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ABSTRACT

Based on expert review and research, this book provides an innovative standard and guide to social studies textbooks used in kindergarten through 12th grade classrooms for content, style, and design. The standards provide a foundation for individuals to select satisfactory textbooks and to help educators and school boards in the adoption of instructional materials. Chapter 1 addresses the problems of textbook content and style. Chapter 2 discusses the vast business of social studies publishing and the increased complexity of textbook packaging with the movement away from state-level adoption of textbooks. Chapter 3 focuses on the content of social studies textbooks with a comparison of past and present textbooks, a discussion of revisionism and reality, and a look at religion in textbooks. Chapter 4 examines the style and story of textbooks and finds that although the content of past textbooks may be flawed, the prose is superior to recent textbooks. Ideas on narrative, readability, vocabulary, instructional design, history, and style provide ways for textbooks to improve. Chapter 5 addresses the issue of format and proposes clarity and simplicity in technical design of books. Chapter 6 provides an outline to review textbooks for content and style and instructional activities and teacher guidance materials for usefulness. Chapter 7 includes an annotated list of the major U.S. and world history textbooks. (CK)

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HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

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A STANDARD AND GUIDE

1994 - 95 Edition

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AMERICAN TEXTBOOK COUNCIL

History Textbooks

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Foreword

IN THE early 1990s history textbooks have been the subject of acrimonious public hearings, state curriculum reports, front-page newspaper articles, and television network news programs. In this fractious climate, educators, curriculum directors, and school boards across the country have sought balanced, reasoned guidance to textbook selection. As a curriculum director or school board member, parent, or teacher, you should be familiar with the main issues that surround the creation and content of history textbooks.

This volume provides a standard and guide to American and world history textbooks used in kindergarten to twelfth grade classrooms. It looks at some major content issues—notably multiculturalism and religion—and covers matters of textbook style and design. Based on recent research and analysis, the handbook includes specific examples of good and bad instructional materials as well as an annotated list of leading history textbooks used in the nation's classrooms. It is published as a tool to assist textbook reviewers in the selection of textbooks, free of publishers' sales pressure. It has a dual role: first, after five years, as an examination and critique of social studies textbooks by the American Textbook Council and, second, as an authoritative consumer's guide. It provides a qualitative foundation and paradigm for educators and textbook reviewers that textbook publishers cannot. Its standards, conclusions, and recommendations are divorced from any commercial considerations or constituent interest.

Unlike earlier standards of review in checklist and grid form, this guide does not attempt to codify quality through scoring systems or charts. While it acknowledges the value of older textbook analysis systems including those developed by the Social Studies Education Consortium,[1] it is wary of novel outcome-

based textbook standards that seem to ask instructional materials to provide services—mainly affective—beyond their ability and rightful scope (e.g., "encourage student creativity"). Criteria of selection and general conclusions about the merit of specific textbooks cannot satisfy all interested parties, of course. Any standard and assessment involves questions of interpretation. Textbook content in history provokes broad disputes about the interpretation of the past.

The American Textbook Council is convinced of the need for this guide based on repeated and urgent requests from people who seek direction in textbook assessment—usually at the time of a formal review in a state or local school district. This guide's purpose is to provide a foundation for individuals who are trying to select satisfactory textbooks and to help educators and school boards when pressure groups seek to gain control over the adoption of instructional materials.

This handbook incorporates numerous studies and reviews by the American Textbook Council during the last five years, presented at national conferences and published in the *Social Studies Review*, *Society*, *American Educator*, *American School Board Journal*, and other publications. Academic scholars, textbook editors, children's book authors, and state textbook officials brought fresh perspectives to this guide and its logic through their expertise and criticism. The standards herein benefit from expert comment on preliminary drafts by Isabel L. Beck, Jean Karl, Umberto La Paglia, George McKenna, and Reed Ueda. Special thanks go to Stapley Emberling and to Peter Cannon, who were instrumental in the lengthy review and production process.

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Gilbert T. Sewall
March 1994

I

The Problem with Textbooks

TEXTBOOKS are the foundation on which teachers create their lessons. They are the primary source of information for students in classrooms across the United States in history and in all other subjects that they study. Curriculum analysts agree on the importance and influence of schoolbooks. With annual printings in the six-figure range, a relatively small number of textbooks—two multi-grade series dominate the whole elementary system in the nation today, and perhaps ten or fifteen books each lock up junior and high school American history and world history markets—comprise what amounts to a national curriculum, established *de facto* by the for-profit textbook publishing industry.

Textbooks are frequently the sole source of information about the subject to both teacher and student. Providing an organized sequence of ideas and information, they structure teaching and learning. How texts are created, selected, and used does much to standardize what is taught and learned in elementary and secondary schools. Research indicates that 70 to 90 percent of classroom learning in history and civics classes is textbook-driven and derived, that is, orchestrated through an annotated and scripted teacher's edition. Teachers who are unknowledgable about textbooks tend to be overly respectful of these instructional materials. They often assume (incorrectly) that learned researchers labor carefully to produce canonical tomes. Because few elementary-level instructors possess a great deal of formal training in history, economics, and other social sciences, some of them—like reviewers—are misled by graphic design and adornments. Sometimes, selection is made on the basis of premiums and dis-

counts. Aggressive sales forces often build tight relationships with textbook purchasers that become habitual over time.

In lower grades teachers turn to social studies perhaps two or four hours a week, using a book and back-up materials that are part of an integrated multi-grade series called a program. This textbook is often backed up by a range of "ancillaries." These classroom helpers include looseleaf text-based teaching notebooks for teachers and tests ready for students. Teachers rely mainly on some kind of annotated teachers' edition to guide work activities, help in the teaching of the lesson of the day, and link one lesson to another. At the secondary level, history and social studies classes use a single-volume text, also annotated, and to some extent, supplementary material. These supplements may include compilations of primary documents and cultural artifacts, literature, or specialized histories.

A standard history or social studies textbook can be an effective teaching instrument in the hands of an informed, organized, and enthusiastic teacher. It can also be a meaningless giant in the hands of a student cruising through a subject, guided by a teacher overwhelmed by the annotated edition, the supplementary exercises, and the instructional design, a teacher who may face many other curricular and extracurricular tasks on any school day. "Ancillaries" help sell a history textbook. The utility of the annotated teacher's edition of a text is critical to most teachers below the ninth grade level, and many above, more than the student text itself. Usually a quick "thumb" or "flip" test (e.g., does the index include a substantial entry on Native Americans?) coupled with an informal readability test (e.g., can my students read these words?) and a look at format (e.g., is it legible and attractive in design?) determines the selection of a textbook.

Publishers know their market. Textbooks are constructed and written mainly for teachers, their adult consumers. Teachers at elementary and secondary levels ordinarily face a range of demands and responsibilities not conducive to original class planning. Their job may include signing vaccination certificates or coaching athletic teams. The textbook gives security. Besides providing detailed factual information that few teachers pos-

sess, it organizes material into digestible units around topics that give some logic and direction to the material. It includes familiar questions and exercises. It creates sequentially organized subject matter and episodes divided into lessons. In history courses, it imposes order on the past.

Textbooks are time savers, providing 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. Textbooks themselves contain ingenious, sometimes distracting exercises that many learning specialists believe help promote skills and decision-making "beyond" the text. These various drills that punctuate the core text can assume a life of their own. They also tend to reduce the central authority of the core text, which is increasingly shrunk and fractured to accommodate the imperatives of "instructional design."

Research Findings of the 1980s[2]

During the 1980s history textbook researchers and critics identified a number of problems of style, content, and design in history texts, problems that those selecting texts should consider. A convergence of analysis since 1987 indicates that in standard history books:

- "Representational" coverage and "mentioning" in textbook revisions after 1970 tried to appease sensitive clients, including those for whom textbook content is an extension of a broader political battle. Textbook reform efforts were often conducted by individuals and associations who believed themselves to be aggrieved by past events in American or world history, who felt slighted or underrepresented in historical scholarship, or who were unhappy with court decisions, with elections, with distribution of national income, with secular trends, and human injustices. These people often believed that, by rewriting history textbooks, they could both alter the past and shape the future toward their own greater interests. Some textbooks, especially for young students, had simplified complex human struggles

into one-dimensional cases of exploitation and victimization.

- Textbook language was often choppy, stilted, and impersonal. Material derived from the social sciences was so poorly integrated that the narrative power of history was destroyed. Textbooks were often mere catalogues of factual material about the past, not stories peopled with heroic and remarkable individuals. Storytelling had nearly disappeared. Textbook writing tended to be discursive, wandering aimlessly from one subject to another. Startling or bizarre side items were stitched to the narrative, a poor substitute for the kind of energetic narrative that can carry history through time and space.

- Publishers had cut down on narrative, substituting colored photographs, diagrams, and charts. Even readable narrative was interrupted with theme sentences set apart in bold type or encased in multicolored boxes. Headings and subheadings, self-contained and often discursive sidebars, study questions, critical thinking exercises, and review summaries intruded into the body of the text. The result was that core text had often been reduced to a mere reading sample by which to test comprehension and other practical skills. These elements were intended to help students retain information. But they impeded the train of ideas and thought, signalling the triumph of the layout artist and the graphic designer over the power of words and stories. Yet no mass-market publisher dared to produce a textbook in a simple, abbreviated, less chromatic format on account of conflicting consumer tastes and hunger for inclusion from many pressure groups.

- Too many topics were covered superficially. Details that might fix an event in memory were generally omitted. Compression of important topics made textbooks boring and hard to understand. It was unclear why some topics had been included and others excluded, but it appeared that publishers made decisions to avoid loss of some significant market. Books were sometimes vague about things that were interesting and significant—and specific about events and people that no one needed to remember.

