mark Lytle's The United States, is distinctly conscious of new trends in textbook content and format. The book is extremely visually appealing. The running text is broken into subsections, units, and sidebars. New dramatis personae appear in the book's evident reach to include new groups.

In one respect The United States benefits from its contemporary approach. Its reviewers remarked on the successes of the book's final unit, "The United States in a Changing World." This section of the book sketches the main currents of recent American politics, economic development, and culture with balance and taste. In considering earlier sections of the book, the same reviewers commented on the lack of energy and sparkle in the book's prose, the result of the loss of individuals in the nation's saga.

Davidson and Lytle's passions are thematic. Groups are presented with panoramic fanfare. Women, blacks, native Americans, industrial workers, and others are highlighted in ways that arguably deform the record in order to make points of representation. Some resulting historiography is dreary indeed:

> By 1910 women held nearly one fourth of all jobs in the United States. Although the majority of women working outside the home were employed as maids and cooks, more and more were moving into office jobs, factory work, and professions such as teaching and nursing.

So anxious is the book to make such points that discerning adult readers become conscious that individuals are reduced to one dimension, of real interest only as part of a collectivity or movement. Characters exist as part

of a group suffering at the hands of the majority. Groups are often treated in a cheerleading style that flatters and panders. Conversely, noted reviewer Kenneth Jackson: "In meeting the key people who shaped our country, we are often times only introduced to them by name, shake their hands, and move on."

In places, the text's historiography hinders the advancement of historical understanding. For example, the period from 1777 to 1787 is presented as "an experimental era": one of progressive educational reforms (e.g., female academies), of "concern for equality" in an environment where "efforts to dissolve social class barriers proved successful," of black ministers preaching to white congregations, of a polity where "the idealism of the revolution further encouraged Americans to try to improve the lives of their fellow human beings." In The United States, Texas cowboys, World War I soldiers, and Civilian Conservation Corps surveyors are represented by blacks. In its index, Women's Rights is a longer entry than the Revolutionary War. Native Americans is a longer entry than the New Deal, Supreme Court, Constitution, Farmers, or England.

As a result, Davidson and Lytle's book is sensitive to minorities and illuminates their presence in the American past. But such adaptations can only go so far until they dispatch prevailing figures in the nation's history --mainly white Protestant males of property--and substitute new symbolic individuals. We lose Captain Lawrence on the Chesapeake in 1813 crying, "Don't give up the ship," his final order as he was carried below, fatally wounded, before the capture of his ship by the British frigate Shannon. Instead, we meet Maria Mitchell, a nineteenth-century astronomer; Susie King Taylor, a black Union army nurse during the Civil War; Martha Jane Cannary Burke

(Calamity Jane); and Florence Kelley, founder of the National Consumers' League.

No doubt that Mitchell, Taylor, Burke, and Kelley all played parts in a vast, complex national history. But what is at risk in this kind of approach is the loss or diminution of the flesh-and-blood people--individuals larger than life--who have directed the political, diplomatic, military, and economic destinies of the nation.

The strain on history writing that the new social studies historiography brings to the subject is obvious: When all human action is reduced to mere trend, class conflict, or group activity, when sociological jargon creeps in, clothed as "scientific" and "objective," when truth begins to twist to fit ideology, history writing become feeble and unfetching. If erstwhile national heroes and leaders are deemed unimportant or "revised" into an oppressor class, evil or merely self-interested, it is doubtful that students will admire and want to protect the polity and culture that these people so energetically created. Young people, deprived of a story, and a glorious one, may learn to dislike reading history, and conceivably, dislike reading about their nation's past.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The precise degree to which history and social studies textbooks affect what students learn and remember about the nation's past cannot be known. Their impact defies quantification. Because textbooks' direct and indirect influence is uncertain, some education scholars claim their influence to be minimal. These scholars may characterize textbook controversies as mere political circuses, where adults ventilate their prejudices, superstitions, political agendas, and utopian desires, an exercise in which truth is a secondary concern.

