

SETTING THE STAGE FOR A CURRICULAR REVOLUTION:
THE COLUMBIAN QUINCENTENARY AND A NEW
NATIONAL NARRATIVE IN OUR SCHOOLS

by

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Reforming school curriculum is difficult, as our school system fosters a climate of tradition and continuity. However, a combination of events in the late eighties and early nineties created an atmosphere that welcomed a new telling of our national history. The quincentennial commemoration of Columbus' voyage moved historical debate to the public eye. Historians, educators, and textbook publishers worked together to capitalize on the resulting spirit of a multicultural awareness among the American public. The Houghton Mifflin textbook series and the National Standards for History were the products of this joint effort. An analysis of these curricular tools and the varied reactions to them creates a self-portrait of our country. From this image we are able to evaluate our progress and the necessity of our continued support of curricular revision.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The discrepancy between historical writings and the history lessons in our schools was illuminated by the quincentennial celebration of Christopher Columbus' voyage across the Atlantic. This event aroused public interest in the development of a contemporary interpretation of American history that would reflect the knowledge of historians in a medium stimulating to contemporary children. Houghton Mifflin's 1991 textbook series took a giant leap in this direction. In doing so, the company has illuminated the path leading from the history department in a University to the kitchen table of a fifth grade student.¹

The Houghton Mifflin series was the only response to California's new Social Studies Framework of 1987. Calling for a more "multicultural" approach to social studies, the framework opened the way for publishers to catalyze social studies reform with new products. This was a great opportunity in a school system that promotes conservatism and continuity rather than reform. Teachers experience sixteen years in the classroom before their higher education classes and training begin. Most enjoyed school as young students, and have little desire to alter it. A sociological study of teacher recruitment by Dan Lortie of the University of Chicago revealed that "two out of three of the major processes involved... rested on positive identification with teaching and thus

¹ Grade five is usually the first year in which the history of the United States is encountered in depth, as reading and geography skills have been developed in previous years. Textbooks are also crucial for elementary teachers, as they are not specialized in a subject area.

reflect continuity with preceding practice.”² Along with teachers, principles and school boards are often hesitant to stray from traditional curriculum for fear that funding might be lost or parents may disapprove. Publishing companies reflect this hesitancy, for they must create products that will sell across a variety of school systems. In this way, tradition is preferred over new approaches to subject matter.

The uproar that Houghton Mifflin’s product created reveals the tedious nature of instigating reform in schools. The 1991 series marks the beginning of a revolution in textbook content. The revisions made in their 1999 series reveal a dialogue among members of the community, educators, and professional historians that has been muted for many decades. The development of the National Standards for History, beginning in 1991, represented the next step in this movement. Gary Nash, a historian at the University of California at Los Angeles, has played a leading role in both Houghton Mifflin’s textbook series and the national standards. His commitment to spreading the knowledge of professionals to our classrooms has been a credible example of the need for academics to reconnect with our teachers in order for the social studies revolution to be fruitful. It is not enough to give teachers a new textbook. They also need sample lesson plans and discussion questions, as well as information on aspects of history that were left out of their own education.

Interestingly, these efforts to create such tools for teachers have met with opposition from both the Left and the Right. Those of the far Left who favor an “identity” approach to history, that is, each culture studies its own history from its own people, complained that the Houghton Mifflin textbooks were merely Eurocentrism being

² Dan Lortie, *Schoolteacher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 46.

perpetuated under a new guise. In the process, such critics open themselves to charges of ethnocentrism. On the other hand, the National Standards for History were attacked by right-wing conservatives who suggested that the standards were created to undermine the unity of our country. These reactions manifest two extreme opinions of what a multicultural curriculum should *not* be. Creating a curriculum that is both inclusive of other cultures and unifying enough to satisfy the extremists of both the Right and the Left indeed requires as much delicate balance as a tight-rope walker in the circus.

Documentation of such controversial events provides a unique forum through which we may study the making of history. Considerable press coverage of the Columbus Quincentenary and the National Standards for History furnished conflicting accounts of the same subject. These polarized views are tied to political divisions and ideologies. They also provide a source for understanding the values and social climate of the times. John Herlihy, professor emeritus of the State University of New York at Geneseo, expresses the historical value of the lessons in our schools in his book *The Textbook Controversy*.

