

The Armillary

Navigating Social Studies in the Twenty-First Century



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Turmoil and Hope: the Arab Middle East in early 2011

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For the last few weeks I have felt a certain *frisson* of excitement as I open the *New York Times* each morning: which seedy dictatorship, which principedom, shaykhdom or kingdom will be the next to feel its people's wrath? These are stirring times, and after some forty-five years' engagement with the Middle East, mostly at academic arm's length, it's immensely and refreshingly exciting to live through these extraordinary events. The *NYT* now has a quarter page **every** day devoted to a round-up of Middle East events, with a couple of sentences on the latest developments in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and so on.

Why has this happened, and why has it happened now? I am not sure how well I can answer the second question, but I will have a go at the first.

With the exception of Saudi Arabia, all the states mentioned above emerged from various forms of colonial rule sometime in the 1950s (as late as 1971 in Bahrain). The colonial states were all fairly weak, and their institutions (republican, monarchical, parliamentary, military) had been established more to serve the interests of the colonizers than **of** the colonized. The weakness, or relative autonomy, of these states meant that they were extremely vulnerable to seizures of power by disaffected elements in the armed forces, and a series of military dictatorships were established by *coups d'état*.

This happened in Algeria (which emerged after a bitter civil war with France to become independent under the rule of the National Liberation Front in 1962), in Egypt in 1952, and in Libya and Yemen in 1969 (as well as in Iraq in 1958 and Syria at various different times in the 1950s and 1960s). What were deemed to be 'traditional' arrangements were maintained in the monarchies. Morocco and Tunisia became independent of France in 1956; in Morocco the monarchy managed to hold on to power, while Tunisia quickly became a republic under the leader of the independence movement. In Jordan, there has been a long history of tension between the 'indigenous' East Bankers, and the Palestinians since the latter 'became Jordanian' in 1950, and again after Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967; this was somewhat contained through the long reign of King Husayn (1952-99). Bahrain, which had been ruled indirectly by Britain since the nineteenth century, briefly considered joining the United Arab Emirates, but decided against it and became a separate independent state in 1971.

Some of these states have oil and/or natural gas, and some do not. In the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula and Libya, the indigenous populations are quite small, and the day-to-day functioning of the economy is dependent on migrant workers, mostly on highly discriminatory short-term contracts. For much of the latter decades of the twentieth century, unemployment or lack of opportunity in, say, Jordan or Egypt was made bearable by the availability of relatively well-paying work in Iraq, or the Arabian Peninsula, but these openings have steadily declined, initially with falling oil prices in the late 1990s.

One feature common to most Arab regimes, both monarchies and dictatorships, until comparatively recently has been their generally close and cordial relationship with the United States. Bahrain, for instance, where the level of violence has been quite high, houses the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet. There are a few exceptions: for better or worse, Libya and Syria have long been regarded as international pariahs, and more than a decade of cordial relations between Iraq and the US came to an end in the run-up to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

In general, the degree of closeness to the US has had little or no effect on whether or not the states were democratic, that is, whether they upheld the rule of law, and had governments that could be voted in or out by some form of universal suffrage in free, fair, and regular elections. Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco upheld such principles from time to time, but in general, democracy in the region has long been conspicuous by its absence (either no elections or rigged elections, major restrictions on political activity, the imprisonment of activists), whether in states close to the US (Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia) or very far from its good graces (Iraq, Libya, Syria). Why is this so? The events of the last few weeks have shown that the standard and somewhat racist answer that Arabs (or Muslims) are somehow incapable of understanding or struggling for democracy no longer 'makes sense', although of course it never did. But why has some form of democracy so far eluded the Arab world?

I think there are five main reasons. First, the necessity of protecting the 'free flow of oil' to the West has historically trumped other considerations; almost all Arab oil goes to the US, Europe, or Japan, and the fact that most of the exporting states were either dictatorships or **'family enterprises'** mattered far less than their 'reliability'.

Second, during the Cold War, in the countries deemed vital to US interests, the US and local obsession with the potential dangers of 'communism' led the states themselves to drive the 'democratic left' into exile, prison, or worse, and promoted the notion that the maintenance of the status quo was the least risky course to support. In addition, the richer states were able to buy off opposition by extensive welfare programs, the creation of public sector jobs, and **by** paying their more politically conscious citizens to keep quiet, or stay abroad.

Third, the 'post-revolutionary' states in the region were equally worried by the democratic left, because of its brave if futile insistence on some form of democratic accountability. The ideology of Arab nationalism was mostly chauvinistic, anti-minority, and promoted a cult of blind obedience to the leader; in addition, long after the ideology had lost any popular resonance, the leaders (or their sons) remained implacably in power. In consequence, in the absence of opposition from the left, the focus of opposition movements shifted to 'Islam'. Although such movements could be and were harassed by the various **states, the states could** not, ultimately, shut down the mosques. Also, beginning most prominently with the assassination of President Sadat of Egypt in October 1981, some Islamic movements turned increasingly to violence, including **suicide bombings** and attacks against civilians, which, as had been the intention, terrified both the regimes and their patrons

Fourth, in that context, the monarchs and the dictators were pretty successful in convincing both friend and foe of the inevitability of Louis XV's famous **phrase**, 'Après moi, le déluge'. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, and particularly after 9/11, the US could easily be persuaded that – say – Husni Mubarak and the son he was grooming to succeed him were the only ones capable of stemming the tide of fiercely anti-Western Islamic movements, which would surely follow any openings to greater liberalization.

Finally, second only to its concern about the free flow of oil has been the US' desire to defend what it takes to be Israel's interests. Hence the fact that the conservative Arab states had either treaties or 'understandings' with Israel, and that both the monarchies and the 'revolutionary states' had almost completely lost interest in the Palestinians, was perfectly fine for all concerned – including, it now turns out, most of those **presumed to be** acting on the Palestinians' behalf.

These are some of the reasons why recent events have been so unexpected, and so momentous. We now see mass movements trying to restore agency to populations which have been pushed around, bullied, and humiliated by regimes which do not remotely respect public opinion, or popular will, and which have steadily stolen very substantial sums from their subjects. Why now? Obviously, the revolution in communications technology has been a major factor (according to Thomas Friedman on *Face the Nation* last Sunday, the Egyptian Army has a Facebook page), but there are others; the continuing lack of employment for young people, even those with university degrees; the gradual but constant rise in the cost of living as a result of higher world food prices, and the fact that some of the dictators and monarchs are old and/or ailing and have tried or will try to pass the baton on to their children (Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia). There have been earlier signs of dissatisfaction, including the *Kifaya* movement (*kifaya* means 'enough' in the sense of 'we have had enough'), which began in Cairo in 2005. We now learn that there have been significant linkages between the movements for change in Tunisia and Egypt going back

two or three years, facilitated by the Internet. And of course success in one place spurs on similar efforts in another. In addition, as commentators and journalists have indicated, the Islamic movements, particularly extremist groups such as *al-Qa'ida*, have so far mostly been conspicuous for their absence

It is difficult to say where all this is going, in the sense that, as in all liberation movements, people are generally in greater agreement on what they do not want than on the details of what they do want. But in spite of the magnitude of the task of creating the institutions necessary to implement change, it is difficult to imagine that there will be any significant turning back. **In 1917, Lenin wrote** (and **what follows** has the merit of being a precise quote, rather than the 'other one' ['sometimes decades pass ...'] currently doing the rounds on the blogosphere): 'Democracy is a form of the state, one of its varieties. Consequently, it, like every other state, represents, on the one hand, the organized, systematic use of force against persons; but, on the other hand, it signifies the formal recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure of, and to administer, the state.' (*State and Revolution*, Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Reprints, 2001, p. 85)





The Living Wax Museum

History came alive for students and the community at Oakridge Elementary in Granite School District, as the multi-purpose room was transformed into a historic Wax Museum. Pam Smith and Jan Rolan integrated Language Arts, science, presentation skills, writing, technology and history to elicit student understanding of the impact people have on history and how history impacts people. Five rows of fifth grade students dressed as historic figures lined the open room. Each with a hand drawn and colored backdrop scene to exemplify their place in history. Sixth grade students were the tech support as they were in charge of playing the iPods with pre-recorded information in the first person of each of the frozen figures. How do you get fifth grade students to hold a pose for two hours? This was ingenious with every other student sitting on a chair in a pose while the others stood posed. Every few minutes the drum would beat signaling a change in position, those sitting stood, and those standing would sit and freeze until the next drum beat.