Between the eighth and twelfth grade, about 85 percent of the nation's students will take one or two years of American history. Forty-five percent will take a course in world history, which may or may not emphasize Western Civilization, or world cultures, which has a reduced historical and more contemporary dimension. Most students will take at least a semester of civics, and some will take another course in geography. Others will take a course in economics, which may in fact be a course in consumer education. An increasing number of students will take elective courses in current events, environmental studies, psychology, or values to satisfy their social studies requirement for a high school diploma. After eighth grade, social studies channels into different courses of study: history and geography but also health and family living. College-bound students are encouraged to take history courses. Less able students are tracked or track themselves into courses that cover such topics as making friends and avoiding drugs. New curricula in sex education and self-esteem are replacing traditional historical course content in some schools, and many social studies teachers themselves are interested in promoting these "alternative" lessons.

American history textbooks raise unique content problems, since they are official portraits of our country's past, purchased by governments and assigned to the students who will one day participate in government by consent. To what degree textbooks affect how students see themselves, their nation, and the world cannot be easily reckoned, but their subtexts, interpretations, biases, and omissions do provide clues to how we regard ourselves as Americans—and how publishers sell textbooks. Their central place in the curriculum makes them especially interesting to philosophers, journalists, and intellectuals—as well as ideologues of many groups and causes.

A history text does more than convey information. It sets a tone through its choice of words, phrases, and sentences. Its content will sound a certain way through the selection of words, phrases, and sentence structure. The writing may be simple or complex, flat or evocative, utilitarian or stylish. 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. In some texts a Max Weber-like style that imitates social science at the expense of episodic history cannot help but puzzle a student. Textbooks may be effective reference materials, but they fail to draw in and excite young readers through vivid narrative and literary treatment.

Consider a passage from a second grade social studies textbook, this part of the Harcourt Brace elementary series popular in schools during the 1980s, which employs the near-to-far approach favored by educators across the nation. It deals with the everyday experiences of the seven-year-old child:

> Many workers help families. Families pay some of these workers for their services. The communities' government pays other workers for their services.
>
> People everywhere pay money to the government. This money is called taxes. There are many kinds of taxes. You often pay taxes on things you buy.
>
> Your family pays many taxes. The taxes go to pay for the services you need in your neighborhood. Your taxes help pay people for their work.[3]

Or this passage from an American history text, *Exploring American History*, an "easy reader" aimed at high school classrooms for slow learners:

> Pocahontas is reported to have saved John Smith's life twice. The English rewarded Pocahontas' kindness by kidnapping her. They held her as a hostage to prevent Native Americans from attacking Jamestown. A hostage is a person held prisoner until certain demands are met.[4]

These passages illustrate the problems facing textbook reviewers today—and tomorrow. They are representative of the flat style and flawed content that children encounter in social studies textbooks. Each of them demonstrates widely held stylistic and thematic approaches in today's textbooks. The first reflects the dominant social studies view that children in the primary grades should study themselves and their immediate localities, no matter how familiar or boring. The second, from a

high school book written for students with limited reading comprehension, combines a disagreeable prose style with an anti-European bias. It is a text that sells briskly in urban markets.

Matters of content, not style—especially ethnic, gender, and religious issues—dominate textbook controversies in the 1990s. State and local policies rarely address matters of style and textual quality. In coming years, in social studies books it is almost inevitable that multivalent arguments over content and interpretation will continue—and perhaps grow more fierce. Yet it is important for textbook reviewers to understand that some textbooks are better written than others, especially in secondary-level history, and some do a better job as instructional vehicles than their competitors. The cynics are wrong: all history textbooks are *not* the same.

II

Social Studies Publishing

EDUCATIONAL publishing is a vast enterprise, and one now linked to global distribution. Out of a total domestic book market of $13 billion in 1993, textbooks and all other instructional materials exceeded $4 billion, of which almost $2 billion were spent for books used in elementary and high schools. Mass-market textbooks occupy a nondiscretionary, mandated sector of the publishing industry. Designed for a "captive audience" whose size and market is predictable through demographic and commercial research, they differ from trade books—the kind of books found in bookstores—where sales are highly sensitive to buyer interest and economic fluctuation.

The market is competitive, and big revenues derive from blockbuster products. In the state of California, for example, each school grade enrolls over 400,000 students of extraordinary diversity. In 1990, the state adopted a single book in history for each grade, kindergarten through seventh grade, providing the single publisher of these seven books, Houghton Mifflin, with a vast geographic monopoly, and a social studies program with national promise and possibilities. Products and tastes change, slowly but inexorably. Ten years ago the Silver Burdett social studies series dominated the national elementary market, capturing an estimated 75 percent share in some states. Today the Macmillan and Houghton Mifflin series together control the elementary social studies market—and Silver Burdett is a social studies program in crisis.

A successful social studies series or textbook can have a ten-year-or-more shelf life. In capturing a big share of a market, a

successful textbook can ring up huge profits for the fortunate publisher for a long period of time. Elementary and high school textbooks represent a lucrative segment in book publishing. The premier high school textbook for civics, *Magruder's American Government*, for example, has been in print since 1918. It is estimated to sell 100,000 or more copies each year, and comes out in "revised" editions annually. The original author of the book is dead, as is Henry Bragdon, another well-known American history textbook author with a new book, *History of A Free Nation*, currently on the market. Magruder, Bragdon, and other popular texts are known familiarly by their first-named authors. They have "brand name" recognition. The publisher has no initial investment to recapture—as it has long been returned—and its authors receive fees or modest royalties for updated editions.

Authors lose control of their books in other ways than through death. We shall discuss this later, but for now, it is enough to note that the stated authors on the title page of a social studies text rarely have much to do with its production, other than acting as senior consultants. Successful texts like Magruder create dependable streams of revenue for their publishers that offset and balance more volatile trade publishing, where purchases are driven by consumer taste rather than mandates and statutes.

Only a few book publishers compete successfully in the mass textbook market. In 1992, *Publishers Weekly* warned that the possible merger of the nation's largest and second-largest schoolbook publishers (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill and Paramount/Simon & Schuster) would invite anti-trust action on account of restraint of trade.* States and many local districts require that publishers post performance bonds, provide many free samples, maintain depositories, sales representatives, and teacher consultants. Thus, only companies prepared to make large investments and meet such distribution standards can participate. Furthermore, any company that plans to compete

* In October 1993, Macmillan sold its elementary and high school textbook division to McGraw-Hill, ending the joint venture, prior to Macmillan's assumed absorption by Paramount.

nationally in school publishing must be "full service," offering study guides, workbooks, and other related products, using discounts, premiums, and other teacher enticements in order to sell its basic books. Spanish versions, margins, texts, binders, and answer keys may determine which books are adopted.

Publishers design social studies books to be sold in as many states and localities as possible. Field representatives, sales forces, market researchers, packagers, product managers, and editorial directors help determine the nature of a social studies textbook. Sensitive to the current desires of teachers and curriculum directors, they are willing to make changes in accordance with any recent pedagogical or subject-based vogue, if popular enough to capture greater market share. In this respect textbooks are normative instruments that reflect the tastes of major curriculum committees and concerns of diverse textbook activists. Because history and social studies curricula are controversial and public tastes are divergent, the cost of developing and selling history and social studies texts is greater than in less polarizing subjects, such as algebra or spelling. For this reason, textbook publishers' reluctance to invest money in new social studies products is likely to increase in the 1990s, resulting in a smaller field of standard books from which educators can choose.

The likelihood of mid-size, regional, or boutique publishers singlehandedly bringing serious new competition to the mass market is remote. Instead of developing social studies texts—expensive and chancy to develop—smaller publishers interested in self-preservation will produce "niche" materials or leave the field. Even major publishers of social studies texts may find themselves backing away from the area. The "one size fits all" social studies product is becoming ever harder to fit, as normative standards of culture and academic content rupture and content disputes escalate. Can publishers afford to develop and sell such social studies products in the future? Will it be possible in the future to develop and market a single history textbook nationally? What is the future of the textbook, particularly in the era of much heralded customized publishing possibilities and CD-ROM? These are among the most provocative questions of the 1990s in the field of educational publishing.

State and Local Adoption

Twenty-two states have state textbook adoption statutes. They adopt at the state level, though actual selection takes place from an official list at the local or school level, usually on a five- to seven-year cycle. The balance of the states are referred to as "open" states; in these states, local districts or schools select and purchase textbooks independently, usually with major state-level funding support. Most textbook reformers in the 1980s supported the idea of local adoption. They argued that teachers should select their own instructional materials; that state adoption does not guarantee quality; and that a few states, above all California and Texas, had excessive force in determining textbook content and standards for the nation. In the 1990s experts agree that there is movement away from state-level adoption, and that even large states do not exert the influence that they did in the recent past. On the other hand, controversies are rife in district and school adoptions, too, from parents, advocacy groups, and others who raise narrow but passionate objections to instructional material that for one reason or another does not conform to their beliefs or opinions.

Authorship

With the increased complexity of textbook packaging—coordinating text and design with ancillary materials on a rapid production schedule—writing a history text has become more of a chore than a challenge. Authorial control in textbook production is slight or non-existent. The hundreds of revisions and content rearrangements make it difficult for managing editors even to remember the changes, let alone maintain continuity throughout. Errors can creep into revisions, which are made in cycles of draft and redraft. In-house editors are rarely expert in a subject, and increasingly they are on the road or at conventions, marketing their high-cost products. Editorial authority is driven by marketing considerations and the design schedule. The packager takes on the coordinating role, not unlike a film producer, which can result in awkward decisions and even commercial failures.