The textbook, as the curriculum, the teacher, and the educational system in this country, reflect the prevailing norms of the community. As we approach the 21st century, present and past community norms are being tested. The testing does generate a degree of conflict, but it is the crucible that produces future ends and goals.³

As a society, we should not allow these future ends and goals to be left to the discretion of members of Congress, the leaders of our states, or even our local school districts. As

citizens of the United States, each of us is affected by the lessons taught in our schools, whether directly or indirectly. Understanding the process of textbook adoption, changes in our historical community, and the creation of the National Standards for History is imperative if we are to support the establishment of a contemporary national narrative. Educational reform takes our schools are to evolve with the times.

CHAPTER II

OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES OF TEXTBOOK ADOPTION AND REVISION

The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* stimulated a period of educational reform that continued through the eighties and into the nineties. This report indicated that our education system suffered from a rising trend of mediocrity. Seeking a remedy for this situation, it was suggested that our children were not getting enough education. Quantity was therefore the problem. Suggested prescriptions to cure this ailment in our society included extending the length of the school day and year, increasing the number of courses needed to graduate, and making courses more rigorous. The dialogue of how to improve our children's education soon moved into an analysis of textbooks. As expected in an industrialized, technologically advancing society, emphasis was placed on math and science. However, in 1987 a publication by Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn entitled *What Do Our Seventeen Year Olds Know?* directed the country's attention to social studies. The report's message was clear: our young adults do not know the story of our nation.

³ John Herlihy, *The Textbook Controversy* (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing, 1992), 11.

Social studies textbooks, whose contents have changed little from edition to edition, were suddenly of great interest. Why are American students unable to recall the decade in which our Civil War occurred? How can a high school graduate be unfamiliar with the issues surrounding the first drop of an atomic bomb? Ravitch and Finn focused the findings of *A Nation at Risk* on the failure of our history lessons to educate students. Textbooks were identified as the problem, and complaints about their content flowed freely. The books did not contain enough, or they contained too much. The language used was too complex, or it was “dumbed down” to a level that failed to challenge students. The books needed more biographical stories, or they had too many stories that distracted from the chronology of events. These criticisms often contradicted one another, making a goal for improvement difficult to define. The process of revising the textbooks is a very tedious task indeed.

There are several obstacles faced by publishers in the development of a textbook. These include state adoption standards, the use of the textbook as the primary instructional medium, the cost of creating instructional alternatives, problems associated with training educator to implement new curricula, and the political challenges associated with the revision of our national narrative. Understanding these hurdles is necessary if we are to make accurate, constructive criticisms of publishers and editors. Doctoral student Robyn Montana Turner explains the complex nature of a textbook’s creation. “In order to address many of the viable concerns of critics, it is necessary to develop public awareness of the wider culture of participants (state textbook agencies, textbook publishers, and the marketplace of teachers and supervisors) whose interactions directly

influence the process of textbook development.”⁴ If we solely blame the publishing company for the weaknesses students have displayed in their education, the deeper issues involved will never be resolved.

There are twenty-three states with textbook adoption standards, but the remaining twenty-seven states are affected by this procedure as well. The states that have standards offer publishing companies a set of criteria to follow, as a means of making their expectations clear and consistent. Demographics also come into play, as one-fourth of the school-age population resides in only four states: California, Texas, North Carolina, and Florida. The standards set by these states are therefore more influential than those set by others because they represent a larger market for publishers’ product. State standards often include technical guidelines, such as the weight of paper used and the type of ink used. More notable, however, are the guidelines regarding content.

Texas is a formidable force and prides itself on the knowledge that its standards are followed by much of the country. The Texas State Board of Education website proclaims, “Texas truly is the nation’s leader when it comes to the textbook selection process for the public schools. Most other states simply adopt the books which are adopted in Texas because of the purchasing power Texas has with the major textbook publishing companies.”⁵ The Texas Education Code expresses a traditional view of

⁴ John Herlihy, *The Textbook Controversy* (New Jersey,: Ablex Publishing, 1992), 107.