A task was provided for younger and older students who visited the museum, directing their attention, and helping them to engage with the content for better understanding of the historical significance of each character. The tasks were age appropriate and gave students a focus while they walked among the living statues of those who paved the way to the present.

Students had to choose someone who had an impact on science and/or history; they could not choose entertainers or sports figures. One of the most popular choices was Abraham Lincoln but there could only be one. Most were from the past but there were a few present favorites, such as Hillary Clinton and George W. Bush. Ulysses S. Grant stood next to Robert E. Lee with sword drawn, Lewis and Clark, Sacagawea, Pocahontas, Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin and many more. Nearly every era was represented and it was evident that students became experts on their historic person.

This was a great way to engage not only students but the entire school community in American History that increased skills and interest.



Project Requirements:

1. Each student will choose one American to research. The person chosen needs to have made a contribution to the United States or the world. People to research may include scientists, authors, engineers, U.S. Presidents, inventors, activists, or any other person who has made a contribution to society. Each fifth grade student will choose a different person to research. Students may not choose entertainers or athletes for this project.
2. Students need to read one biography and use at least one Internet website to research the chosen person.
3. Each student will write a brief essay about the person. It should include:
 - a. Background Information
 - b. What the person is known for/accomplishments
 - c. How the person has made a difference in American History and/ or to our lives today
4. At school, each student will record his/her essay on an iPod.
5. A science board will be provided for each student. Most of the work on the presentation boards will be completed at school. The presentation board will include:
 - a. The person's name
 - b. A scene where the person might be seen in history (example: a lab for a scientist, Appomattox for Ulysses S. Grant, etc)
6. On the day of the Wax Museum Event, each student needs to come dressed as the person researched and be prepared to participate fully in the Wax Museum.

Jan Rolan and Pam Smith Teach at Oakridge Elementary School in Granite School District.





An Illustrative Anecdote by Cory Little

A couple of years ago, I stumbled across Twhistory (<http://www.twhistory.org>), an intriguing idea to re-cast a historic event as a series of Twitter posts from the participants. I was teaching an experimental, technology-rich 11th grade US History class at the time and decided to give it a try. With the 40-year anniversary of the Kent State shootings approaching, I gave the students an overview of the environment of that situation and what happened. We then selected a couple of dozen characters that would be able to flush out the story as it unfolded. Some were actual people that were there, while others were manufactured personalities, such as an un-named guardsman or onlooker. The students wrote brief Twitterish updates as though they were that person and we arranged them chronologically as they might have happened during a three-day period, carefully marking down the exact minute that we think it would have occurred.

I created thirty Twitter profiles, one for each of our characters. That last sentence was significant. Twitter only allows so many profiles per email address, so I used a trick I looked up online to create all of the profiles using several fake, or temporary email addresses. Each had a picture that the student had found, either of the real person involved, or one that looked like it could be their character. Wanting to post each of the tweets at the precise time we had selected for the actual event (+ 40 years), but not thrilled about the amount of time that would take, I found an online tool that I could use to pre-program when those various tweets were to be sent, and we could just sit back and watch the posts appear.

The day before the first post was to go live, I got an email from Twitter explaining that an irregularity had been identified and because it looked like our fake accounts had been created by some computer program for some devious purpose, all of the accounts had been disabled. So it didn't happen. Nothing got posted. No evidence of the significant amount of effort on the part of the students and the teacher to implement technology whiz-bang to improve student learning.

Despite the disappointment, I had to admit that there were important successes. The students had gotten into character in a way that they probably would not have been able to if they weren't trying to think and compose tweets as that person. The focus was less on what happened and more on how events at Kent State would have seemed at the time or how it would have felt to be there as an eye-witness, or as a participant. Despite my first failed attempt, I still think Twhistory is an awesome option for teachers to look into.

My Goals for the Students

I have three goals for the social studies classroom, which are in reality just three facets of the same overall vision:

1. Seamless integration of content from various sources. This includes text, video, audio, and images, but also includes classroom discussion and the results of student thinking if that can be captured in some way.
2. Students will learn to think like a _____. Like a historian when we are doing historical inquiry, like a geographer or an economist when we tackle those things, etc.
3. Students will assume ownership of the process and products of learning.

I see technology as a way to make these goals more achievable and meaningful. In the remaining paragraphs that I have here, I want to share some ideas of practical ways that technology can be used to facilitate these goals, or others that you might have for your classes.

Transform the Textbook

And by transform, I don't mean replace! I have an iPad and it is part of my job to help teachers learn to incorporate these and similar tools as they acquire them. When a teacher tells me that they just got an iPad with a grant and they are going to use it in their social studies classroom, I am enthusiastically supportive. I often ask how they are going to use it, and then try to hide my disappointment as they explain how they plan to transform their classroom experience with what amounts to a \$500 wireless mouse.

Tablets and similar devices will not significantly (positively) impact learning until they are in the student hands. (I also believe that there is little value in apps unless they are online apps, so the type of device becomes less important.) I realize that teachers have to become comfortable with that kind of technology first, and that it takes a sizable chunk of change and commitment from the IT crew to get devices into student hands, but that is where the benefit *might* be recognized. If you load an electronic version of the textbook onto the device, or use it to access the electronic version online, you have still just replaced the textbook with another and not transformed it at all. The possibilities that devices like tablets have for textbook transformation are not yet even on the doorstep. Jeff Grimes has a chapter of a book available as an Apple App called *The Revolution* that you can download for free. It hints at kinds of interactivity that might be useful in a textbook, certainly better than a print book, but still not close to what will have to happen for teachers and students to embrace the new style of textbook.

There are a couple of short articles that would be worth your while reading along this vein of textbook transformation. The first is by Ellen Noonan. It focuses on building the "how to do history" approach into the textbook, among other things. Great article and the

comments from readers were interesting as well. <http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/new-ways/building-a-better-textbook-noonan/>

The second is from Stanley Pesick, who explains how to turn the standard textbook from being the authority to a jumping point to discussion or other learning. <http://teachinghistory.org/best-practices/teaching-with-textbooks/24278>

The Future is Here, Online

Teachers should be active in online PLCs and students should become comfortable participating in online communities as well. There may be hundreds of online PLC opportunities for social studies teachers, but there are at least a few really good ones that you should look into. Some require almost no attention on your part, such as <http://teachinghistory.org/>

There are loads of great ideas and innovative lesson plans, many of which incorporate the technology that you already have in your classroom. A little more attention might be required to visit blogs occasionally. Two good starting points for this would be

1. History Tech (<http://historytech.wordpress.com/>)
2. *The History Lab* (<https://sites.google.com/site/thehistorylab/>)

The next step would be to actively become involved in an online PLC. There are several great options out there for teachers, and there are even some that are specific to Social Studies, or even a particular course that you might teach. One of the new award-winning groups is a Twitter group with local ties called #sschat. The single most important technology that I have found for education in the past 15 years is the wiki, or something like it. A wiki is something that allows both the teacher and the students to post content, edit it anytime on the fly, comment on each other's stuff, collaborate on projects, review learning in progress, etc. This whole concept of a public learning space that students kind of own and kind of share really gets at my third goal mentioned above of having students assume ownership for what they are learning and giving them some control over how that learning is organized and how the results are published to the teacher, to the rest of the class, and, potentially, to the interested world.