The Adoption Process

The Texas textbook adoption system demonstrates how a state agency regulates the production and review of a history text.[5]

Once a publisher decides to produce textbooks for a particular target state, the books must pass through that state's adoption process. No two state adoption processes are exactly the same, but the Texas process may be the best known. The Texas adoption procedure follows a strict timetable. It begins with the state proclamation, or call, to publishers to submit textbooks. The proclamation describes the desired content, components, and other requirements. Twenty-five months after the state issues the proclamation, publishers may submit finished books to the Texas Education Agency. Publishers submit textbooks for various subjects on regular cycles, usually once every six years.

Two months after submission, publishers present their books formally to the State Textbook Subject Area Committees. Citizens of the state have the opportunity to evaluate the books and express their comments both orally and in writing. . . . The Texas Commissioner of Education and the committees consider citizen comments as well as their own evaluations when they decide which books to recommend for adoption. Members of the State Textbook Subject Area Committees may ask publishers to make certain changes, corrections, and deletions to their books as a condition for adoption.

The State Textbook Subject Area Committee makes recommendations for or against adoption of a book based on how closely the book matches the specifications in the proclamation. At a public hearing before the State Board of Education in the fall of the [adoption] year, the Board of Education votes for the official list of adopted textbooks. School districts are then made aware of the list from which they may choose their textbooks.

The authors of mass-market history books who are advertised as such have minimal control over their product. They serve as editorial consultants and—sometimes—act as sales people during the campaigns in which publishers' caravans and promotional teams comb "big" adoption states, making presentations in cities and towns. The fastidious try to prevent inaccuracies and what they consider to be flawed interpretations through repeated readings and memoranda to editors and developers. Some textbook authors succeed in conserving some voice in their books.

Publishers seek eminent scholars as writers and consultants because these "names" may lead teachers to purchase their texts. The truth is, however, eminence or style is rarely accompanied by interest. Writing school textbooks does not help historians in their careers. Finding good authors for textbooks is difficult. The major incentive for skilled children's writers or history professors to contribute to school texts is a financial one. What serious writer for children or adults would be willing to submit to readability formulas and other indignities beyond authorial control? The writing of core text, study reviews and questions, and annotated teacher's texts is completed by anonymous writers in development houses and production companies; these are subcontractors laboring under the direction of a text editor. These writers of textbooks are unfailingly earnest in their efforts to create finished and commendable products. But with rare exceptions, they bring to the task modest literary talent and scholarly background in history.

According to a ScottForesman social studies editor, "we editors understand, better than the authors, what background—or lack of it—students bring to the text. We rewrite to make concepts clearer, to make references more understandable. We take complex ideas and break them down to their component parts."[6] It is true that complex ideas are broken down by textbook editors, but the text is not necessarily improved, and the decline of prose style in history textbooks is a frequent complaint of teachers, children's book authors, and critics of educational materials.

III

Content

TEXTBOOK reviewers inevitably turn their attention to subject matter content. It is important for them to pay attention to three key aspects of any history textbook. Thus they should consider at the outset the way in which a text uses chronology ("dates") to clarify and place events in time, that is, to organize content fundamental to historical understanding. They should consider how well the text highlights important events and people, and how they ("names") act on more general political, economic, and social conditions in history. They should consider how well text and format link geography to history. But in matters of content, what curriculum specialists call "social considerations" will undoubtedly be of unique interest to textbook selection committees. The concept of multiculturalism—so elusive in definition—has become a theoretical matrix in social studies during the last decade.

It must be admitted from the start that various groups and individuals in the United States today have little point of agreement on the history curriculum—or interest in trying to find one. An abundance of sensitive issues makes construction of a national and global past increasingly difficult. Content issues in U.S. history textbooks radiate from different mindsets—affirmative and negative—about the development, historical leadership, and institutions of the United States. World history textbooks must cover different governments, religions, and mores in virtually telegraphic form. The main issue is the degree to which they will emphasize the continent of Europe, which has "Westernized" the world during the last five hundred years with advantages and disadvantages for other regions of the world.[7]

Since the 1970s social studies textbooks have been screened to eliminate bias and slights, especially against minority groups and women. The Council on Interracial Books for Children, founded in 1966 by editors, illustrators, teachers, and parents "committed to affecting basic change in books and other media," conducted crusades for content reform of children's tradebooks and textbooks. It acted as a high-profile pressure group on textbook publishers and state curriculum officials to "raise consciousness" about racism and sexism in the books that children read. With federal support, the CIBC conducted "critical analyses of racist and sexist stereotypes prevalent in children's books and learning materials."[8]

In 1978, in a celebrated series of *New Yorker* magazine articles, Frances FitzGerald expressed surprise at the changes in American history books, noting that the triumphalism that had once marked texts had ceded to new content and "inquiry approaches." Three years later, Houghton Mifflin published *Eliminating Stereotypes*, a handbook and position statement on sensitive subjects. Created for internal use and for distribution to textbook critics, it considered minority groups, the sexes, economic and environmental issues, and language. Like other publishers' guidelines, it was quite prescriptive. ("Show boys as well as girls interested in small furry animals and birds, planning meals, shopping for clothes.") In 1988, the New York City Board of Education published guidelines that noted social studies curriculum problem areas such as "contextual invisibility," stereotyping, historical distortion and omission, language bias, and inaccurate or stereotypic visual images. ("Do illustrations and images portray women and men of all races, ages, physical abilities, and social classes interacting with each other; or are they predominantly white, nondisabled males?") California and other states enacted general curriculum compliance criteria that mandate review of educational materials for "inclusion" and "diversity."[9]

Once historical content in textbooks was changed merely to "include" or accommodate one cause or crusade, it became more likely that historical content would be changed to "include" and accommodate others. In some cases, these com-

promises resulted in overgeneralization, in misrepresentation of accepted facts and works of literature, and in textbooks which do not reflect the best thinking in the field. Publishers' efforts to address as many of the topics listed in dozens of curriculum guides have resulted in shallow attention to important topics. Attempting to avoid controversy over the content of books, publishers have responded to the most restrictive of compliance regulations and the most aggressive of state requirements, thereby changing books for all purchasers.

Interest in multiculturalism among educational publishers today is not hard to understand. An increasing number of U.S. schools, especially in metropolitan areas, have black, Hispanic, and Asian students. In a world linked by communications as never before, global awareness—superimposed upon local and national perspectives—makes any "monocultural" curriculum or "Euro-American canon" seem inherently provincial or narrow. "Revisionism" has altered the interpretation of history and the humanities in research universities, schools of education, and indirectly, in schools. Some multicultural educators look to non-Western cultures to provide educational alternatives that may correct what they consider to be a Eurocentric curriculum.

In language arts textbooks, story selection now occurs almost exclusively on the basis of ethnic, gender, and other ascriptive coding by author and subject. In history, "inclusion" of new groups and subjects is not so simple. American histories reflect varying degrees of "revisionist" pressure to emphasize race, class, and gender in historical analysis. World histories cover the political and industrial revolutions of the modern world that radically affect the lives of Americans and people of the earth, and the evolving story of democracy and human rights. But pressure to compress "Western" subject matter and political history can result in shallow coverage of seminal events that have shaped today's world.

Past and Present

If reviewers compare the content of contemporary texts to those produced forty years ago, they can easily see just how far social studies textbooks have come in rethinking ethnic and

gender roles, even in the elementary grades. *My Country*, a fifth grade textbook published by the state of California and used during the 1950s, provides a striking example in its portrayal of antebellum plantation life:

> Perhaps the most fun the little masters and mistresses have comes when they are free to play with the little colored boys and girls. Back of the big house stand rows of small cabins. In these cabins live the families of Negro slaves. The older colored people work on the great farm, or help about the plantation home. The small black boys and girls play about the houses. They are pleased to have the white children come to play with them.[10]

In this section on colonial America, *My Country* gives no indication of how the slaves came to live in agrarian southern states or of the chattel system that deprived slaves of their humanity. Much later, in explaining the advent of the Civil War, the book explains:

> [T]he Negroes were brought from Africa and sold to the people of our country in early times. After a while there came to be thousands and thousands of these Negro slaves. Most of them were found in the southern states. . . . On the southern plantations, where tobacco and cotton and rice were grown, they work away quite cheerfully.
>
> In time many people came to think that it was wrong to own slaves. Some of them said that all the Negro slaves should be freed. Some of the people who owned slaves became angry at this. They said that the black people were better off as slaves in America than they would have been as wild savages in Africa. Perhaps this was true, as many of the slaves had snug cabins to live in, plenty to eat, and work that was not too hard for them to do. Most of the slaves seemed happy and contented. [11]

These passages constitute historiography that is offensive by today's standards. They also present bad history. *My Country* is not an evil book. Its lessons include rich narrative passages and incorporate dramatic prose that textbook publishers have nearly abandoned. But *My Country* stands as evidence of progress in rethinking the past and what children should learn. If we remember that *My Country* was published by California forty-seven years ago, and compare it to the fifth grade United States

history book that the state adopted in 1990, all Americans can be reassured by the increased honesty of social studies textbooks. Houghton Mifflin's *America Will Be* considers the Middle Passage, plantation society, abolitionism, and the advent of the Civil War in an entirely different way, depicting the harsh lives of black people and national divisions aggravated by an industrial revolution and King Cotton. Here is an excerpt:

> Most slaves lived in drafty, one-room cabins with dirt floors. Many times, two or more families would live together in one cabin. They slept on the ground on mattresses filled with cornhusks. Northup described his bed as "a plank 12 inches wide and 10 feet long." His pillow was a stick. Slaves wore shabby cotton or wool clothing, which was provided by the master twice a year. They ate pork fat, molasses, and cornmeal. Sometimes they could raise vegetables. But often the food did not have important nutrients.
>
> Most slaves worked in the fields, but a few had other jobs. House slaves cleaned, cooked, washed, sewed, and took care of children in the "big house," or plantation mansion. Their jobs were easier than working in the cotton or rice fields, but many house slaves suffered constant criticism from their watchful owners.[12]

It is also hard to imagine today that *My Country* used the following passage to describe a typical Indian habitat and kinship system:

> Now we see, standing just outside the doorway, the Chippewa mother. She is wearing a buckskin skirt which reaches to her toes. On her feet are moccasins, and about her shoulders a garment much like a shawl. Her small black eyes look out of a broad brown face. The hair of this Indian woman is black and straight and coarse. Just now it is drawn into an untidy mop at the back of her head. . . .
>
> Indian women worked hard. With the help of the girls, they gathered all the wood for the fires. The women skinned and cleaned the game that was brought in by the hunters. They dressed the skins, tanned them, and cut and sewed all the clothing for the family. The Indian women tended the fields of corn and squash and beans. Of course, they carried the water and took care of the children and cooked all the meals.