⁵ <http://www.stateboard.com/textbook.html>, accessed January 15, 1999.

education in which the classroom is an environment to shape and mold agreeable

citizens. Chapter 28.002(h) states:

A primary purpose of the public school curriculum is to prepare thoughtful, active citizens who understand the importance of patriotism and can function productively in a free enterprise society with appreciation for the basic democratic values of our state and national heritage.⁶

The conservative tone of this statement is deepens when compared to California's description of the purpose of education.

The standards proceed chronologically and call attention to the story of America as a noble experiment in constitutional democracy. They recognize that America's on-going struggle to maintain our beautifully complex national heritage of *e pluribus unum*.⁷

The influence of Texas is evident in the conservative nature of our textbooks. In the fall of 1988, the major competitors of in the textbook industry, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Silver Burdett & Ginn, D.C. Heath (later Houghton Mifflin), and Scott Foresman (later Harper Collins/Addison Wesley) focused their products on Texas adoption.⁸ Many of these editions are still being used in schools today.

State adoption standards for textbooks are problematic in times of reform. Publishers often replicate old texts that have been adopted, for these books will still meet the states' standards if those standards have not changed. Caroline Cody, who has served as the Director of the National Association of State Boards of Education Textbook Project explains, "In the past, a recent copyright date was used as an indicator of the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *History/Social Science Content Standards Grades K-12*, California Academic Standards Commission (Sacramento: Commission for the Establishment of Academic Content and Performance Standards, 1998), 1.

currency of the content. Copyright dates no longer serve that purpose well, however, since federal copyright regulations now permit publishers to get a new copyright date with very minimal changes in the original book.”⁹ The problem of recycling of old textbooks under the guise of a new cover and copyright date is compounded by the tendency for schools to use them for up to ten years at a time. Without revision, these textbooks cannot possibly be keeping up with the evolution of historical scholarship. As a result, the books are outdated and uninteresting to contemporary students.

Publishing companies interested in developing innovative approaches to history lessons are restricted by the guidelines that protect old, stale books. The failure of an innovative fifth-grade social studies textbook entitled *Man: A Course of Study* (MACOS) illustrates this problem. This multimedia program was created in the 1960s, “as one of the most important efforts of our time to relate research findings and theory in educational psychology to the development of new and better instructional material.”¹⁰ The program consisted of fifteen films, four records, five filmstrips, three games, eleven 8x10 photographs, two wall-size maps, three wall charts, 54 artifact cards, a variety of photomurals, and a take-apart seal. The program was problematic, for the industry had been established to market only educational material that could be contained by a durable cover and binding. Publishers balked at the complexity of the MACOS program, fearing their investment would not be taken up by the states. The pressures of authors and

⁸ James Laspina, *The Visual Turn and the Transformation of the Textbook* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 9.

⁹ John Herlihy, *The Textbook Controversy* (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing, 1992), 39.

¹⁰ Ibid.

editors to follow set patterns of social studies curriculum are often stifling to the development of new curriculum.

However, in 1987, California's State Board of Education adopted a new History-Social Science framework that opened the door for textbook companies to revise and expand their products. California was already leading the way in initiating reform, rejecting biology text that failed to include evolution in 1985, and later rejecting math texts that failed to teach problem solving in 1986. The new social studies framework altered the state's standards dramatically. These changes affected United States history in grades 5, 8, and 11, and World history in grades 6, 7, and 10. Schoolteachers and professional historians demanded that the textbook publishers come up with an entirely different approach to the subject. An article by David Kirp in *The Public Interest* summarizes the new standards.