There are many good options in this wiki area, most are free and most are easy to use. Take a look at a few good examples of how teachers are using collaborative environments for students to not only post the results of their work, but also the ongoing learning itself.

<http://mrbrucehistory.wikispaces.com/>

<http://105.wikispaces.com/>

<http://progressiveerausm.wikispaces.com/>

Here's a quick little plan to encourage you to implement some technology into your classroom.

1. Attend a couple of local conferences to get a few ideas to try. The Saturday Seminar is a great one and so is UCET.
2. Enlist support from your best friend at school, the local technology support person, and the district social studies specialist.
3. Cross your fingers and give it a try.
4. Tell others how it went (good and bad). If it was great, you might even consider presenting the results at the conference the next year.





Saturday Seminars: A Good Use of Your Weekend

by Tara Chase, NBCT

Where can you learn about Civil Rights, Plains Indian Horse Cultures, and the Conspiracy to Assassinate Abraham Lincoln in one day? At the Social Studies Saturday Seminar, of course! The Utah State Office of Education—in conjunction with the Utah Council for the Social Studies (UCSS), Granite School District, and Jordan School District—present these day-long social studies seminars twice a year for teachers of all levels. Seminars are a great way to increase your content knowledge, get new ideas for your classroom, and get some USOE credit to boot! Seminars usually involve daylong sessions for Elementary teachers and three shorter breakout sessions for Secondary teachers. Sessions are presented by local professors, district personnel, and other highly qualified individuals. The variety of offerings guarantees everyone can find subjects to interest them and match their curriculum needs.

The Spring Saturday Seminar was held on March 19, 2011 at South Jordan Middle School. Hundreds of teachers attended to learn content and strategies, and specifically to discuss ways to integrate Social Studies with the English Language Arts Common Core. The elementary teachers, especially, came in large numbers to sessions expressly designed for their grade level and the Social Studies curriculums. Secondary teachers took in sessions on Utah history, English Common Law, technology in the classroom, and Humanitarian law—among others. As usual, the presenters were well-prepared, interesting, and offered great ideas and insights to the attendees.

The 2010-2011 seminars have come and gone, but just like Halley's Comet, terrible fashions, and Ferris Wheels—they will come around again! (*And much faster than the comet, we might add.*) Plan now to attend the seminars for the 2011-2012 and the 2012-2013 school years. They'll help your teaching, feed your social studies-loving soul, and just maybe blow your mind a little bit too.

See you there!



The National Council for the Social Studies Conference: Denver, 2010 & D.C., 2011 by Quinn Rollins



Last fall I had the opportunity to attend the National Council for the Social Studies Conference. I was attending as a social studies teacher, but also as the Vice President for the Utah Council for the Social Studies. As I'm relatively new to the leadership role in UCSS and in my affiliation with NCSS, it was a new experience for me—one that opened my eyes to the possibilities of what can be done as part of a professional association.

There were thousands of social studies educators and education leaders in attendance, and that alone was an eye-opener for me. Sometimes as teachers we end up so confined in our classrooms, so focused on the education of individual students that we forget to think laterally—that there are thousands of other social studies teachers in the country, and many of them are going through the same struggles we are. The struggle to be accepted as a “solid” subject when there aren't nationwide standards and testing; the struggle to even keep social studies as a subject in the classroom; the struggles of increased scrutiny by politicians and lobbyists who want to make sure we're teaching students “the right way.” In speaking with these other teachers from across the country, I felt like Utah does have its share of challenges when it comes to social studies education, but we're not the only ones, and we're far from the worst off. Teachers in other states perceive more hostility than I do in our home state, and although this trip was before the most recent legislative session, I still feel we have the ability to do our jobs and do them well. This camaraderie with other professional educators was a highlight of the conference for me, even though it wasn't a specific point on an agenda, or a workshop about how much social studies teachers can support each other. It was the overall feeling of support and wellbeing that comes from attending a conference like this, and I was impressed with that feeling in Denver.

The speakers at the large group sessions were impressive, and motivated me to do more in the classroom, as part of NCSS and UCSS, and in my own career development. President Goldberg's keynote addressed our need to be leaders in our field, knowing our goals as social studies teachers. If we don't know why social studies is important, how will our students, their parents, or politicians? We need to learn to contact the “digital natives” we teach, and help them learn 21st Century skills and habits of mind. Sam Weinberg spoke about the importance of teaching literacy (a focus of the Common Core), and that adolescent literacy should concern all subject areas. Kenneth Davis, author of the “Don't Know Much about History” series spoke extensively about what students (and adults) should know about their history. He believes in making history more real, which makes it

more complicated than the “inspiring heroes” stories that often get told in classrooms, to the exclusion of the experiences of everyday Americans and the more complicated truths about the heroes and villains of history. Davis also emphasized acknowledging and using pop culture to engage students. Find points of reference between history and things students already know about that will help them become the expert, and then use that expertise to teach them.

I attended several different workshops at the NCSS Conference. I’m a self-admitted Professional Development Junkie, and anytime I can find more strategies that might engage my students, I’m going to take them. Michael Yell is a past president of NCSS, a current middle school teacher, and he was an engaging presenter that showed us dozens of strategies in the space of a few hours. His best strategies dovetailed literacy and inquiry in a masterful way, and I’ve used them in my class since returning. A second-year teacher, Rory Tannebaum, gave a presentation on Teaching Controversial Issues in the Classroom. I was stunned that this teacher, with only two years under his belt was presenting at this national conference, but his strategies were solid...if terrifying. It reminded me of the controversial topics that are in my own curriculum, and helped me reassess my own teaching strategies when it comes to the more difficult topics of history. Author Elizabeth Partridge demonstrated Google Lit Trips, including some that she’s created for her own books. This strategy would take some time to set up yourself, but there are dozens (if not hundreds) already made for various historic books and events, and are worth looking into for some student exploration. Glenn Wiebe has become my go-to resource for new history strategies and technology strategies. I attended his class about using iPods and iPads to teach Social Studies, and his hands-on presentation let us delve into some apps I haven’t seen before, but have been able to use since. I’ve subscribed to his weekly e-mailed tip since returning from the conference, and his website, Social Studies Central, is a fine free resource for any social studies teacher.