> The Indian men never helped their wives with the work around the wigwams. They would have felt it a disgrace to help with the work of the squaws. (*Squaw* is a word that means Indian woman.). . . They loved their children, just as white mothers do. They taught their daughters how to take care of a wigwam and helped their sons to become brave warriors.[13]

This passage contains some odious subtexts about gender roles. Good riddance to such childhood lessons. But that does not mean that some textbooks of the 1990s have no subtexts of their own. From drudge, the Native American woman has been recast. The prominent place of women in Alkonkian society has become a textbook staple, reflecting recent scholarship in American native societies. Going a step farther, into fantasy, *American Voices,* a ScottForesman book for high school use, makes general claims that supposedly characterize *all* North American tribal groups:

> First, families were organized along kinship lines, meaning that family membership was defined by blood connection. In many Native American societies, family connections were matrilineal, that is, made through the female line. A typical family thus consisted of an old woman, her daughters with their husbands and children, and her unmarried granddaughters and grandsons. When a son or grandson married, he moved from this female-headed household to one headed by the female leader of his wife's family. Women also controlled divorce. If a woman wanted a divorce, she simply set her husband's possessions outside their dwelling door. Families were joined in clans, again defined by kinship ties.
>
> Second, the division of labor within Indian societies most frequently set women in charge of child care and cultivation or agriculture. The men were responsible for activities in which child care would be a burden, such as hunting, trading, and fighting.
>
> Politically, women's roles and status varied from culture to culture. Women were more likely to assume leadership roles among the agricultural peoples than among nomadic hunters. In addition, in many cases in which women did not become village chiefs, they still exercised substantial political power. For example, in Iroquois villages, when selected men sat in a circle to discuss and make decisions, the senior women of the village stood

> behind them, lobbying and instructing the men. In addition, the elder women named the male village chiefs to their positions.[14]

Reflected in this passage, too, is the kind of presentism where words like *divorce*, *female-headed households*, and *child care* give the description a very contemporary flavor. Feminist perspectives have had great force in reshaping textbook content. But enthusiasm sometimes discards reality, as when the Houghton Mifflin elementary series introduced in 1990 invented a female cattlewoman as a representative woman of the early nineteenth-century West, *una Latina y vaquera*, but also a sop to feminists looking for "new role models."[15]

Revisionism and Reality

Many curriculum activists are not satisfied with the dramatic changes in textbook content. They deny the magnitude of content revisions, and especially with American history books, call for more. Why? Historian C. Vann Woodward of Yale University noted in 1981 that progressive historians have tended to invert old myths of American innocence, replacing them with different views of Anglo-American intentions. This "revised" history, Woodward said, would like to give European Americans a new image of themselves and their cultural heritage:

> The first English settlers . . . never should have come in the first place. Invasion was their initial offense. The pattern of collective rapacity and inhuman cruelty to darker peoples that characterized their westward conquests of the Pacific shores and on across the ocean ever westward through Asia is seen as existing from the very outset. From this point of view the line of precedents stretched from the slaughter of braves in the Pequot War of 1637 on for three centuries and more to Lieutenant Calley at My Lai, with little more than changes in the technology of annihilation. Thus interpreted, American history becomes primarily a history of oppression, and the focus is upon the oppressed. The primary objective in all this would not seem to be so much the exposure of evil or the identification of transgressors as it is an oblique exercise in the analysis of national character.[16]

Some American history books suggest that xenophobia and

nativism are universal and central to the American character. They judge the white Americans of the past crudely, lumping them together into one amorphous body, as in this passage from *American Voices*:

> In short, many Americans developed a sense of xenophobia, a hatred or fear of foreigners or strangers. They acted accordingly. They posted signs that read, "No Jews or Dogs Allowed." They called the Chinese "coolies" and the Italians "wops" and "dagos," all derogatory names. The ethnic jokes that surface today have their roots in this period of ethnic hostility and violence.
>
> The fears of Americans led the U.S. government to enact several acts in the late 1800s that restricted immigration. The Chinese were the first to feel the golden door closing on them. In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act . . . demonstrated the lengths to which nativism and racism could go and set a precedent for the future exclusion of immigrants.[17]

In *American Voices*, Americanism and racial purity—indeed a *part* of the national heritage, expounded not only by laborers but by liberal icons such as Margaret Sanger and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.—become structural, fundamental, and universal. This is bad history of a new (and demoralizing) sort. When some educators seek to reinvent history on behalf of self-esteem, when it is in fashion among intellectuals to claim that all reality and hence all morality is relative, when television specializes increasingly at "recreations" and "dramatizations," it is becoming increasingly difficult, not only for young people, to distinguish between fact and fiction, between reality and fantasy.

Are textbooks to be confected on behalf of complaints by ethnic, feminist, gay, and other scholar-advocates out of altruism, political commitment, a sense of confraternity, or intimidation among editors? Reviewers of textbooks should not overlook the ideas that some educators today are applying to school curricula. "The subject matter content [in history and social studies] should be treated as socially constructed and therefore tentative—as is all knowledge," said the preamble to "One Nation, Many Peoples: A Declaration of Cultural Interdependence," the 1991 New York State review of an earlier set of

multicultural guidelines criticized for serious historical errors and anti-white racism.[18] What can this mean? "Social constructionism" has become a "controlling idea of our blinkered cultural and academic life," Jean Bethke Elshtain of Vanderbilt University has said:

> To go beyond the reality of perspectives to the claim that there are only perspectives, that facts themselves are arbitrary inventions and that there is only "my reality" and "your reality" is to embrace nonsense. And to go still further and argue that the conditions of knowledge change with a change in gender, that men and women [or blacks and whites] inhabit separate epistemological universes, is to embrace not only nonsense but dangerous nonsense.[19]

The literary critic Michiko Kakutani has warned of reality distortion, noting that, "young people, like many of their elders, get their history from movies and television, media that are taking increasing liberties with the truth, routinely blurring fact and fiction, and distorting real events to make dramatic or ideological points." Kakutani perceives the academic sources and baleful implications of the problem:

> [D]econstruction purveys a stylishly nihilistic view of the world, which insists that all meaning is relative, that all truth is elusive, and therefore futile. Such critical approaches irreparably divorce intellectual discourse from morality and ethics, and posit an ahistorical world in which actions have no consequences and language has no real meaning. Together with society's current eagerness to blur the lines between fact and fantasy, reality and appearance, the deconstructionists and like-minded thinkers foster a climate in which ideologues and propagandists, like the Holocaust deniers, can try to assail those two pillars of human civilization: memory and truth.[20]

Are history textbooks in the process of being reworked into a different instrument, one supposed to demonstrate the collective virtue or sin of groups and causes? "We live in a time when great efforts are being made to falsify the record of the past and to make history a tool of propaganda; when governments, religious movements, political parties, and sectional groups of every kind are busy rewriting history as they would wish it to

A Historian's Warning

In 1982, the late Arnaldo Momigliano, a distinguished historian, echoed some rising concerns about the condition of historiography and the changing uses of history.[21]

Rumors are spreading that historians simply manipulate data in order to make propaganda for the political, social, and religious beliefs they happen to cherish at a given moment and place. There is even a widespread notion that such manipulation is inevitable and healthy. According to this view, historians are, and must be supporters of ideologies: they must recognize that their own task is to foster their own political, social, and religious beliefs because they do not have, and cannot possibly have, objective criteria for truth. The historians that stick to the belief that there is something like truth for the historian are deceivers and self-deceivers.

Ordinary religious, philosophic, and moral tenets have been losing authority. It has therefore become customary to ask the historian to provide guidance for the future development of mankind. It has also become common to ask the historian to provide quasi-religious or quasi-moral interpretations of the past that are quite beyond the abilities of any historian qua historian. As soon as you begin to ask the historian to do what he cannot do, you will involve him in the sort of trouble we are just now noticing. In the ensuing confusion it would be easy to claim that the historian's task is not to give objective information about the past but to provide a message for the future. This is exactly the position preferred by those who define history as a branch of rhetoric and deny the historian's ability to discover the past, yet expect from him a blueprint for the future. Let us be in no doubt about the fundamental point. The historian works on evidence. Rhetoric is not his business.

have been," the eminent historian Bernard Lewis has asserted. "All this is very dangerous indeed, to ourselves and to others, however we may define otherness—dangerous to our common humanity."[22]

Religion

How do textbooks convey religion's force and place in the individual human spirit, in communities, in culture, and a people's history? How have systems of belief dealt with human problems in the distant past and present? Religion proves to be another troublesome area of textbook content, since it has had enormous influence in the origin of current traditions, beliefs, moral systems, and public affairs. Whether secular humanism is a quasi religion or ideology is a matter of engrossing philosophical dispute; its place in textbooks and instructional material has been the subject of major court cases and local school board battles, recently considered by legal experts.[23]

Today believers of many viewpoints accuse textbooks of satanism, Christian advocacy, or violations of Allah's honor. The result has been the effort of textbooks to evade the religious controversies that have raged in the global and national past.