Narrative, not fact-bites, would drive the telling, drawing heavily on primary source material to bring the story to life. Instead of assiduously avoiding controversies, the new approach would place problematic topics- especially race and religion- at center stage.¹¹

Not only did this provide an opportunity for a cross-cultural perspective; it also created an opportunity in the textbook industry to achieve adoption in the second-largest state. California sales amount to ten percent of the entire country, which would be a solid score for a company. However, companies feared the loss of their position on the adoption list of Texas and other states that accepted only traditional, consensus history narratives. The

¹¹ David Kirp, "Textbooks and Tribalism in California," *The Public Interest* (v.104, 1991), 24.

only answer to California's call came from Ligature, a research and design firm that specializes in the design of instructional materials. Houghton Mifflin agreed to publish the project, know as Social Studies for the 21st Century (SS21), for their 1991 textbook series. The decision required a \$20 million investment, but it would prove to be a profitable business move into California's \$200 million textbook market.

Ligature explained the SS21 development and goals in a 30-page document, which broke down the process of constructing a new textbook into three stages: Pre-planning: Conceptual Development, Planning, and Development/Production. An analysis of their competitors' strengths and weaknesses followed, as well as a forecast of Ligature's repositioning in the market. The intention to move the current social studies curriculum into a new dimension was clear. The SS21 project would "set a new standard in social studies education" and "teachers will say that this program is substantive, innovative, engaging, effective, and relevant." In accordance with California's standards, the goal was to create a historical narrative that would reflect the pluralistic nature of our nation as a strength that ultimately unites us. Ligature planned to present this new story in "nontraditional ways" in a program that "visually and verbally pulsates." ¹²

This goal was not developed independently from the teaching community. The initial market testing began in Boston and Chicago, and later moved into several states around the nation. These sessions were informal meetings between 15-20 teachers and Ligature representatives. The forum allowed teachers to express what they hoped to see improved in social studies instructional material. Ligature returned to the teachers with

prototype samples for feedback. Representative Carol Adams commented on the responses they received.

What a respondent is inclined to do is look at anything we test against (we always test against the current best-seller) and say, “Well that’s just like everything I’ve always had, same old thing.” Some will say they’re teaching with it, even though they may not be. They identify a different company [textbook] they’re teaching with, but think that’s it. Then they sort of turn their backs on that, look at ours and tell us what they like and what they don’t like about it, perceiving it as the new one.¹³

Such positive responses to the prototypes were common. Ligature’s innovative approach was well received, and they pursued their quest at full speed.

In essence, the goal of Ligature was to modernize the textbook to suite the learning styles of contemporary students. From Atari to Sega systems, children of the 1980s and 90s have experienced much higher levels of visual stimulation than previous generations. The members of Ligature’s SS21 project worked to restructure textbook format in order to engage these students in the material. Traditional social studies texts were comprised of sections written by various authors, leaving squares to be filled by a different set of people in charge of graphics. Often times, the images placed on a page failed to encapsulate or expand on the text content. In textbooks such as this, verbal learning often stands alone for as much as 800 pages.

A multicultural approach in this text-based form would be more tedious material than a streamlined national narrative. It most likely would consist of various supplements

¹² James Laspina. *The Visual Turn and the Transformation of the Textbook* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 12.

in the traditional text, adding a sentence here and a paragraph there. Ligature's exciting approach to inclusive history involves a more holistic type of reading. The colorful, magazine-like pages (Appendix, Figure 1) have been criticized for "bouncing around, lacking direction, and not streamlining the text."¹⁴ These same critics also tend to underestimate the capacity for children to read and comprehend textbooks, claiming that we should keep it simple for them.

However, Ligature's design methods stem from psychological research on perception, learning, and memory. For example, what may be deemed "bouncing around" is actually the utilization of spacing techniques in the presentation of information. Alan Baddeley, a psychology professor specializing in memory at the University of Bristol, explains, "It is better to distribute your learning trials across a period of time than to mass them together in a single block of learning."¹⁵ In Ligature's social studies program, concepts are presented in smaller chunks of information that reappear throughout the text. Utilizing the distributed learning encouraged by Baddeley, Ligature attempted to enhance long-term memory of content.

Ligature also utilized the Gestalt theory of perception in designing page layout. This theory is built on "the natural tendency to organize what we look at into patterns by perceptually grouping parts."¹⁶ Due to the rich layout of Ligature's pages, analytic

¹³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ Ibid., 103.