There were several speakers attending NCSS, essentially because of their fame, but who are parlaying that fame into great things for social studies education. Dr. Maya Soetoro-Ng is most famous as “Barack Obama’s sister,” but she’s much more than that. She’s been an educator herself for many years, teaching in schools and now as a professor teaching other teachers at the University of Hawaii. Her speech was about teaching our students not to escape the problems of the 21st Century, but to teach them to act. Her emphasis was on three aspects of imagination: Empathetic Imagination, Moral Imagination, and Narrative Imagination. These all combine to help our students reduce aggression and increase kindness; to imagine peace and solutions for problems instead of reveling in the destruction of conflict; to find ways to deepen our own stories and tell them to increase understanding. I was personally very moved by her message. Is history connecting the

dots of wars in our classrooms? Or is there a larger, more humane vista that we can show our students? Instead of a dehumanizing approach to history, her ideas are warm and human. I was touched that this educator, who happened to have her voice elevated by the election of her brother, would choose to use that new platform to spread this message. The American Film Company, a new studio whose first movie was *The Conspirator*, brought the movie and previewed it to teachers at NCSS and the producer and screenwriter spoke to us at length after the movie. Thanks to generous seed money, the studio wants to make a series of movies about the “untold, mistold, or undertold” stories of American History. This first movie is about the trial of Mary Surratt as a conspirator in Lincoln’s assassination; other upcoming topics include John Brown at Harper’s Ferry, and Paul Revere and the beginnings of the American Revolution. I was impressed at the vision the producer has for this company, and that they’d be willing to commit to movies with a mission of teaching people the “real” stories of history, not necessarily the Hollywood version. The other big name at NCSS was Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who also a man is putting his money where his mouth is. I’ve known his name for my entire life, but didn’t ever know that besides changing the NBA forever, he’s also had a lifelong passion for history. He spoke about his own personal history and how he learned to love school; my favorite quote from his address was “if I’d had to have a real job, I would be down there with you...” The books he’s written are an attempt to fill in the gap in African American History “between slavery and civil rights.” His book *On the Shoulders of Giants* has just been made into a movie, and he previewed some clips from that movie for the audience. It was released directly to On Demand cable services, and should be available on DVD this year. His goal is to make ten films about the African American experience, using his celebrity and the appeal of these previously untold stories to get them made. Again, I was impressed that someone who in my eyes had it made years ago, would use his position to benefit students and teachers of history. It was inspiring and exciting, and I can’t wait to see what else comes of it.

An additional duty I had as a representative of the Utah Council for the Social Studies was to represent Utah in the House of Delegates. Set up as a model of a legislative body, I was able to review bills, cast votes, and do my best to fairly represent the needs of our state in the House of Delegates, and see how this governing body can be a model for our own procedures and policies. I also attended the Presidents Meeting on behalf of our president, Dawn Hauser, who returned to Salt Lake City for our own UCSS Saturday Seminar. This smaller meeting involved the presidents of the state and regional councils, and it was gratifying to hear the successes and challenges that other parts of the country are having with their own social studies councils.

In all, it was a tremendous opportunity and experience for me. As a teacher, I learned new strategies that really work for my students. It also confirmed that some of the strategies

I've been using for years are solid, and the benefits my students enjoy from them aren't just flukes. The leadership from the authors, speakers and presenters I saw was inspiring, and motivated me to continue in my own professional development. More than anything, I was encouraged at the state of social studies education at the national level. I energized by the passion that thousands of other teachers have for teaching the same subject that I do, and felt able to cope with the many challenges we face as professionals. The next National Council for the Social Studies conference is in December in Washington, D.C., and I'm planning on being there. If your circumstances allow you to attend, find a way to do it. You'll be glad you did.

Online Resources:

Kenneth C. Davis www.dontknowmuch.com

Michael Yell's Mystery Strategy <http://teachinghistory.org/nhec-blog/24485>

Elizabeth Partridge <http://www.elizabethpartridge.com/>

Google Lit Trips <http://www.googlelittrips.org/>

Social Studies Central www.socialstudiescentral.com

The American Film Company <http://www.theamericanfilmcompany.com/>

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's On the Shoulders of Giants <http://kareemabduljabbar.com/osg/>

Congratulations to the UCSS Teachers of the Year:

2011:

- **Ruth King, Elementary and National Teacher of the year for NCSS**
- **Quinn Rollins, Junior High School (Granite)**

2012:

- **Carol Stevens, Elementary (Granite)**
- **Doug Snow, Junior High (Tooele)**
- **Dominick Brusso, High School (Jordan)**



Quinn receives UCSS Secondary Teacher of the Year from Boone Colegrove, sponsor of the award.



Ruth King: NCSS Elementary Teachers of the Year with the secondary winners. Washington DC, Dec. 2011 (Top Left Photo) NCSS Teachers of the Year with Secretary of Education standing behind Ruth!



Using Latino Background Knowledge in the Social Studies Classroom

By Axel Ramirez PhD

As a history educator I am always discussing the importance of making history relevant to all students. However, many times Latino students feel as if the history they are learning offers little connection to their lives (Urrieta, 2004). In this article I will offer up key topics and concepts that my high school Latino students have used to make connections to social studies readings and discussions. Incorporating topics and concepts to which students can make cultural connections can potentially make the social studies classroom more relevant and engaging to the Latino student. Student comprehension and interest is often improved by incorporating elements that are tied to their own lives.

Author/Article background: I run a summer bridge program for Latino high school students at Utah Valley University. The goal of the Latino Educators of Tomorrow (LET) program is to help 10-11th grade Latino student's transition from high school to the university by offering entry level courses in a "Latino friendly" atmosphere. The second goal of the LET program is to steer many of these students into the field of education. Within the program I have had the opportunity to teach most of these students in social studies classes. Though the majority of this article is based on my actual teaching during the last four years, I will also reference some of the findings from my dissertation: "Traditional Latino cultural knowledge and the reading of historical texts." In addition, I will draw from my experiences as a junior high social studies teacher for 12 years.

Supporting research: When Latino households and communities are studied, researchers find that Latinos acquire multidimensional depth and breadth from their participation in household life and ethnic communities (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005, 2006). Latino students are not brought up without experiences that are helpful in content area classrooms. In the multicultural research this type of experiential background knowledge is often referred to as "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez et al, 2005). These "funds of knowledge" are crucial for educators to understand because it is from such experiences that students interpret texts (Epstein, 2001; Brozo, Cantu Valerio, & Salazar, 1996; Reynolds et al., 1982) and make connections during discussions. Furthermore, there is evidence that students make cultural connections to text and discussions regardless of their perceived academic or reading level (Ramirez, 2009), meaning that even if a student is struggling with the reading level of the text that is being discussed, it is still possible for them to become involved in the discussion of those texts if the topics/concepts are relevant to their background knowledge.

Types of Connections: Regardless of social studies content or grade level, there are topics and issues that frequently come up in social studies discussions (conflict, economics, government, daily living, etc.). In this section I will begin by explaining the type of connections I have experienced Latino students making in social studies classes. The first group of topics/issues surrounds background knowledge associated with global connections. The second group is more closely associated with social dynamics found within the United States. The reason that I am so excited about the following topics is that they were student generated rather than teacher generated and as we all know, students love to interact with topics which they bring up themselves.

Global connections

Family: The most widely made connection initiated by Latino students involves family. In a traditional Latino family, the idea of family goes beyond the nuclear family. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, and close friends are all considered *familia*. When issues of family are brought up, as in readings and discussions about family structures or family values, Latino students can offer up a variety of connections. In discussions surrounding the care of elderly family members, my Latino students are often very vocal about the importance of caring for our elders. Many times, traditional Latino students are very upset about the idea of care facilities or the elderly living on their own. In addition, discussions that surround the teaching of values, as in *Poor Richard's Almanac* or Native American sayings of wisdom, are readily connected to the Latino practice of the parents or family elders teaching values to Latinos through *dichos* (proverbs). Any reading or discussion that can focus on family/family structure or teachings from family elders may allow Latino students to connect more readily to the topic.



Latin American current events: Students from Latin American countries are often very informed about what is happening throughout the world because they have access to news outlets that many of our mainstream students do not access. For example, many students in my classes get information about what is happening around the world from *Univision* (a widely followed international Spanish language station). Thus, I am often impressed by their ability to view current event issues from multiple perspectives. Students may also have extended family in Latin American countries. Through correspondence the students become intimately aware of what is happening in other parts of the world. As a result, Latino students can bring varied and personal opinions during global current event discussions.