In 1990, Warren A. Nord of the University of North Carolina wrote:

> What cannot be doubted is that our ways of thinking about nature, morality, art, and society were once (and for many people still are) fundamentally religious, and still today in our highly secular world it is difficult even for the non-religious to extricate themselves entirely from the webs of influence and meaning provided by our religious past. . . . To understand history and (historical) literature one must understand a great deal about religion: on this all agree. Consequently, the relative absence of religion from history textbooks is deeply troubling.[24]

Religion—a fundamental influence in shaping the ideas and events of the American nation and world—shrunk in history books during the 1980s. The 1990 Houghton Mifflin elementary series first made special efforts to include material (and in state hearings received savage criticism from militant Jews, Muslims, and fundamentalist Christians). Most American history textbooks

today devote an adequate amount of space to the history of religion, focusing mainly on religious liberty and freedom. They acknowledge the presence of religion at least up to the Scopes Trial of 1925, even though their treatments are uniformly antiseptic and abstract. They do not consider contemporary religion, and they fail even to note the religious component and impulse—with lasting impact on public morality—of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. World history textbooks today explain the outlines of the world's major religions with some care. In fact, world history textbooks often cover the subject more comfortably than American history textbooks, since they do not have to deal with the role of the Christian religion—and conflicts therein—in shaping the national identity.

The struggle for religious liberty strikes a dominant chord in American history and civics textbooks. Once this point is made, customarily with the earliest settlements and the Bill of Rights, the texts move on. What is not always well explained is the time-honored place of religion in civic life and literature, and in the case of American history, how Judeo-Christian and (particularly) Anglo-Protestant beliefs have entered into daily life and public affairs. They describe nativist hostility toward Roman Catholics and Jewish immigrants but with little nuance. Even in world history textbooks, where religion must be covered in order to make cross-cultural comparisons, what religions are and do—the passions they invoke—is left unsaid.

In one growing area of social studies (that overlaps with economics and science) some lessons seem to contain a message of catechismic ambitions, that is, with a faintly religious design. Kinds of fervor once reserved for a divine architect or saviour are now directed toward secular (or pantheistic) ends. *Environmental Science*, a widely used textbook, states:

> The ecological crisis is the sum of the interconnected problems of population, depletion, and pollution. However, a crisis of the human spirit is also evident. As many psychologists point out, it is easy for people to escape into materialistic life-styles. With equal ease, many among us view ourselves as apart from nature and immune to its laws. Technological advancement and economic growth, which have brought great prosperity and

> improved living conditions, have become the primary goals of society. Little thought is given to future generations and the long-term health and well-being of the planet.[25]

Accordingly, the industrial world operates with a "frontier ethic," a "human-centered" view that sees the world's resources as unlimited, and nature as something to be conquered. "Traditional Western teachings"—that nature exists to serve humans—are at fault. This humanism and "biological imperialism" are the core sources of environmental damage, the book asserts. "We use the world to feed the self. We exploit the water, air, wildlife, minerals, timber, and soils to serve the ego." *Environmental Science* calls for "sustainable ethics" that revolve around the understanding of limited resources, recycling, cooperation with nature, and human restraint. In such a world, "We will no longer yearn for more or seek to continue our current levels of consumption." The book calls for a "new global economic system" that includes population reduction—happily, "through attrition"—"a new ethical system based on sustainable ethics, the reduction of arms sales, and global cooperation." Such utopian prescriptions, however well-intentioned, extend beyond the realm of social studies and science.

°°°

These are only a few subjects and themes that make the review and adoption of history textbooks so pitched. Textbook reviewers should understand, in history and the social studies, as in few other fields of study, textbook publishers face the full complement of organized groups who want favorable and prominent treatment. Each lobbies hard for a place in social studies education, even if it means slighting or antagonizing another group. Sometimes the groups undertaking critical textbook inspections have very specialized interests, e.g., in Chumash, Ukrainian, or Sikh history. These advocates can be trained scholars; they typically have unyielding views that aim toward group hagiography. Publishers cannot afford to ignore broader-based pressures, which range from the "Christian right" to the "Afrocentric," if they want their textbook products to be adopted and purchased.

Accuracy has been the first casualty of contemporary sensitivities, clashing ideologies, and pressures for inclusion. Many textbooks avoid a candid appraisal of historical controversies, especially if those controversies reflect current political struggles and could hurt textbook sales. In American history textbooks, contemporary activism of all kinds receives uncritical accolades and excessive space. A photograph of protesters in wheelchairs or a profile of Native American spokeswoman Wilma Mankiller reflects the force of advocacy on the shape of history. A subject like environmentalism, for example, often contains only the views of organizations and scholar-advocates more interested in consciousness-raising than fact. In the last five years, most American history textbooks have relabled "blacks" as "African Americans," making standard and universal an unsettled designation with much political freight. Individuals and events are oddly disembodied, without flair, personality, or real distinction. No one receives much credit for achievements. In American history, national purpose is obscured, except perhaps for misleading statements on behalf of equality ("The equal rights movement . . . will continue until all people in the United States enjoy full equal rights") or on behalf of personal choice ("We must choose what kind of world we want, and work for it").

In the case of American history, reviewers should consider the way in which textbooks try to articulate a national identity. To what extent and how clearly do textbooks describe the development of a national consciousness? The movements that have reinforced the common civic culture in which students are growing up? This content is an essential component of any satisfactory text, a matter that cannot be compromised. It is an indispensable lodestone for a usable history in a democratic state. Yet it is a thematic chord diluted or lost in many textbooks and social studies materials today.

Reviewers should, in evaluating American history books:

- Read several text passages and critical thinking questions in the texts they are reviewing to consider the success with which each textbook under consideration incorporates new themes of ethnicity, gender, religion, et cetera. In these areas

the primary materials that are selected and the means with which they are incorporated into lessons needs careful scrutiny.

- Ask to what extent do new themes affect the depth and interpretation of political and economic change in the subject area. Do these themes enhance or marginalize constitutional and economic history? Who are selected as heroes and for what reasons? What old heroes remain, and why?
- Be on guard when the treatment of historically mistreated groups becomes the overriding theme on which selection is based, especially when "victimization" and "structural inequities" are the sole and unremitting chords in the interpretation of national character.
- Pay attention to the introduction of "supplementary" materials, inflammatory in nature, introduced for adoption in response to claims of "Eurocentrism," "sexism," "bias," "insensitivity," "secular humanism," and other rallying cries from anti-historical ideologues whose primary allegiances lie in a group or cause.

IV

Style and Story

IF WE LOOK at textbooks of the past, the content may be flawed, but the prose is often far superior to that of textbooks today. In *My Country*, for example, broadly criticized for content above, we find the following passage:

> After a time Captain Jones had command of another ship, the "Bonhomme Richard." It was an old vessel and not very strong. But in it the brave captain began a battle with one of England's fine ships. The cannons on the two ships kept up a steady roar. The masts were broken, and the sails hung in rags above the decks. Many of the men on the "Bonhomme Richard" lay about the deck dead or dying. The two vessels crashed together, and with his own hands the American captain lashed them together. By this time the American ship had so many cannon-ball holes in its sides that it was beginning to sink. The English captain shouted:
>
> "Do you surrender?"
>
> "Surrender? I've just begun to fight!" John Paul Jones roared back at him.
>
> ... The Americans shot so straight and fast that the English sailors dared not stay on the deck of their ship. Their cannons were silent. At last the English captain surrendered his ship to John Paul Jones. Captain Jones and his men quickly gathered up the wounded American sailors and moved them to the deck of the captured ship.[26]

The festive patriotism that ran as a strand through many older American histories, of course, has today lost its power to capture many hearts in curriculum planning and educational publishing. As pointed out in the previous chapter, many social studies educators today call for different themes and attitudes

about the past. The change in topics and interpretation may be an advance, but sensitivity and inclusion have proceeded at a cost to style and voice. In the leading fifth grade American history text of the 1980s, *The United States and Its Neighbors*, the florid, martial prose of the 1947 text above had ceded to neutral prose of the following kind:

> The greatest American naval officer was John Paul Jones. He was daring. He attacked ships off the British coast. In a famous battle, Jones's ship, the "Bonhomme Richard," fought the British ship "Serapis." At one point in the battle Jones's ship was sinking. When asked to give up, Jones answered, "I have not yet begun to fight!" He went on to win.[27]

Some educational publishers in social studies today forgo forceful prose out of fear of offending pressure groups on the lookout for bias, exclusion, elitism, and other intellectual transgressions. Yet the complaints of researchers and textbook critics during the 1980s has at least forced textbook makers to address textual quality. Reviewers will discover variations in style and voice among different books and programs. Still, most textbooks include as many facts as possible in order to meet varying scope and sequence lists and content tests important to purchasers. This "mentioning" makes any textual grace difficult, and it gives historical writing an undeserved reputation for dullness.