¹⁵ Alan Baddeley, *Your Memory: A User's Guide* (London: Prion Publishing, 1996), 88.

thought is initiated as students concentrate to make sense of the visual information.

The same features, page after page, actually create well designed “access structures.”¹⁷

Though these features might initially be judged as “lacking direction,” they actually provide students with a regulated, multi-level lesson.

Finally, the graphical nature of Ligature’s product reinforces the words on the page. The more senses incorporated into learning, the deeper the processing and retention. Baddeley also addresses this technique, stating, “Multiple encoding, encoding the material to be remembered as richly and in as many modalities as possible, therefore becomes a strategy for enhancing memory.”¹⁸ With the advent of research indicating different learning styles, such as that by Stuart Murphy, it is necessary for visual information to be amplified and utilized in order to give all types of learners the means to take in the information.

Though the layout of the pages was a distinguishing factor in the Ligature program, textbook content was the primary issue. The new History/Social Science Content Standards created by the California Academic Standards Commission provided the guidelines that publisher Houghton Mifflin sought to follow. The Grade 5 standard addresses the development of the nation up to 1850; it emphasizes:

...who was already here, when and from where others arrived, and why people came. Students learn about the colonial government founded on Judeo-Christian principles, the ideals of the Enlightenment, and the English traditions of self-government. They recognize that ours is a nation that has a constitution that derives its power from the people, that has gone through a revolution, that once sanctioned slavery, that experienced conflict over land with the original

¹⁶ James Laspina, 111.

¹⁷ Ibid., 105.

¹⁸ Alan Baddeley, *Your Memory : A Users Guide* (London: Prion Publishing, 1996), 313.

inhabitants, and that experienced a westward movement that took its people across the continent. Studying the cause, course, and consequences of the early explorations through the War for Independence and western expansion is central to students' fundamental understanding of how the principles of the American republic for the basis of a pluralistic society in which individual rights are secured.

In focusing on “cause” and “consequences” of historical events, it is necessary to present more than one side of the story. Texts might describe and explain the world at a particular moment, discuss the occurrence of an event, and assess both the causes and results. This approach allows students to see that people experience the consequences of events in unique ways. History thereby becomes a complex mix of events rather than a streamlined chronology. A textbook that stimulates such an understanding of the complexity of our world is one that includes many voices throughout the text.

Social studies has rapidly become a forum through which many groups can tell their version of our story. Restructuring the lesson plans to include these perspectives requires lines of communication between professional academics and teachers. Past attempts to revise social studies have failed due to a lack of such discourse. In the late 1960s and early 70s, the New Social Studies (NSS) movement challenged the mode of instruction that used textbooks as a tool for lecture to recitation.¹⁹ This attempt to create new curricular options for teachers used a top-down strategy; university scholars told classroom teachers what was best for them. John Rossi, a social studies teacher whose career was significantly influenced by these projects, testifies that this approach led to the movement's failure. “Teachers were never involved sufficiently in the development of

¹⁹ John Rossi, “Uniformity, Diversity, and the ‘New Social Studies’,” *The Social Studies* (January/February, 1992), 41.

the projects to feel a sense of ownership or commitment.”²⁰ Not only were they left without feelings of ownership, they were often left without methods for implementing the ideas of the NSS into their day-to-day lesson plans. Rote memorization and lecture/recitation persisted in spite of the arguments made by historians, for the points made were useless without an indication of how to incorporate them into the classroom. Ligature’s commitment to obtaining feedback and suggestions before embarking upon the production stage of the SS21 program created a solid connection between authors, designers, and educators. This revision process was not following in the footsteps of earlier attempts, and it found greater success in schools.

The NSS’ connection between rote memorization, recitation, and the textbook suggested such books to be poor resources. Yet teachers have clung to textbooks as the primary tool in their classrooms. Shelley Weintraub, of the Berkeley School District, addresses this continued use.