Such attitudes ignore some realities of teaching and learning. The American history textbook is a necessary classroom authority on the national past, shaping the way teachers and students think about it. For good or bad, teachers rely almost exclusively on a single, comprehensive textbook as the chief medium of instruction. For undereducated and ignorant teachers, it is a crutch. To many teachers and almost all students, the textbook is taken to be a well of truthful and expert information. It creates a convenient armature on which the unpublished curriculum hangs. The examples, episodes, anecdotes,

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viewpoints, information, and data that a textbook contains will constitute the essential corpus of American history in the classroom where it is used.

Despite repeated efforts over the past generation to introduce new methods and diverse curricular materials, social studies teachers continue to depend heavily on textbooks as their major source of course content. The textbook strongly influences not only what students learn but also their very attitude toward learning. A boring textbook signals to students that the subject is boring; a vivid and imaginative textbook will convey the subject differently, in ways more likely to motivate students to pursue further understanding of their nation and society.

Textbooks are constructed and written as they are mainly for teachers, the products' adult consumers. Teachers, elementary and secondary, ordinarily face a range of subjects and responsibilities not conducive to original class planning. Their job may include signing vaccination certificates or coaching athletic teams. For teachers, the textbook gives security. It provides a reference with expertise few teachers possess; it organizes material into digestible units around topics that give some logic, direction, and explanation to the material. It creates sequentially organized episodes to give texture to the past.

The textbook is a timesaver, a prepackaged "delivery system" that helps conserve teachers' time and energy. The ancillary tools of a textbook "program" may include workbooks, questions and test items, vocabulary words, key concept lists, and activity suggestions, sometimes packaged in a conceptually integrated series. Textbooks themselves contain ingenious, sometimes distracting exercises that learning specialists believe help extend skills and decision-making.

American history and social studies textbooks are the official portraits of the past that adults hand to the next generation. Because they are the printed chronicles of the polity, economy, and culture, they are of special interest to political philosophers, journalists, intellectuals, and others. They are unable to be neutral in the way Latin or algebra texts can be, although the attempt to make them so may embalm subject matter and destroy style.

As the textbook conveys information, it also sets a tone through its prose. It will sound a certain way through the words, phrases, and sentence systems selected. The writing may be simple or complex, wooden or vivid, flat or evocative, utilitarian or stylish, relativistic or editorial.

American history textbooks today, notably at the elementary and intermediate levels, strive for simple, inoffensive prose that often lacks the qualities of good literature and fine history. These textbooks may be effective reference materials. They are not compilations aimed at drawing in and exciting the reader through vital treatment of subject.

What follow are summary conclusions about American history textbooks, reflecting the points that the panelists repeatedly stressed in their reviews and critiques of the literature. These points attempt to identify opportunities for improvement in the field at large:

1. THE PHYSICAL SIZE AND WEIGHT OF TEXTBOOKS DISCOURAGE ENTHUSIASM FOR THEIR CONTENTS.

From whatever angle they pursued their analyses, the reviewers all stressed the sheer size of the books, daunting, fearsome, and intimidating, even to the child or teenager drawn to reading. "No one will ever curl up, cuddle up with one of these behemoths," concluded Robert Nisbet with some exasperation. "Perhaps the schools insist upon such weight as a means of discouraging pupils from ever taking a book home to read, and thus risking loss." Milton Meltzer asked the central question: "How can we expect a boy or girl to plunge into such forbidding books with any enthusiasm?"

The first consideration for several reviewers was how to slim down American history texts from the 800 to 1,100 pages customary at the junior- and senior-high-school levels. In Europe, by contrast, with its fuller fabric of history, school history texts generally weigh no more than one pound and are no larger than five by eight inches. Robert Nisbet suggested a two-pound maximum weight and five-by-eight-inch maximum size as a precondition to all other reforms. Concluded Bryce Lyon: "Big is not better. A small book forces the author to be economical in his writing, to include only material that is important, and to integrate the material into an intelligent synthesis. Since almost always the small book will be better written, it will more readily grip the student's interest."

Reviewers agreed that textbook quality cannot be judged solely on appearances. They considered what lay between those shiny covers with the photographs of eagles, astronauts, or the Manhattan skyline. Said Lyon:

"When one begins to read these textbooks, it is soon obvious that size and weight are the least of their problems."