Narrative

Like any good historical writing, textbooks should reveal a human voice replete with strong verbs and adjectives, vivid anecdotes, and lively quotations. Since history is a narrative, textbooks should take advantage of the structure. Young people enjoy stories and events that concretize human involvement, compassion, love, hatred, and triumph of the underdog. History is full of drama, and the epic stories behind the present stand on their own when well told and written. Sometimes these historical episodes are "stranger than fiction"—and because they really happened, and may have helped shape the present, they have an authority greater than fiction. Biography especially

A Study of Textbook Style

A 1988 study by Isabel L. Beck and other researchers at the Learning Development and Research Center, University of Pittsburgh, drew some strong conclusions about stylistic shortcomings in elementary-level social studies texts.[28]

A common core [of stylistic problems] comprises four elements: unclear content goals, assumed background knowledge, inadequate explanations, and . . . sloppy presentations. . . . Even when the general topic of the content seemed to imply a goal, the concepts to support the goal were not clearly established. The texts lack the kind of plan for what students are to learn that would offer a whole conception of some topic that is more than the sum of the separate ideas and facts it includes.

Our analysis found that the texts assume unrealistic levels of prior knowledge from target-aged students. Text presentations make little attempt to establish often sophisticated and abstract concepts needed as background to understand main points of the content.

[M]ajor concepts and events often go unexplained. Inadequate explanations are often rooted in the background knowledge issue. That is, many explanations begin at the wrong place, assuming understanding of ideas that would allow learners to draw connections needed for a coherent representation of a topic. Explanations require more than statements of facts and events; information that connects facts, events, and ideas and clarifies their role in a phenomenon is needed to bring about understanding.

Numerous examples were found of bad writing, poor organization, and muddled thinking. The kinds of problems that fall into this category are not editorial errors; their cause is not as simple as an omitted word or transposed sentences. Rather, they show evidence of poorly developed ideas.

provides universals and particulars, records human anxieties and triumphs, reveals sorrows and hopes, and gives students some idea of how heroes and villians steered their own lives. Memorable stories—reinforced with related pictorial matter, primary materials, and questions that do not intrude into the text itself—are essential if they are to capture a child's imagination. Effective history for children must engage interest and curiosity and excite their desire to know more about how the past became the present. The absence of good stories, bold narrative, and suspenseful tales can dampen student enthusiasm for the subject from the very beginning of a textbook.

The clumsiest textbook writing is found in texts used in lower grades and for slow learners with less reading ability or motivation. In elementary school series, the text can be fragmented to such an extent that children cannot follow narrative development. They have trouble building bridges from one subject to another. The vocabulary is constrained by many rules and formulas. It is a difficult style to read, understand, and remember. The 1988 study of four elementary social studies programs cited above carried "a strong indictment of those materials" on several grounds of style and story.

It is easy to find examples of what the Beck report complains about. In *The United States and Its Neighbors*, for example, a passage ran: "In 1816, James Monroe was elected President. Things went so smoothly that this time is called the Era of Good Feelings."[29] End of thought, subject, and the tale of the Monroe Administration. The Monroe Doctrine was left unmentioned, even though it set the course of Western hemispheric relations into our own day. *Eastern Hemisphere*, a sixth grade book in the current Macmillan elementary series, dispatches Marco Polo in a column. It devotes a chapter to "China Today" that is very hard to understand, punctuated by a box on "How Silk Is Made."[30]

The considerable gulf in quality between schoolbook prose and a well-written story should trouble reviewers, who must take the overall narrative flow of a history textbook into account. Some educators (and many children's book authors and editors) call for the abandonment of social studies text-

books in the primary grades and reliance on juvenile trade books and history-related literature. Formal history textbooks need not be introduced until the fourth grade or later, if energetic teachers are comfortable in developing their own reading lists and tailoring lessons from them.

Teachers should encourage all students, especially in elementary schools, to use the school library, where they can find well-written books, including fiction and biography, likely to nourish enthusiasm for historical subjects. Certain classics seem just as wonderful—or better—today as they did when they were published. For example, Hans Christian Andersen's "The Emperor's New Clothes" makes a timeless point about humbug and human suggestibility. Great oratory like Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and parables like George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Voltaire's *Candide* enhance and sharpen history lessons. The California Department of Education has assembled an excellent compendium of children's literature for use in history and social studies classes, and an able school librarian can provide a list of more current titles to teachers. Other review resources for teachers exist, even though many children's book reviewers tend to favor books that "represent a diversity of groups and are sensitive to a broad range of cultural experiences."[31]

Readability and Vocabulary

Old worries that textbooks have been too difficult for many students have changed. At present, many educators are worried that some textbooks may not be challenging enough. Readability formulas—once so popular—take into account only some features of textual challenge, such as sentence length or number of complex words. The insensitive use of readability formulas has contributed to "dumbing down," boring diction, and confusing exposition in history texts. To gauge difficulty, many accomplished teachers who have thought about textbook issues rely on their own judgment, and such impressions are almost always of more value than readability ratings.

The following precepts are intuitively compelling and supported by research. What the student knows, expects, and feels

in advance will affect the reading of a text. The more knowledge students have about the topic, the less likely they are to find the text difficult and the more likely they are to understand and retain any new knowledge. The smaller the group and the more teacher assistance that will be available in class, the more challenging a text can be and still be a successful learning tool. Unfamiliar words provide challenge and the opportunity for word study and vocabulary growth. They need not interrupt reading comprehension. But too many unfamiliar words can cause students to revert to reading individual words, thus interrupting general text progression. A text that provides explicit definitions of new words within the context and provides multiple uses of these unfamiliar words in subsequent text can be effective in increasing vocabulary.

Instructional Design

Can textbooks provide the student with a structure that promotes learning and retention? Can text makers design learning systems that promote certain abilities, skills, and outcomes? Many curriculum developers believe in textual signposts and exercises that help direct student learning, and they pursue improvements in instructional design (in contrast to technical design or format, discussed in the next chapter). These elements to "assist" learning include tables of contents, chapter heads and subheads, indexes and glossaries, critical thinking and review questions, chapter introductions and summaries, and vocabulary lists. Some serve to organize the text in an orderly manner and give teachers a means of teaching, reviewing, and testing. Since publishers tend to want to to provide all the latest gadgets, books can become cluttered with all kinds of sideshows that undermine the centrality and profluence of the text. Reviewers should be wary of instructional designs that promise outcomes from textbooks that are doubtful ("promote multicultural understanding") or specious ("encourage student creativity"). They should be suspicious of non-academic outcomes lists that seek to link social studies education to self-esteem and other kinds of therapeutics.

History and Style

Non-fiction writing can be as exciting as fiction. Children do not need it dressed up with flourishes to understand or appreciate it. Cooked prose and lots of white space are not the solutions to stylistic problems in textbooks. Recent elementary series in social studies have made the effort to offer more appetizing reading fare to fifth graders, but textual problems persist, partly on account of the truncated core text.

A history textbook cannot traffic in escapism or sheer entertainment. *What actually happened is important*, for it supplies the test of content. A lucid and straightforward text has no substitute. Trade book authors and editors have no natural monopoly on writing with verve. Vivid narrative writing in textbooks remains an ideal. Any content controversies aside, the movement of fine juvenile narrative into the classroom would constitute a revolution in curriculum and instruction. What young people respond to are social studies texts that stretch their imaginations, that transport them emotionally to far-off places and times, that delight with their exoticism and mystery, that are full of adventure, and that contain facts and events presented in memorable ways.

Reviewers should ask themselves of any textbook being considered for adoption at any level:

- Is the language choppy and stilted? Is there a voice and sense of drama in the text? Or has the language been stripped down in order to make it "readable"? Is language abstract or full of jargon?
- Are controversial issues treated in a listless, lapidary, or evasive 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?
- Does the text take advantage of the narrative genre? Is narrative organized to give some sense of wholeness to the subject matter? Do episodes and descriptions add up to lucid explanation of broader themes and trends? Do content questions at the ends of chapters review the material that is

covered in the text? 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 or intrusive? Do subunits, reviews, and myriad "skills building exercises" marginalize the core text?

V

Format

At the high school level, American history textbooks have swollen into 1,100-page behemoths, weighing five or six pounds. Each new edition adds material in an effort to keep up to date, compounding the size problem. Instead of trying to cover the entire history of our country in a single volume, some textbooks now only cover certain phases of the past, or are divided into two volumes, each used at different grade levels (with the probability that part of the same text may be too "hard" and the other too "easy" for the student to absorb and learn).

Textbook reviewers should be vigilant to seductive appearances in educational materials, since design considerations have become paramount forces in marketing and textbook "appeal." In contrast to gray-paged tomes of a generation ago, containing a few drawings, maps, and black-and-white photographs, the typical American history textbook today offers a riot of colors and sophisticated graphics. Graphics may excite as does a commercial advertisement or fashion magazine. The artful organization of photographs, sidebars, charts, boxes, study exercises, and critical thinking questions creates a shimmering surface mosaic. Sometimes the individual accessories are tasteful, smart, and pedagogically useful. More often they are distracting.