If we don’t have textbooks, it’s going to be harder to keep our best teachers. This year, we have all new faces teaching the seventh grade. Anyone who could went to the Eighth grade, where we had a textbook, or went to another subject. Or retired early. This is hard work. You don’t have time to develop a curriculum. You need all the help you can get.²¹

Weintraub’s comments indicate that we are not ready to drop the textbook from our curriculum, and we may never be. Indeed, the hours spent grading papers, holding conferences with students, attending staff meetings, policing student restrooms, and dealing with behavior and truancy hardly leave time to reconstruct a program for the

²⁰ Ibid., 43.

²¹ Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995), 32.

year! This has led even teachers interested in a multicultural approach to history lessons to stick to the traditional narrative of conservative textbooks.

Another source of pressure to continue using textbooks comes from parents. William Fetsko, a Social Studies Supervisor in New York, explains that to parents, “the textbook frequently has a certain mystique. It is viewed as tangible evidence that their son or daughter is getting an education.”²² Many parents would be alarmed if their child was without a social studies textbook, and would be even more disturbed if their child was not following a similar curriculum as they followed when they were young.

Though it is not mandatory for local districts to purchase state-approved textbooks, the money allocated for these books may not be used on other curriculum items. An article in the *New York Times* explains that in California, districts “must spend 70 percent of the \$28.90 a year the state supplies for textbooks for each pupil on the approved books. Their alternative is to seek a waiver or put the money aside for future spending on state-approved books.”²³ A school may opt to not use textbooks, but that will render a large portion of their budget useless. This system may inhibit efforts of school reform by reinforcing the traditional dependence on textbooks. However, California’s Commissioner of Education, Bill Honig suggested that textbooks could actually lead the way in school reform through a new approach textbook construction.

Houghton Mifflin identified the potential of Ligature’s program to bring social studies textbooks up-to-date with current scholarship and student lifestyles. In an effort

²² John Herlihy, *The Textbook Controversy* (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing, 1992), 130.

to evolve with the spirit of the times, Houghton Mifflin has struggled to revise Ligature's program to meet the new demands of educators and school districts. The first pages of the fifth-grade text, *America Will Be*, provide an overview of the collaboration that made this possible. The suggestions gathered from educators go beyond a need to make the text more visually appealing, often addressing the need to include more cultural perspectives. Members of the production team are each given a two-page spread in which they respond to educator requests by expressing their approach and goals in producing the textbook. Teachers can see that the team is well rounded with Nash, professor of Social Studies Education Beverly Armento, professor of Geography Christopher Salter, and associate professor of Education Karen Wixson acting as joint authors.

This professional lineup might evoke the fear that educator needs are overlooked by academics that are involved only with their field. However, the Program Overview also provides a section in which each author lists a suggestion he or she has received from a teacher on how to improve social studies instruction. One such quote reflects the growing awareness of the "whiteness" of history, and a desire to add dimension to the story of our country. "My students are a very diverse group. I try my best to convince them that it took all kinds of people to build America. I want a book that addresses the historical presence of all those people. I want my students to identify with the many kinds of people who made this country great."²⁴ These quotes provide credibility and

²³ Robert Reinhold, "Class Struggle," *The New York Times Magazine* (September 22, 1991), 28.

²⁴ *America Will Be* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), T11.

promote a sense of connection for teachers with the textbook authors, building a bridge between the activity in the classroom and professionals in the field.

The process of textbook construction involved extensive interaction among all members of the production team. Ligature developed a “thumbnail process” which required intense sessions of brainstorming about page layout and text content. Whereas many social studies textbooks contain text and graphics that are constructed separately and then pasted together, the Ligature team developed the text and graphics simultaneously. To break the barriers that had long separated words from images, thumbnail teams were expected to determine a reason for every detail on the page. Captions were no longer mere labels, but vital elements, linking text and visuals.²⁵ In this way, the two dimensions of the book were interdependent, and served to amplify the meaning of each page. Members of the Ligature team explained that their goal was to produce a “beautiful book” that would draw students into the story of our country. When Houghton Mifflin purchased their program for publication, textbook editors worked to ensure this attractive product would be contemporary in both its appearance and its account of history.

²⁵James Laspina, *The Visual Turn and the Transformation of the Textbook* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 44.