Travel/Migration: Many of our Latino students have insights into international issues concerning travel and migration because of their personal or family experiences. Students can therefore understand the economic and political necessities surrounding immigration in a way that adds depth to discussions.

Religion: Because of the influence of the Catholic Church on the culture of Latin America, students may better be able to understand ideas of community values and celebrations. In many small towns throughout Latin America communal rituals are celebrated throughout the year. In addition, the importance of symbols and individual rituals are often understood by students who are actively involved in their faith groups. Yet, a Latino student does not have to be a practicing Catholic to understand the rich symbolism and importance of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* to Mexicans and Mexican-Americans.



Chauvinism

On a more personal note, students who come from Latin American countries may also understand the concept of male chauvinism (*machismo*) more than most students. The idea of patriarchal or male dominated societies are not abstract concepts to Latino students who come from traditional Latin American backgrounds. While we must be careful of over generalizing, the concept of *machismo* is still evident in Latin America.

Social connections among Latino students

Issues of discrimination, poverty and class consciousness, and the need for unity may be connecting points for Latino students in social studies classes. Unfortunately, during my teaching career these were very difficult concepts for my mainstream students to understand since they were generally upper middle class and the majority shared the same ethnic and religious background. Thus, students from Latino households may more readily become involved in such discussions though great care has to be taken to not force students to become the spokespersons for the “Latino side” of social issues.



Discrimination

When discussing discrimination with a class full of Latino students, the issue of discrimination is never “someone else’s problem”; it is something that is immediately relevant, as most Latino students have either directly experienced discrimination or have a close family member who has experienced discrimination. Furthermore, many Latino students understand the nuances associated with discrimination such as when there is discrimination between people of similar background and experiences.

Poverty

Poverty is a concept to which many Latinos can readily connect. When discussing the Great Depression with Latino students there was empathy and understanding since they understood issues of desperate poverty. Because many Latino students who live in poverty understand the urgency behind free/subsidized medical care and free and reduced lunch programs, there is an opportunity to connect to many of the Great Society programs.

Class consciousness

As a result of their understanding of poverty and global events, some Latino students may also understand class consciousness more profoundly than others students. In my dissertation, a Latino student described a family exchange at the dinner table: *We always argue about how there is always the poor class and the rich class, and the rich class is always getting richer because it’s always exploiting the poor and that’s just not right. There has to be some kind of fairness, some kind of change and how they exploit the workers, too. We all are equal* (Ramirez, 2009).



Unity and social activism

With an understanding of discrimination, poverty, and class consciousness comes an understanding of the necessity for unity and social activism. Many Latino students have felt isolated so they understand the need for unity among people with similar experiences. A belief in the importance of unity among like people, along with past experiences concerning discrimination and poverty may lead to an understanding for the need for social activism.

Discussion concerning global connections

The following list is not meant to be comprehensive. Rather, it was put together to show how the topics/concepts that my Latino students brought up in my classes might be used with the social studies core. The list isn't only for the benefit of Latino students since many students from different ethnicities may share similar background knowledge. Yet, because the list is Latino student generated, there is a greater chance that it may be of service for teachers of Latino students. There are obviously many more connections that can be made that would be relevant to Latino students which can be drawn by using culturally relevant texts or discussing specific events and people associated with Latin America.

Utah history curriculum:

- Matriarchy/Patriarchy and respect for elders within indigenous communities
- Religious background to Dominguez-Escalante
- Utah as Crossroads of the West and as a destination for immigrants
- Historical background of towns or geographic features
- The importance of family to pioneer groups
- Principles of extended family working together
- Issues of a common language for new immigrants
- Discrimination throughout Utah history toward various groups
- Perception of women's rights in territorial Utah
- Social unity and separation among ethnic/religious groups
- Connections between character education programs and traditional teachings on character/values
- Current events with global connections

United States/Civics curriculum

- Matriarchy/Patriarchy and respect for elders within indigenous communities
- Geographical place names
- Maintaining religious identities in new lands
- Anti-Catholic discrimination in colonial regions
- Issues of religious liberty in the colonies and founding documents
- The Great Awakening
- Political unity within the colonies
- Social separation among ethnic/religious groups during the colonial era
- Reasons for migration as part of Westward Expansion
- Border disputes during westward expansion
- Issues of unity and honor in the American Civil War
- Progressivism and class consciousness
- Waves of immigration
- Poverty during the Great Depression

- Civil rights and class consciousness
- Great Society programs
- Connections between character education programs and traditional teachings on character/values
- Current events with global connections

World history/civilization curriculum

- Matriarchy/Patriarchy and respect for elders in world civilizations
- Migration related to agriculture
- Migration due to political stresses
- The importance of religion and symbolism in every day and ritual activity
- The connection between religion and politics
- Unity and nation/state building
- Population graphs
- Class issues and caste systems
- World immigration patterns
- Discrimination toward new immigrants throughout the world
- Third world poverty issues
- Current events with global connections

Conclusion

The last four years have been rewarding as I have seen my Latino students immerse themselves in social studies during the summer months. Though I do try and provide a “Latino friendly” atmosphere in my classes, it is the students’ input that is based from their real experiences that livens up the classroom. My Latino students have taught me to look at them from the perspective of “what they bring” to the social studies classroom more than on “what they don’t have.” Once my framework changed, I began to realize that the social studies curriculum is itself “Latino friendly” and can be very inviting to Latino students.

Axel Donizetti Ramirez, Ph.D. is an associate professor of secondary education at Utah Valley University. He was a junior high social studies teacher for twelve years. He is also the director of UVU’s Latino Educators of Tomorrow program.



TOP TEN ANALYSES: Using Categorillas

By Chris Hall, Davis School District

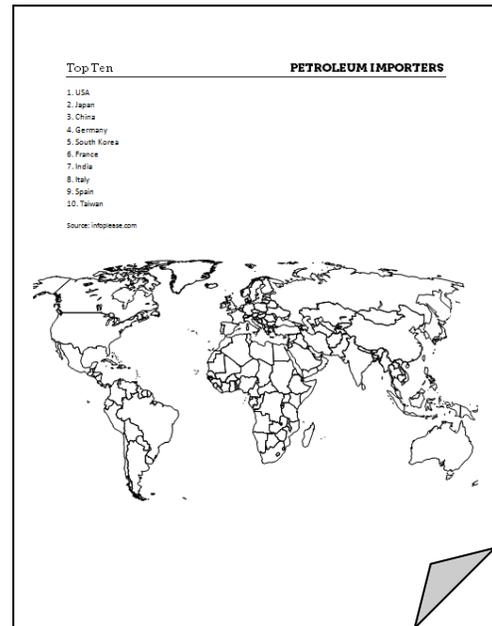
Categorillas

In his book *Teaching Geography* (Guilford Press, 2005) Phil Gersmehl defines the term *categorilla* as a “term coined for the longest, deepest, highest, or otherwise most exceptional feature in a category. He criticizes the use of these types of facts (the highest waterfall, the tallest buildings, etc.) as not helpful to students in putting real-world events into perspective. He does admit however, that they can certainly help to grab a student’s attention.

Using this idea – the categorilla and the interest students have in learning about extreme facts– as a starting point, I developed a method, or activity, which allows students to practice place-name geography and do more “real” geography at the same time. Having used it for many years now I have found it to be very effective and students even find it enjoyable. I call it a “Top Ten Analysis” or, sometimes, borrowing the term from Phil Gersmehl, a “Categorilla Activity.”