In making decisions about what books to adopt, reviewers would do well to remember the virtues of clarity and simplicity in the technical design of textbooks. Whether lavish graphics and pictorial displays really *promote* learning—and thus justify their expense—remains a broad and open question. Some master teachers contend that students ignore photographs, maps

A Matter of Scale

An abiding complaint of textbook analysts, as researcher Jeanne S. Chall and others have noted, is the large size and ornamental graphics popular among textbook publishers.[32]

> No one seems to know if the bigger books with their numerous illustrations help the student learn better, or motivate the student more. But everyone seems to be caught in the dilemma of increasing text size and number of illustrations. Publishers seem to fear that, if they cut down on text size and number of illustrations, they will lose a competitive edge in adoptions and sales.
>
> No one seems to know if teachers and students really want bigger books and more pictures, either. None of the students we interviewed mentioned illustrations when they talked of their preferences. Yet this does not prevent publishers from including 1,000 illustrations in 1,000 pages of text in an eleventh-grade social studies textbook. The size and weight make the textbooks increasingly difficult to lift and carry. We wonder how students manage when they have homework that requires the use of two or three of these textbooks.

and diagrams until they are analyzed to extract information, or used as tools to present information in a form other than words. Only pictorial supplements that are relevant to the text itself can assist comprehension and concept development. Tables and other graphics should avoid confusion and occur close to the related and applicable text.

The prominence of pictures in books is justified in two ways, according to researcher Marilyn Jager Adams of the University of Illinois. Pictures may provide cues for identifying words that are otherwise hard to recognize, or pictures may stimulate interest in reading a text and promote a better understanding of the information.[33]

Increased use of illustrations in recent years has made books more "user friendly," but it has also contributed to the criticism

that such books have gotten easier. When the average number per page begins to exceed one and gets closer to two, and when the average page begins to devote more space to pictures than to narrative text, then it is time to rethink the design—or reject a book under consideration in favor of a text with a more straightforward core text. The chief design flaw in the pace-setting Houghton Mifflin social studies elementary program is its pictorial richness, a graphic *tour de force*, exciting to look at but executed at the expense of textual integrity and flow.

Many variables go into giving a text a certain look or visual feel. It is beyond the scope of this guide to deal individually with such features as print size, typeface, number of columns and lines per page, space between lines and width of margins, and so forth. Yet such elements add up to an esthetic whole whose appeal is subjective. In general, reviewers should resist the charms of color and computer graphics and focus on text and substance.

- Is the core text lost in color and exotic fonts, sandwiched amid illustrations, study units, and sidebars?
- Is the format hard to scan or read?

If so, textbook design is failing to facilitate learning. Instead, it is helping to confuse students and perhaps make the work of publishers and their printers more profitable. Design may sell books, but it can make little or no addition to effective teaching and learning. In history books, *there can be no finer illustration than maps*, which can be linked to text in almost unlimited ways.

A Final Question

The inclusion of pictures and graphics in books is very expensive compared to the cost of producing text. The cost of a single high school history textbook now ranges between $35 and $50 dollars, a large sum of money, more for teacher's editions.

Are current standards (and costs) for the physical characteristics of mass-market books—holographic cover; computer-generated, four-color layout; lavish photography—met at the expense of text? Is the participation of accomplished authors

and scholars minimized in the textbook production process because of other kinds of costs? Could history texts interest and instruct more effectively through simple "classic" designs, featuring clear texts unimpeded by baroque, expensive, and confusing formats? Would any publisher take the risk, and in underselling its competitors, find a substantial market share for a "no frills" product? The answer is probably no, even though examples of strong text and tasteful formats do exist in trade and reference books that "cross over" into school libraries and classrooms.[51]

VI

Textbook Review: An Outline

Is the information accurate? Is the treatment of various groups in society fair and unbiased? Is the reading level appropriate for the students who will be using the material? Is the book written in a clear and comprehensible manner? Is it written in a style that will be interesting and hold the student's attention? Do the review questions and other end-of-chapter exercises support the material presented in the narrative? Are pictorial and sidebar materials relevant to the subject matter? Are chronology and linkages with geography integral to the book's design?[35]

Content and Style

Examine the table of contents. What subjects are emphasized? What themes and patterns emerge? What logic guides the movement of the text? What kinds of history are stressed? In the case of American history, does the book develop the idea of a national character and civic identity? In the case of world history, does the book explain the unique impact of Western ideas and technology on global society?

Examine one unit. Are topics treated in depth? Is the narrative lively in style and rich with experiences of people? Is there correspondence between the narrative and illustrations, sidebars, supporting biographies, and primary source references? Is literature included or referenced? Are different genre of primary sources included, either as a complete reference or in a meaningful excerpted passage?

Instructional Activities and Teacher Guidance Materials

Read over a lesson. Compare the material intended for the student and that intended to guide the teacher. Identify the lesson goal or objective. Is it sound? Do primary sources, maps, graphs, and tables enhance the core text?

Examine the instructional activities. Do they provide opportunities for students to be actively engaged in the learning process? Are they varied? Are opportunities to write provided? Can students of differing abilities find opportunities for success in learning the content? Do questions provided for students help them to analyze the information and to think critically; that is, to reflect, hypothesize, analyze, verify, synthesize? Do the activities provide for curriculum integration and correlation? Do students have opportunity to discuss or debate ideas presented in the textbook? Do activities become more challenging as the year progresses?

Examine the teacher's edition. Is a detailed scope and sequence list for the course provided? Is there a direct relation between the teachers' and the students' materials? Are these teachers' materials more than banal marginalia? Are opportunities offered to extend or enrich the text? Are primary sources or literature a part of this extension?

Examine another lesson in the teacher's text. Are there ideas, activities, or suggested materials to engage student interest? Do the activities make sense? Are they varied? Are they appropriate for the grade level and the reading ability of students? Are varied instructional strategies suggested to meet the learning styles or ability levels of different students? Can students generate their own questions? Are extension activities suggested? Are they meaningful?

Examine evaluation and assessment materials. Are both formal and informal assessment strategies suggested? Do these strategies enable students to hypothesize, analyze, and draw conclusions about the subject matter they are studying? Do assessment strategies include student writing exercises?

VII

Major American and World History Textbooks: An Annotated List

THIS GUIDE can examine only a fraction of the books in the entire market. It covers only the best-selling mass-market social studies and history textbooks widely used in elementary classrooms and in high school courses. The original goal in preparing this guide was to choose the leading books in terms of sales and influence upon the teaching of history in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Through annual surveys since 1989, the American Textbook Council has noted that the number of mass-market social studies and history textbooks is surprisingly small (and shrinking in size). In the absence of publicly available sales figures, the American Textbook Council has relied on its own databases and on the opinions of experts—professors, textbook writers, publishers, and state textbook officials—to determine which books to examine. The Council has monitored several major state adoption decisions. The Council has also analyzed publisher's catalogues, which reflect over time publishers' sales strategies, introductions to the market, and product success and failure. Fairly broad agreement exists among textbook experts that the titles examined in this guide are the major American and world history texts, both in sales and influence.

Many of the leading texts now in use in the nation's classrooms were introduced during the California elementary and junior high school adoption of 1990 or the Texas high school American history adoption of 1991. The American Textbook

Council has benefited from the following evaluations. In 1989 and 1990 California conducted extensive textbook reviews for grades kindergarten through eighth grade, published in *Adoption Recommendations of The Curriculum Development and Supplementary Materials Commission to The State Board of Education*. Oregon also conducted detailed evaluations open to public inspection. Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas undertook other assessments. Only a few competent reviews of world history books have been done in recent years. The Council has benefited from reviews conducted under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers and the East Asian Institute at Columbia University, both of which have examined world history textbooks by region, as it has from the California Textbook League periodical report, *The Textbook Letter*. In addition, the American Textbook Council has commissioned dozens of external reviews of texts by leading historians and authors. These assessments—generally organized by theme or geographic area—have appeared in issues of the *Social Studies Review* and other publications. The annotated list below attempts to synthesize these diverse reviews and findings.

The American Textbook Council receives one overriding request from educators, and that is to name the "best" textbooks in American history, world history, and other subject areas in the social studies. For obvious reasons, the Council resists such requests and cautions against such reductive efforts. In the first place, almost any current mass-market textbook will suffice in the hands of an organized, informed, and enthusiastic teacher. Secondly, textbooks are effective teaching and learning tools only when they are suited to the reading abilities and academic foundations of the students who will use them. The average reading levels and cognitive backgrounds of any classroom help determine a book's success or failure as a learning instrument.

Yet educators are hungry for concrete recommendations. The following annotated list includes American and world history books in current use in schools. Educational publishers are often misleading about the actual "newness" of a new copyright. Copyrights are now revised almost annually, often with minor

corrections and necessary updating, say, in 1994 to include the Clinton Administration and events in Eastern Europe. Some books with fresh copyrights were in fact written a decade ago. Books that are marketed as "revised editions" include more extensive changes of older books.

Elementary Social Studies Series

Houghton Mifflin Social Studies and *The World Around Us*, the Macmillan elementary series, were introduced prior to the 1990 California social studies adoption. The Macmillan series uses a conventional near-to-far or expanding environments approach. The Houghton Mifflin series, much less so. The Houghton Mifflin program is undoubtedly more interesting in the lower grades. The Macmillan program is easier to use and is popular with teachers. The content of the Houghton Mifflin program is more clever and complex. The Macmillan program is thinner on content, and its books often indulge in annoying anti-historical presentism, as in the case of the sixth/seventh grade world history, *Eastern Hemisphere*. Houghton Mifflin's newest version of fifth grade American history, *America Will Be*, puts more emphasis on twentieth-century events than the earlier edition, designed mainly for the California market. The books in the Houghton Mifflin series for sixth grade, *A Message of Ancient Days*, and seventh grade, *Across the Centuries*, cover world events from antiquity to 1789. Both have been praised by many textbook reviewers and are appropriate for less able readers in higher grades. In an effort to broaden the appeal of the series, and stung by criticism that the original series was not adequately multicultural in scope, Houghton Mifflin in 1994 added *To See a World* to the series, a "world cultures" approach for the same grades, evidently designed to placate those critics. *To See a World* emphasizes non-Western cultures and covers current affairs, making deep bows to multicultural fashion. The book is crammed with didactic "exercises." Because of the vast scope of its subject, it resembles an outline or workbook. *To See a World* is a testament to the content wars in social studies, not an advance or an improvement in the Houghton Mifflin series.