CHAPTER III

AMERICA WILL BE

One of the first things a reader notices when opening Houghton Mifflin's fifth-grade textbook, *America Will Be*, is the unconventional devotion to a discussion of our differences. Unit One conveys the message the book hopes to deliver and demonstrates the multicultural approach to do so. In Chapter One, "A Nation of Many Peoples," the terms "culture" and "pluralism" are introduced. These concepts are at the root of a multicultural approach to education, which attempts to convey both the challenges and benefits of a pluralistic society. The text reads, "In a pluralistic culture, life is exciting. People work, join together, struggle, learn, and grow."²⁶ The inclusion of the word "struggle" is a crucial difference between Houghton Mifflin's text and those of its competitors.

Two of Houghton Mifflin's leading competitors, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (HBJ) and Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, also provide a discussion of multicultural education in their teacher's edition. HBJ explains, "An important aim in social studies is to help students recognize the contributions of various cultural, religious, and ethnic groups." It is not clear to what these groups are contributing, and the lack of explanation leads us to assume that the book is referring to a tidy package of pluralism known as "America." Though teachers should "encourage students to consider contrasting points of view," such exercises are meant to "promote ethnic pride- a feeling of belonging in a pluralistic society."²⁷ The explanation of Macmillan/McGraw-Hill is contradictory. Under the

²⁶ *America Will Be*, Houghton Mifflin Company (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Publishing, 1991), 6.

²⁷ *The United States: Its History and Neighbors* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.), T17.

heading “Multiculturalism,” the book states, “The United States is a country of many cultures. Rather than emphasize the cultural differences, *The World Around Us* emphasizes similarities.” However, right below this statement, the image of a post-it note bears this message: “Dear Teacher: *The World Around Us* emphasizes the unique role the United States has played in the world as a result of its multicultural population.”²⁸ It seems an impossible task to express the diversity of our nation while brushing over our cultural differences.

The ethnic pride and feelings of belonging mentioned in HBJ’s textbook are, of course, vital elements of a young citizen’s education. However, this version of a multicultural education skirts many issues that might inspire students to think critically about our past and present social conditions. Gary Nash explains the necessity of including the story of our nation’s struggle to achieve our Constitutional goal to “create a more perfect union.”

Quite simply, the particularities of social history can be mainstreamed readily enough by changing the governing narrative from the rise of democracy, defined in terms of electoral politics, to the struggle to fulfill the American ideals of liberty, equal justice, and equality. This new narrative, arising out of a democratized historical practice, would speak to contests and conflicts over power and how such contexts reflect the long struggles among various groups to elbow their way under the canopy of the nation’s founding promises.²⁹

If students are to “consider contrasting points of view” they must also consider the conflict between groups. Often times, these groups have contributed to our country’s growth by raising their voices against injustice and oppression. Whereas HBJ defines

²⁸ *The United States and Its Neighbors* (New York: Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 1991), T-24.

²⁹ Gary Nash, *History on Trial* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 101.

multicultural education as learning about differences, Houghton Mifflin perceives it to be the story of how our differences have caused conflict that has shaped our country.

America Will Be is not a pessimistic version of our national history. Though critics like Lynne Cheney, former chairperson for the National Endowment for the Humanities, argue that such perspectives “totally overlook the failings of other cultures while being hypercritical of the one in which they live,”³⁰ the textbooks discuss many of the benefits of our pluralistic society. As an example of life-enhancing products of a such a society, one of the sections entitled “A Closer Look” describes its effects of cross-cultural interaction on music. The heading claims, “When you turn on your boom box, you’re listening to history.”³¹ The page is filled with an eye-catching layout of an accordion, cymbal, conga drum, and electric guitar, each accompanied by a caption that links them to their original part of the world. The unit is full of positive examples of pluralism in our society. Pages eighteen and nineteen have a variety of types of bread strewn across their pages, explaining the ethnic origins of each. These sections of the textbook show many of our daily pleasantries to be results of our diverse population. Though we struggle, we also work together to make music, food, and other cultural elements that add depth to our lives.