2. THE PROSE STYLE OF MOST TEXTBOOKS IS BLAND AND VOICELESS.

The quality of writing in textbooks reviewed varied considerably by individual text. High-school histories tended to be far superior to lower-level books as instruments of vivid historical writing, according to the reviewers. Still, the overall literary style of the textbooks assessed fell well short of the mark. "The books are universally bland, repetitious, fact filled, and deadly in their lack of attempts to stimulate and catch the interest of the audience," said reviewer Joan Grady.

Reviewers found textbooks generally to be mere catalogues of factual material about the past, not sagas peopled with heroic and remarkable individuals engaged in exciting and momentous events. Textbooks, using the social sciences to be more scientific and objective, scale down the historian's voice, which is said to be prejudicial. They tend to minimize the role of the individual in history, preferring to concentrate on larger cultural groupings and movements.

Textbook writing is processed--written by consultant and committee--to make it "readable," with a low enough "concept load" to make it saleable. Especially at the lower levels, the review indicates, full-bodied narrative and storytelling have nearly disappeared. Textbook prose hesitates to give a vivid impression of reality. Literary evocations and calling up feelings can cause adoption-related controversies, even though narrative voice is the quintessential ingredient in all good history writing. The <u>dramatis personae</u>

of American history are disappearing, to be replaced by broad collective forces and trends. The result is a curiously disembodied style of history that describes what happened but not why. History has an eerie, random quality, far removed from the life of the reader. Many students, introduced to history and their nation's past this way, are likely to think of both as an inexorable process over which individual citizens have no control.

In American history textbooks, the prose tends to be discursive, wandering aimlessly from one subject to another, piling event upon event with little hint of significance. At the paragraph and unit levels, many texts suffer from epidemic non sequiturs. When stories do exist, they sometimes fall flat. To many reviewers, stories (often artificially placed in special sections and short takes) often seemed banal, lame, cute, or condescending. As putative spice, with a smarmy believe-it-or-not tone, startling or bizarre details are stitched to the narrative. Believe-It-or-Not! and Gee Whiz! gimmicks are too often the rule. These devices seem a poor substitute for rich, symphonic, directed, energetic storytelling that carries a narrative through time and space.

"The sense of drama and majesty that enthralls readers of Samuel Eliot Morison, Bernard DeVoto, Catherine Drinker Bowen, Barbara Tuchman, and even Gore Vidal is simply not here," noted reviewer Anne Morgan. Added Jean Karl: "Ease of reading does not come from simple words and simple sentences alone." A book should have enough explanation for real understanding, Karl said. "Even fifth-graders are entitled to graceful writing, rhythm that emphasizes meaning, examples that clarify events, and enough cause and effect, and enough integration of material to grasp what really happened and not just have to memorize an event that has no meaning."

3. EXCESSIVE COVERAGE MAKES TEXTBOOKS BORING.

The ideal degree of coverage in a comprehensive history textbook creates inevitable controversies, since competent teachers disagree among themselves on the relative merit of the survey and postholing approaches. Both have value, of course. Unfortunately, many teachers who oppose full-bodied surveys seek to avoid some area of history or want to shrink historical coverage altogether. Too readily, biographical, constitutional, military, electoral, and economic units slide from the main plate, to be replaced by ahistorical subjects such as sociology, anthropology, and global education.

All the reviewers in this assessment worry about course dilution and are committed to sturdy, fact-oriented, demanding courses in history. Still, they found textbook coverage to be extravagant, partly as the result of publishers' efforts to please as wide an audience as possible. Many textbooks, reviewers noted, were most effective as almanacs, encyclopedias, and reference guides. The mere mention of a person or event, they agreed, did not necessarily guarantee substance and fullness.

In introductory texts, some mention of less than scintillating, even secondary events is inevitable. But in American history textbooks, names and episodes dart past like telephone poles seen from the window of a swift-moving train. Part of the problem lies with publishers' growing reluctance to make choices and value judgments that might offend some individual or group. Publishers quake at the the thought of slighting powerful pressure groups and--with an eye on market volume--make an extreme effort to include something for everybody.

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Many inherently lively subjects are subject to differing interpretations: What should be written about the many-splendored religious sects and movements, capitalists and financiers, labor unions and ideological movements, social classes and minorities, let alone politicians with their strengths and frailties? All may appear in the textbook, but only in a neutral grey zone where they receive little criticism and not too much credit for their achievements. So dramatic people and events walk onto the stage of history, as Bryce Lyon noted, "say nothing or scarcely anything, quickly do their thing, and then abruptly disappear."

4. GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS CONTRIBUTES TO FLAWED TEXTBOOK WRITING.

Coverage may appease sensitive clients, including those for whom textbook content is an extension of a broader political battle. Textbook reform efforts are often conducted by individuals and associations who believe themselves to be aggrieved by past events in American history, who feel slighted or underrepresented in historical scholarship, or who are unhappy with court decisions, with elections, with distribution of national income, with secular trends, and more. These people often believe that, by rewriting history textbooks, they can both alter the past and shape the future toward their own greater interests.

All the books reviewed exhibit the group consciousness that has so affected our sense of the past during the last generation. Christopher Columbus has not left the scene, but women and blacks are two new groups prominent in the American history textbook. The statesmen, military heroes, and treaty makers that seemed to dominate the pages of history books twenty-five years ago have given way to new characters. The new groups can be

incorporated into the larger parade of American history with integrity and even passion. In some cases the textbooks reviewed do so admirably. The stories of Clara Barton, Booker T. Washington, and Custer's Last Stand endure. Items like Plessy v. Ferguson and the Seneca Falls resolutions have gained deserved prominence.

But in some cases the textbooks' effort to focus on women, blacks, Indians, and other groups is superficial, forced, and occasionally ridiculous. Trivial examples and strained statements crowd out significant and exciting political, economic, or cultural events in order to engage in a kind of textual affirmative action. Some textbooks, especially at the fifth- and eighth-grade levels, simplify complex human struggles into cases of base exploitation and victimization. In many textbooks, the selection of evidence, at least to a discerning adult, seems to favor minority groups. In inferior textbooks, especially at the lower-grade-levels, the tone of writing and analysis can be strictly bleeding heart, a dull Manichaean morality tale with human figures made of cardboard.

On this score, some textbooks fare more honestly than others. But to some degree all American textbooks suffer from efforts to appease group pressures for flattering representation. "The reader is often very conscious of the particular persuasions of the authors in what they choose to include, exclude, extrapolate upon, or slight," reviewer Kenneth Jackson said. "Authors stretch themselves to the point of losing credibility."

5. TEXTBOOK FORMAT AND GRAPHICS DIMINISH THE STYLE AND COHERENCE OF THE RUNNING TEXT.

The running text is the skeletal and muscular system of a textbook. This basic narrative comprised perhaps ninety percent of textbook content a generation ago. To be television-competitive and engaging, as well as to concentrate on skill development, textbook publishers have altered this convention, substituting endless photographs, diagrams, charts, boxes, subunits, study exercises, skills applications, and so on, especially in lower-grade-level textbooks. The result is that the textual qualities of the history book are reduced to a bloodless subset of a workbook, a mere reading sample by which to test reading comprehension and other practical skills.

"Even fairly readable narrative was constantly being interrupted with theme sentences set apart in bold type and encased in multicolored boxes. Texts are riddled with headings and subheadings. All these organizational intrusions are intended to help students retain information. But they definitely impede the train of ideas and thought. Brilliantly colored illustrations, maps, charts, graphs, political cartoons. profiles, and other vignettes are additionally distracting," noted reviewer Anne Morgan sagely, concluding that contemporary textbook format was "a triumph of the layout artist and the graphic designer."

The American history textbook's glitz and atomization detract from the potential adventure of the written story. "A text should not be a silent television to be enjoyed along with a Coke and a bag of popcorn," Bryce Lyon said. Sometimes the accessories are tasteful and smart: The reviewers commented on the dignity and flair of Boorstin and Kelley's A History of the United States and Garraty et al.'s American History. Overall, great strides have been made to make textbooks attractive to kids. But this is the

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attractiveness associated with cereal boxes, not Morison, Commager, and Leuchtenburg's The Growth of the American Republic and other literary texts.

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Too often, it seems, the organization of newer American history textbooks unconsciously reflects the declining power of the national history to inflame the imagination and capture the awe of common citizens. This trend may be explained by the sheer narcissism of a culture ignorant of the fact that it stands on the shoulders of giants--of civilizations long past--that have shed much blood and spilled much ink to help create the generally salutary ideas, institutions, and conditions of the American present. The review panel involved with this report, despite differing critiques of the literature, hopes that these historic efforts have not been in vain and will be part of the next generation's legacy.