How it works

FIRST: Students are given an unlabeled political map of the world and a list of ten countries which are superlatives (*categorillas*) of some sort: top ten exporters, top ten in a particular demographic statistic, top ten producers of something, etc. The assignment is simply to locate the “top ten” countries, shade and label them, and then – *most importantly* – to make some observations about the global pattern (if any) that emerges. My favorite website for finding these lists is www.nationmaster.com.



For example, students might be asked to map the world’s top ten petroleum *importing* countries and make some observations:

TOP 10 PETROLEUM IMPORTERS, 2006

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| 1. USA | 6. France |
| 2. Japan | 7. India |
| 3. China | 8. Italy |
| 4. Germany | 9. Spain |
| 5. South Korea | 10. Taiwan |

SECOND: Small groups of students work together, using their maps to make general observations about the patterns or groupings that they see. Early in the year they may be very elementary kinds of observations, but they improve over time and with practice. Modeling by the teacher is crucial. Let the students discuss and brainstorm for a few minutes. Insist that they write down something to share. Simplistic first impressions (“Gee, all the countries are small.”) are sometimes all they can get, but it may lead to a fruitful discussion with the class.

In the case of the petroleum importers, students might note the following:

- These countries are either rich or developing.
- These countries produce a lot of other products for sale on the world market.
- European countries are overrepresented.

FINALLY: The teacher leads a discussion in which student groups share their observations and the teacher adds to these. I call this “debriefing” and use the time to have students add some of the best insights to their maps.

Additionally, this a time for a additional information to be added to the map. In the case of the petroleum activity, the teacher might show maps of, or ask students to list on their papers, the world’s ten largest petroleum *producers* and *exporters*. (See appendix A.) When comparing the three *category* maps, interesting observations will be made by students or can be drawn out of them through a discussion with the teacher. The instructor can decide which of these to ask students to add to their pages.

- China and the US are both a major producers and importers: “We must use a lot of oil!”
- Norway is low on the production list, high on the export list, and not on the import list: “They must not use much oil! And where are they getting so much?”
- Saudi Arabia is number one on both producing and exporting lists and not present on the importing list: “No surprise here.”
- Japan is second in the importing and not on the other lists: “They are pretty dependent on the exporters!”

The process begins very simply for students – look at a list of countries, find them on the map, label and shade them (easy enough). But then things get more difficult. Once the countries have been shaded, the students must make observations about the distribution that they now see.

Varying the activity

There are many ways to add variety to this activity so that you can use it often. A few include:

- Including the top ten and bottom ten in a category on the same map (use two colors!)
- Changing the scale of the map; i.e. top ten states in the United States.
- Increasing (or decreasing) the number of states to be mapped. I have gone as high as twenty.

- Different students make different *categorilla* maps which can then be compared in groups to come up with observations.

Benefits and Best Practice

Place Name Geography. When students are labeling countries, they are practicing place-name geography. I try to create activities which will use lists including some of my “focus” countries throughout the year. For example, Nigeria, Mexico, Brazil, and Germany will show up in my activities a great deal. Students quickly become adept at finding these countries on the map because they show up in so many *categorillas*.

Spatial Patterns and Distribution: Students learn to look for spatial patterns, a key skill of the geographer. Whether they find regional groupings of countries or other patterns of distribution (all English-speaking countries or all former French colonies, for example) students are able to practice this skill in an authentic way. They create the map from a spatial data set, and then they analyze it.

Regions: Students gain familiarity with many different names for regions: North Africa, Central Asia, the subtropics, the Midwest, etc. When debriefing/discussing the activity with students, it is important that the instructor be certain to use (and encourage students to annotate their map) with appropriate regional terminology.

Academic Vocabulary: When debriefing the activity as a class, encourage students to add key vocabulary terms to their Top Ten sheet. Allow the vocabulary to emerge naturally from the class discussion, but know ahead of time what terms you’d like to have them associate with the concept portrayed in their map. You can often elicit these terms, or simpler synonyms, from the class as you debrief. For example, depending on the age, course, and lesson topic, some terms I might have students add to the petroleum categorilla might include: petroleum, crude oil, refinery, OPEC, export, import, MDC, LDC, resource, fossil fuel, and economic complementarity.

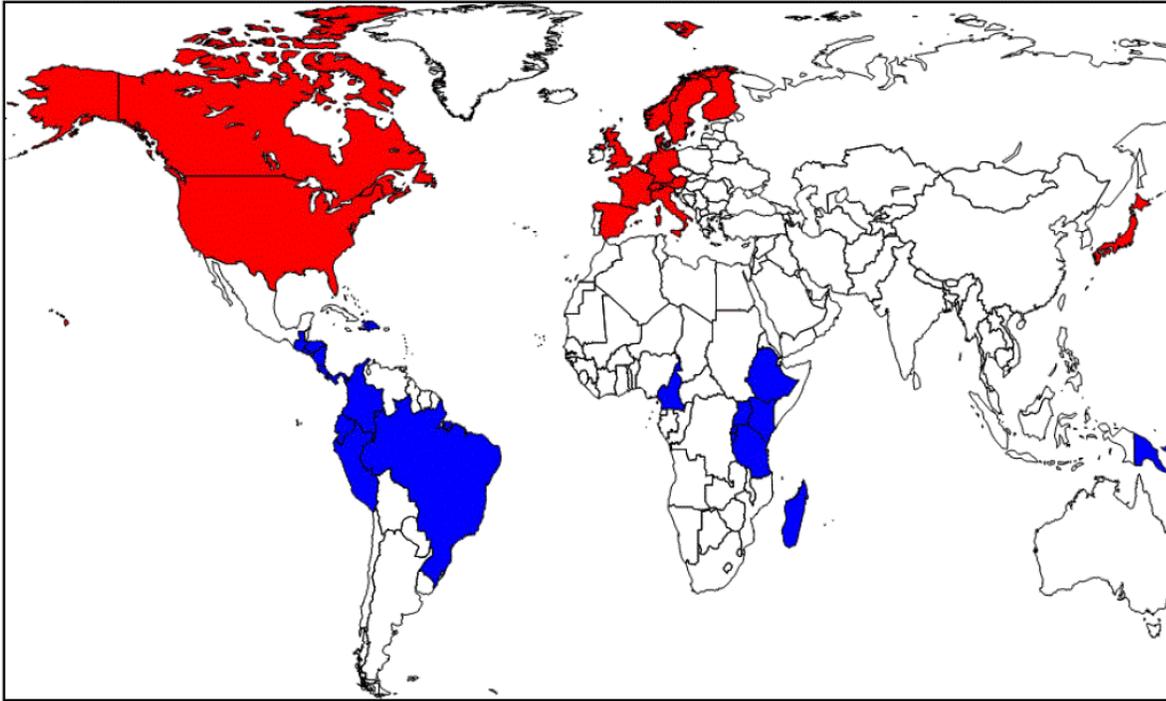
Note-taking skills: There is always plenty of “white space” on my Top Ten Analyses handouts. Students know that I expect them to use part of that space to make observations about the patterns that they see on the map. They also know that we will be “annotating” their sheet during the classroom discussion/debrief. I write a few key words or phrases on the board as they add terms, definitions, and ideas on their sheets. Some of these notes can even be geolocated, that is, tied to places on the map by using arrows.

Another Example

In a unit of instruction about agriculture, one of the things students will learn about is the characteristics and distribution of plantation agriculture. Because it is impractical to study every, or even several, different crops, I choose to focus on coffee as a case study and then generalize to other plantation crops such as tea, bananas, and palm kernel. The first activity I use is a Top Ten Activity.