While superior to other elementary programs, the Houghton Mifflin series falls short of real excellence on account of its failure to emphasize a core text and in its overactive format. Three elementary series in print, products of the middle 1980s, despite their relatively fresh copyrights—*People in Time and Place*, Silver Burdett Ginn; *ScottForesman Social Studies*; and *HBJ Social Studies*, Landmark Edition, Harcourt Brace—are inferior to the Houghton Mifflin and Macmillan programs.

American History

American history is usually taught at the eighth and eleventh grade level, sometimes from the same split two-volume text. These two-volume textbooks do not address the presumed problem of very different reading abilities for the same student at these two grade levels. Eighth grade history often emphasizes national history before the Civil War or 1900. Eleventh grade histories include books that deal primarily with the modern United States, defined variously by states and localities at 1865, 1877, and 1900.

EIGHTH GRADE

For readers of very limited ability, *America Will Be*, the fifth grade book in the *Houghton Mifflin Social Studies* series noted above, is accessible. For better readers still with limited skills, teachers can profitably use *A More Perfect Union*, the eighth grade book in the same series, a book that concentrates on the period from the Revolutionary War to 1914, and one more "elementary" than "secondary" in appearance and pitch.

Teachers of eighth graders with average reading skills should consider instead Lorna C. Mason, William Jay Jacobs, and Robert P. Ludlum, *History of the United States, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1877*, Houghton Mifflin, widely praised since its adoption in Texas in 1991. An even finer book, John A. Garraty, *The Story of America*, Holt, Rinehart, was created for eighth grade use and adopted in California in 1990. While *The Story of America* is an effective text for eighth grade students with strong reading skills, the book has also found an audience in high schools and comes in a split two-volume format. John A.

Garraty et al., *American History*, Revised Edition, Holt, Rinehart, older but still in print, remains a sound one-volume textbook for eighth graders of average reading ability. Robert A. Divine et al., *The People and the Dream*, ScottForesman, has some strong sections, especially on social history and culture, but its text, overall, seems needlessly simple. James West Davidson and Michael B. Stoff, *The American Nation*, Prentice Hall, is a forthcoming revision of a popular text of mixed quality. Carlton L. Jackson and Vito Perrone, *Two Centuries of Progress*, Third Edition, Glencoe, is banal and uninspiring. John R. O'Connor, *Exploring American History*, Globe, a deeply flawed and often objectionable text, is not recommended for use at any level.

ELEVENTH GRADE

For high school students of limited reading ability, see the preceding list of eighth grade American history textbooks. Among older textbooks designed for general use in high schools, Daniel J. Boorstin and Brooks Mather Kelley, *A History of the United States*, Prentice Hall, is a challenging book of merit and style. Widely considered the distinctive, most literate high school American history text produced during the 1980s, it has been displaced to some extent by newer books. *A History of the United States* has a "traditional" approach, stressing constitutional and economic history, and it has been criticized as "conservative" in comparison to other American history texts. Henry Graff, *America: The Glorious Republic*, Houghton Mifflin, another political history, has its share of enthusiasts, but the book has failed to capture the audience that its publisher once expected, partly because of its political focus and relative uninterest in social and ethnic issues. A third book, *Triumph of the American Nation*, was the largest selling high school textbook in the nation ten years ago. It has been a troubled title, and in 1991, Georgia rejected the book, criticizing its "outdated approach, inattention to multiculturalism, inadequate critical thinking questions, and choppy narrative flow." Its publisher, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, has completely remade the book. It now has a 1995 copyright and sports a new (brand) name,

Todd and Curti's The American Nation. The core text of the newer book has shrunk radically, perhaps by half, using a format with much more white space, illustrations, and side attractions. The final chapters are a medley of multicultural themes and trendy concerns, not history. The new Todd and Curti is a step backward, a case of "dumbing down" and appeasement of pressure groups to try to find a larger audience.

Holt, Rinehart and Winston also publishes John A. Garraty's *The Story of America*, noted above, which the publisher maintains is designed mainly for eighth grade use. This is hard to fathom. *The Story of America* is a better (and more challenging) textbook in content and style than the new Todd and Curti. *The Story of America* is arguably the best general secondary-level American history textbook introduced in the 1990s, along with Thomas V. DiBacco, Lorna Mason, and Christian G. Appy, *History of the United States*, also adopted for high school use by Texas in 1991 in a split-volume format. In comparison to these two books, a third split text adopted by Texas falls short: James West Davidson and Kathleen Underwood, *American Journey*, Prentice Hall.

Henry W. Bragdon, Samuel P. McCutchen, and Donald A. Ritchie, *History of a Free Nation*, Glencoe, is an ambitious book aimed at able students, a makeover of *History of a Free People*, now out of print. The new book is big and cluttered with subunits; the text is literate and detailed, sometimes complex. *History of a Free Nation* has lost some simple virtues of Bragdon's old book and should not be confused with the original. Nonetheless, it merits serious attention as a challenging book for academic students.

Gary B. Nash, *American Odyssey: The United States in the Twentieth Century*, Glencoe, makes a concerted effort to highlight ethnic and social strands in twentieth-century American history. It was adopted for eleventh grade use in Texas and aligns to the California framework in history. As a social history, *American Odyssey* outreaches Carol Berkin et al., *American Voices: A History of the United States*, ScottForesman. Full of revisionist folly, and strident on themes of ethnicity, gender, and class, *American Voices* is not recommended.

For students with high reading skills and sufficient background including Advance Placement candidates—or as basic references for teachers—several texts are held in high regard. Sometimes criticized unfairly for "triumphalist" interpretations, well-known, older texts have done much in the last two decades in revisions to incorporate new historiography and social history into their texts: John M. Blum et al., *The National Experience: A History of the United States*, Seventh Edition, Harcourt Brace, and Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy, *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic*, Ninth Edition, D.C. Heath. "College-level" social histories exist in which "revisionism" meets balance and nuance. Mary Beth Norton et al., *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*, Third Edition, Houghton Mifflin, is a tonic reappraisal of American history through the lens of social history and group studies. George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative History*, Third Edition, Norton, is admired by some educators who like its old-fashioned narrative style and political focus.

World History

World history textbooks raise qualitative problems different from American history textbooks. They are more fungible; one book can easily substitute for the other without loss in approach or content, since these books have almost no authorial voice. These textbooks are forced to cover vast material, this a result of curricula that compress world history into one year. High school world history textbooks have received less review and analysis than American history textbooks in the last five years, partly on account of adoption schedules. Paul Gagnon's 1987 reviews of world history textbooks remain acute, but the books he examined are now often more than ten years old. Moreover, since then, debates over a "Western-centered" and "multicultural" approach have intensified.

For students of limited reading ability, the books in the *Houghton Mifflin Social Studies* series designed for sixth grade use, *A Message of Ancient Days*, and seventh grade use, *Across the Centuries*, cover world events from antiquity to 1789. They are highly regarded by textbook critics and can be used as intro-

ductory world history texts by high school students who require basic texts.

Four world history texts for high school students of average reading ability are adequate or better: Burton F. Beers, *World History: Patterns of Civilization*, Prentice Hall; Larry S. Krieger, Steven L. Jantzen, and Kenneth Neill, *World History: Perspectives on the Past*, D.C. Heath; Gerald Leinwand, *The Pageant of World History*, Prentice Hall; and Walter T. Wallbank, Arnold Schrier, and Patricia Gutierrez-Smith, *History and Life*, Fourth Edition, ScottForesman. *History and Life* offers welcome clarity of content, covering many complicated subjects with finesse. Two books are more challenging: Anatole Mazour and John M. Peoples, *World History: People and Nations*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, is a thorough book of considerable merit, with more substance than its competitors, even though some teachers will think it suffers from excessive size; Ross E. Dunn et al., *Links Across Time and Place: A World History*, McDougal, Littell, has its admirers for its global approach.

Four world history books are inferior to the texts noted above. In terms of style and format, none stands out, and their overall content is equivalent or worse: Mounir Farah and Andrea Berens-Karls, *World History: The Human Experience*, Glencoe; Mounir Farah et al., *Global Insights: People and Cultures*, Glencoe; and Marvin Perry et al., *History of the World*, Houghton Mifflin, a great disappointment. *Global Insights: People and Cultures*—a popular but vacuous "world cultures" textbook of the 1980s—is currently under full revision, according to its publishers. Sol Holt and John R. O'Connor, *Exploring World History*, Globe, is a text with grave lapses in narrative and content.

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AMERICAN TEXTBOOK COUNCIL

The American Textbook Council was established in 1988 to advance the quality of textbooks. The Council conducts independent reviews and studies of schoolbooks in history, social studies, and the humanities. It also publishes the *Social Studies Review*, a quarterly bulletin that provides reviews of social studies textbooks and commentary on curricular issues to over 4,000 leading educators, public officials, and citizens across the country. The Council endorses the production of textbooks that embody vivid narrative style, stress significant people and events, and promote better understanding of all cultures, including our own, on the principle that improved textbooks will advance the curriculum, stimulate student learning, and encourage educational achievement for children of all backgrounds. It provides a forum for educators and others interested in improving the educational materials that teachers and students use. The American Textbook Council is a program of the Center for Education Studies, a nonprofit educational institute chartered in the state of New York. The Council is located at 475 Riverside Drive, Room 518, New York, New York 10115.

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