VIII. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment inspected eleven leading American history and social studies textbooks from a literary and historiographic viewpoint. It found that many of them lack a lively writing style, a strong narrative line, and voice. Too often texts are overwhelmed by graphics in a misguided attempt to catch and hold the attention of television-addicted children and adolescents. The report suggests that, as a result of the efforts of various pressure groups, key elements in the many-sided panorama of American history are watered down, distorted, or evaded entirely. The assessment encountered excellent writing and strong textbooks among those surveyed, especially at the eleventh-grade level. It also found compelling evidence of cowardice, commercialism, condescension, and crassness in the writing and publishing of far too many American history textbooks.

Now what? The following recommendations might lead to substantial and overdue improvements in the writing and publishing of textbooks. They follow with a caveat: The probability of broad-gauged textbook reform is slight as long as publishers face the market forces and selection committees face the

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political cyclones that blow around them. The road to the practices recommended below is steep and inclement:

1. SCALE DOWN THE SIZE OF TEXTBOOKS.

Smaller textbooks would result in less formidable, more manageable volumes. In cutting the number and size of pages, authors and staff writers would be forced to be more selective, focusing on central episodes of the nation's past and presenting them to juvenile readers with greater acuity. Forbidding comprehensive textbooks used for one grade might be broken down by subject or era into multiple small-bound books, each of which could have more focus and a stronger narrative seam.

2. REDEDICATE TEXTBOOKS TO THE TEXT.

The fine illustrations and graphics that decorate textbooks help enhance student knowledge. But their overabundance distracts from the continuity of reading and persuades the student to become a mere viewer. The textbook should focus on text, with any pictorial material and study exercises acting in an ancillary capacity. Graphics should help to make historical reading more exciting and rewarding, magnifying the text, not trying to replace or compete with it.

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3. HIRE BETTER TEXTBOOK WRITERS.

Research indicates that revising texts in accordance with the principles of good writing can markedly improve comprehension. Textbook publishers should make a point of engaging historians and other writers who can and want to create vivid histories with voice and energy. Texts should be written by talented teachers and scholars, not by social studies professionals and ghost writers who often lack any sense of history and are often antagonistic to it. Style makes a text hum. Textbook reform efforts should concentrate on enlivening passages, making them less impersonal and providing more human drama. Textbook historiography should abandon readability formulas that can dumb material down. In fact, it should welcome complex sentences and challenging vocabulary, where appropriate, as such writing can expand both comprehension of the subject and appreciation of literature.

4. EMPHASIZE PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS.

Publishers should expand textbook sections in order to highlight autobiographies, diaries, slave narratives, inaugural addresses, great speeches, landmark documents, and manifestoes. Instead of making do with mere skills exercises that demonstrate the role of key documents in historical inquiry, textbooks should feature primary materials in ways that ensure careful reading and stimulate discussion of their significance.

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5. SET MINORITY GROUP ISSUES INTO HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

Textbooks should not minimize or disparage majoritarian issues and concerns in ill-considered efforts at textual affirmative action. They should not act as cheerleaders for minorities and special causes at the expense of the central stories that mark the nation's political and economic development. Textbooks should not conduct morality plays in which historical narrative is reduced to a struggle of individuals and groups against a sinister establishment. Conversely, textbooks should face historical conflicts and tensions squarely, outlining them in strong and dramatic prose, not shrinking from class, religious, racial, or gender controversies for fear of giving offense to potential book buyers.

6. INITIATE TEXTBOOK REVIEW BY INDEPENDENT SOURCES.

While textbooks are "criticized" by diverse individuals with strong opinions and political ends, no authoritative review system exists to allow historians and knowledgeable scholars to flag dull, incoherent, or mediocre texts. Journals, magazines, and leading metropolitan newspapers should review textbooks as they do trade and scholarly books. An organized system of textbook review should originate, whereby leading historians, scholars, and teachers can evaluate the qualities of new and existing history textbooks. By calling attention to historiography and literary content, a review system

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would subject publishers' products to greater scrutiny and encourage better writing in American history textbooks.

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