For this case study, I have students map two categorillas: using two colors, students map the distribution of top coffee exporters and top coffee importers (Appendix B). The resulting map is very telling.

Coffee **Importers** and Coffee **Exporters**



Students will usually notice the following:

- Importers are developed, exporters less developed
- Exporters are all located in the tropics, importers in the midlatitudes
- There are importers and/or exporters on all continents

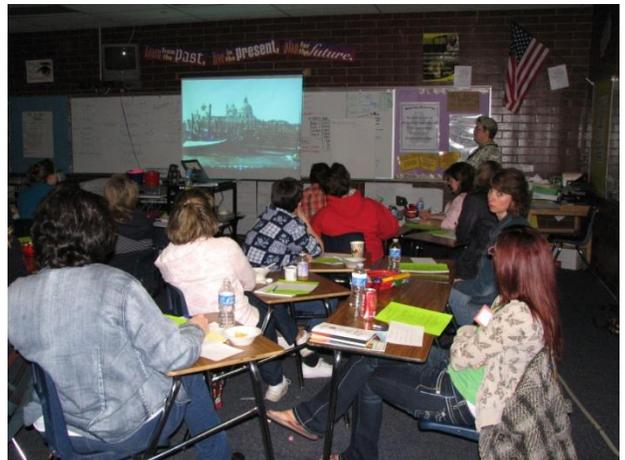
In our discussion, I bring out the following vocabulary and concepts:

Plantation agriculture	Cash crop	Luxury crop
the "tropics"	MDC and LDC	Neocolonialism
Export oriented economies	Single crop economies	Economic complementarity

To conclude the activity, I have students focus on the idea that most plantation crops are tropical and, though the distribution of countries producing them may change, the concepts are really the same. We add some of these products to their map: bananas, cocoa, palm kernel, tea, etc.

Conclusion

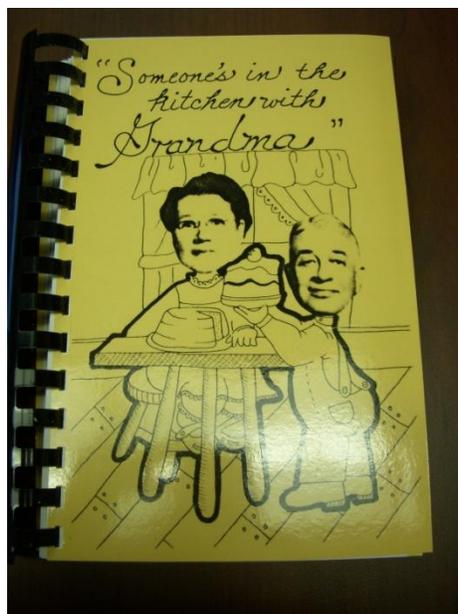
I have found that starting a class period with a Top Ten Analysis/Categorilla Activity gives the instructor time to distribute papers, complete attendance, collect homework, or some other “housekeeping” activity while students are focused on a fairly easy activity which they enjoy. (Locating countries on the map and coloring them isn’t really hard, and they don’t realize that after the fifteenth time they’ve “found” Nigeria they will actually have it memorized.) Students enjoy being able to work in small groups as they come up with their “observations” from patterns identified in the map, and I have found that their observation are actually better if they are given the chance to bounce ideas off each other for a minute or two. Finally, the debrief feels much less like a lecture, and much more like a discussion of their ideas, while still allowing the instructor to teach concepts and academic vocabulary much like would occur in a more formal lecture.





Thinking Historically by Pam Su'a

Someone's In the Kitchen with Grandma: Using Community Cookbooks to Teach Utah and U. S. History



After reading an article in the January/February 2011 issue of NCSS's *Social Education*, I thought it might be kind of fun to use the widely-available Utah community, family, and religious cookbooks with students our Jordan School District. Younger students are always surprised to see the odd ingredients and units of measurement that they used in the "days of yore", but there is much more you can do with cookbooks. Teachers can collect cookbooks or have students bring in their own. Cookbooks can be checked out from libraries, most cities' historical societies have at least one cookbook on file, or they can be pulled from the Internet. This activity is especially good to help students gain and practice the skills of "inference", plus it is a great activity when talking about specific time periods.

Each student having a cookbook is not necessary. Students can work in teams of two or three and still get the benefit of this activity—in fact having someone to discover and exclaim with is half the fun. Teachers might start by having students determine how their cookbook was produced: handwritten, typed on typewriters, mimeographed, printed? Calling students attention to unique physical qualities of the books will give them more information on the audience for the cookbooks. Are most of the recipes taken from magazines or newspapers or are they someone's specialty like "Aunt Ruthie's Best Chocolate Cake"? In the article referenced here, Cynthia Resor suggests that teachers can approach the examination of community cookbooks using three themes: (1) changes in recipe ingredients and cooking and technology and how these changes relate to national economic and

technological changes; (2) the changing role of women (are names listed as Mrs. Harold S. Campbell, Mrs. Beatrice Campbell, or Bea Campbell?); and (3) regional and cultural differences (Resor, 2011).

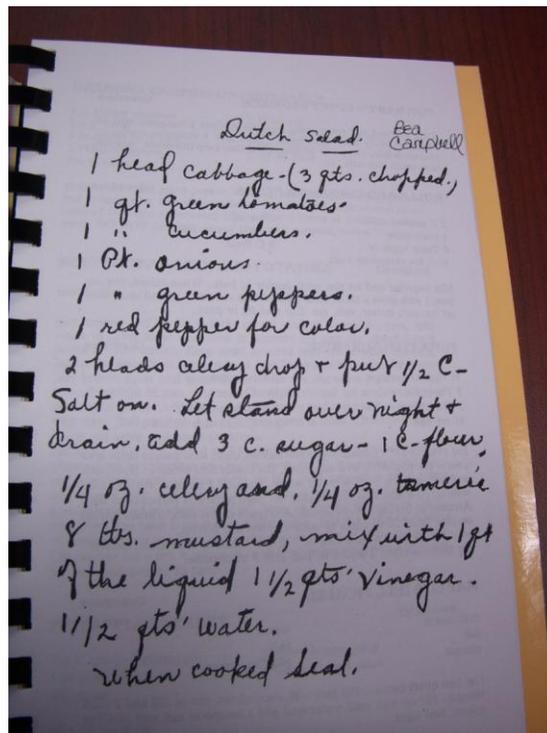
The next page of this article gives teachers a *primary source analysis sheet* specifically for using cookbooks. When I used this with Jordan students, I used the recipe from my Grandma Bea Campbell to make "Dutch Salad". It is the only handwritten recipe I have of hers and the recipe is just unique enough to give students something that will draw their attention. Appreciation goes to my cousins Kathy Chambers Jensen and Ann Chambers Barker—(2nd grade teacher in Alpine District), for putting together our Campbell family cookbook seen here.

Any activity that gives our students an opportunity to seek and discover, ask questions and make inferences, and learn about the lives of people who lived before us is one that will increase student interest and engagement in history. Hope your students enjoy this!

Please see the article for great, useful information and other tools for using cookbooks:

Resor, C. (January/February, 2011). *Using Community Cookbooks as a Primary Source*; *Social Education*, 75(1), 30-35,

Someone's in the Kitchen with Grandma Cookbook by Ann Chambers Barker and Kathy Chambers Jensen, Fruit Heights, Utah.



UCSS Journal

Primary Source Analysis Sheet: Cookbooks as Primary Sources



1. What is the name of your cookbook? _____
2. Where did you find the cookbook? _____
3. Who are the editor(s) and illustrator of the cookbook and what information do you have about these people?
4. What information can you find about the cookbook? (Where was it published? Who published it? When was it published?)
5. Who contributed to the cookbook and how are they related? How do you know? (Family, community, religious connection, etc.)
6. What unique physical characteristics do you find in the cookbook? (Check one or more and give detail)
 - Photos (what or who are in the photos?) _____
 - Handwritten Recipes: (Who wrote them?) _____
 - Notations: (of what?) _____
 - Poems, artwork, other creative elements (describe) _____
 - Advertisements: _____
 - How are contributors names written? _____
 - List Others: _____
7. For what audience was the cookbook written? How do you know?
8. What does this cookbook tell us about the technology of the time in which it was made and used? (Look at ingredients, methods of cooking, length of time for cooking, how recipes are written, etc.)

UCSS Journal

9. What does it tell us about the life and times of the people who made it and used it?

10. List two questions you would ask the cookbook editor:

11. List three things the cookbook tells us about life in Utah/America at the time it was written. How do you know?

12. Which recipe would you like to try? Why? Which recipe would you NOT like to try? Why not?



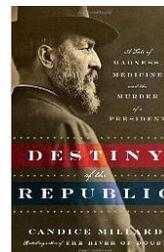
Book Review by Debbie Cline: *Destiny of the Republic:* by Candice Millard

“Garfield could not shake the feeling that the presidency would bring him only loneliness and sorrow. As he watched everything he treasured—his time with his children, his books, and his farm—abruptly disappear, he understood that the life he had known was gone.”

Sixteen years after President Abraham Lincoln’s assassination and still our president is not protected against such threats! This is a non-fiction book that reads as a novel. What is happening in the United States at the time James A. Garfield is catapulted into the unwanted presidency that will take his life. This book is full of intrigue and information about the assassin, the political climate, new inventions such as the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell and medical discoveries. All these events will intersect as the author makes parallels with the happenings of the turn of the century and the events leading up to the election of our 20th president that will culminate in his death. The night prior to his inauguration to the presidency of the United States he writes: “Tonight I am a private citizen, to-morrow I shall be called to assume new responsibilities, and on the day after, the broadside of the world’s wrath will strike. It will strike hard. I know it, and you will know it.”

This is a fascinating read that taught me about an era that I thought to be unimportant or interesting; instead I saw an era full of dynamic events that transformed a nation. The author took me for a ride that gave me new insights and a lasting impression of this amazing time period. This was done through the lens of a man who would reluctantly become president only to lose his life before his presidency had a chance to blossom.

Millard takes you through a history of the late 1800’s that ends with the death of a president who may have changed the course of our nation. His short 6 months in office altered our history and taught us much about how we view new ideas and changes in society. For James A. Garfield the ignorance of the medical profession led to his anguished and ultimate death but for society it was a profound transformation of medical science and acknowledgement later of Lister’s ideas of infection and anaesthetics that would save many lives in the future. Yes, it was the assassin who shot the gun that took President Garfield down, but his death was due to the treatment of the wound and thus causing his excruciating suffering, as his body full of infection, finally succumbed to death. “If a man murders you without provocation, your soul bears no burden of wrong; but all the angels of the universe will weep for the misguided man who committed the murder.” James A. Garfield.



OPEN LETTER TO UTAH SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS...



Elections 2012:
Through the Eyes of an Adolescent
By Elizabeth Draper, Copper Hills High School

It's that time again: Election Season, my least favorite season as a high school student. Why, you ask? Is it because politics don't interest me, or perhaps because I feel as though the presidential decision isn't applicable to me or even my life? Not at all. Rather, the reason is simply a tangible piece of life I deal with everyday: my peers.

Election season can be exciting for many, and adrenaline highs are common especially around result night. However, for someone like me, it is a time where candidate jokes fly and parental-based opinions are argued. And that is why I, as an adolescent in the United States of America, dislike "The Race."

There are two types of peers that oust themselves out of hiding during this time- those that simply couldn't care less, and those who I deem the mindless "followers." Ah, the followers, my favorites. These are the students who acquire the majority, sometimes all, of their knowledge from one source and one source alone: their parents. They take what they hear in their homes, from the mouth of their guardians, and immediately assimilate it into their own beliefs without even assessing the validity of the claims for themselves, through their own research and investigation. With the exception of a few anomalies, rarely have I encountered an adolescent my age that has formulated their own opinion about a political and economic concern or a presidential candidate.

Afraid of being besieged by the clones of my age group, I generally keep silent with the slightest eye roll, but deep down, I hold back a paroxysm of irritation towards those with this type of tunnel vision. Even I admit myself that sometimes, being politically aware and immersed is not my number one priority on my teenage to-do list, but I do strive to be knowledgeable of all aspects of a topic before I pursue an argument concerning our government.

Open minds and open knowledge is what today's youth needs. As future leaders of our country, it is a necessity for the adolescent to see all perspectives and respect all sides of the argument, while still maintaining true to their inner values. Changing beliefs and altering mindsets is not the issue, but rather being knowledgeable and considerate, formulating opinions of our own without the influence of others. **Please, teach us how to do just that.**



Elizabeth Draper is a junior at Copper Hills High School in Jordan School District. The youngest member of Utah Council for the Social Studies, Elizabeth aspires to be social studies educator and plans to study secondary education at the University of Utah.

Do you have or know a Utah student who might be interested in submitting an "Open Letter to Utah Social Studies Educators"? Email the UCSS Communications Officer at dscline@graniteschools.org

Announcements

Summer Opportunities for Social Studies Teachers!



For teachers who are interested in studying at historical sites or with noted historians during the summer on someone else's dime, here are some great opportunities:

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History summer seminars

In these seminars you'll study with nationally-known historians on specific topics of interest to you. Most expenses are covered, although there may be a small transportation fee. For details and online application due Feb. 15 please go to:

http://www.gilderlehrman.org/education/seminar_overview.php

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) summer seminars and landmarks of American History

There are two types of seminars, both are usually one to four weeks in length. In the summer seminars, you'll choose the topic or historian you want to study. For the Landmark seminars, you'll choose which historic site you want to visit. For details and application which is due March 1, please go to: <http://www.neh.gov/projects/summer12.html>

Goethe Institut Transatlantic Outreach Program (TOP)

The Goethe Institut offers a great opportunity to study modern Germany with a small group of history teachers. There are several different groups that take a two-week field study to Berlin and other points of interest in Germany. Teachers can choose between studies in June, July and August. All expenses are paid. Please go to the online application due Feb. 6 (those who attend the Saturday Seminar Session will have an extension to the deadline):

http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/lp/prj/top/enindex.htm?wt_sc=top

Teaching American History Grants:

We in Utah are lucky to have a number of **Teaching American History Grants**.

Teachers are encouraged to apply individually to appropriate grants. Here are the contacts as we know them:



Granite School District: Project Coordinator, Debbie Cline, dscline@graniteschools.org Open to Granite District elementary teachers and secondary Social Studies Teachers.



Jordan School District: Project Director, Pam Su'a, pamela.sua@jordan.k12.ut.us, any 4th or 5th grade teacher in Jordan, Wasatch, Provo or Murray Districts may apply.



Washington School District: Project Director, Edy Lang,



Alpine School District: Project Director, Sara Hacken, shacken@alpine.org (check this)



Tooele School District: Project Director, Heidi Ross, hross@tooele.org



Davis School District: Project Director, Chris Hall, chall@dsdmail.net