The qualities of Unit One in *America Will Be* are representative of the rest of the book’s content. The forward nature presents conflict in a realistic manner, without fearing these weaknesses will lead children to turn their back on the country. As an

³⁰ Lynne Cheney, *Telling the Truth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 26.

example, the text explains to students, “Maybe the hardest problem in a pluralistic culture is prejudice, disliking people without knowing anything about them. You will learn how immigrants, Native Americans, and blacks have met with prejudice.”³²

Students are challenged to identify the shortcomings of our society and to improve the way we interact with one another. Discussion of topics such as prejudice are not found in the fifth-grade textbooks by HBJ and Macmillan, though many students aged ten to eleven have experienced some form of prejudice. The opening of HBJ’s book does instruct teachers to avoid stereotyping, yet it does not present the concept of prejudice to its readers. An article in the *New York Times Magazine* puts this difference in perspective. “The issue is not multiculturalism. We agree with that. The question is, ‘Are you going to talk about the political and moral values that are essential for us to live together?’”³³ If we do not talk about social phenomena such as prejudice with our children, they will not learn to combat it.

Indeed, the purpose of the Houghton Mifflin book is to encourage young students to see the possibility and hope in making a better America. The title, *America Will Be*, is unlike the titles of many of its competitors. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich’s fifth-grade text is entitled *The United States: Its History and Neighbors*. This title has a complacent feeling, suggesting hundreds of pages of stories and names that justify the being of our country. Macmillan’s series echoes the feeling of HBJ, entitled *The United States and Its Neighbors*. In contrast, the title *America Will Be* signifies that we have not yet reached

³¹ *America Will Be* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 7.

³² *Ibid.*, 21.

³³ Robert Reinhold, “Class Struggle,” *The New York Times Magazine* (September 22, 1991), 47.

our full potential as a country. The title is dynamic, calling students to realize that they will have an impact on the evolution of our nation. It is true to the mindset of Americans, who since the days of separation from England, have looked to the future in a search for their ideals. It speaks of the youthfulness of our country, leaving room for accounts of both accomplishments and failures in our development so far.

The work of Todd Gitlin, a sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley, resembles this two-way street by both praising and criticizing Houghton Mifflin's series. Though he connects the books to two decades of historical work that has built our awareness by shifting "the racial caste system" from a "peculiarity off the side of American history" to a "central feature of national life,"³⁴ he does not hesitate to vocalize the shortcomings of the series. He feels that the message of *America Will Be* falls short and lacks confidence and conviction.

"America," the books maintain, "*will be*." The lingering insistence that America the coherent, the good, and the just, lies in the future- that is to say, that it does not exist- only halfheartedly conceals the revelation that the old firm America was not really there in the past where it was supposed to be and where once, in the textbooks, it was unquestionably assumed to be.³⁵

Gitlin asserts that our weakness lies in our inability to confidently define our national identity. In this regard, multiculturalism is a reaction to what we do not want, without a direction to map its progress.

³⁴ Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995), 145.

³⁵ Ibid., 40-41.

However, the product of Ligature and Houghton Mifflin's combined efforts does have a direction. The opening of the Teacher's Edition offers explanations of the authors' goals and perspectives on social studies curriculum. Unit One is devoted to understanding pluralism, in order for students to develop an inclusive view of our country's history. This format is more directed and clear than that of Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, which contradicts itself in its definition of multiculturalism and then fails to mention anything of culture or diversity for almost seventy pages. Houghton Mifflin's consistent connections between cultures and between past and present serve to show students common themes throughout the history of the world. In this way, they will perceive the mechanisms of human interaction through their study of the past. It is the lingering anticipation of what the future will bring that makes the book unique and powerful. The purpose of the text is not to provide a recipe for American success, but to introduce students to the ingredients found in the world around them so that they might construct their own.

Gitlin is accurate in describing *America Will Be* as the fruits of the efforts of historical development. The history of Europeans is brought down from the threshold, and placed in its proper chronological context in the history of the Americas. "The Age of Exploration" does not enter the picture until Chapter Five, and the editors contribute nearly thirty pages to "The First Peoples of the Americas." Though HBJ and Macmillan/McGraw-Hill position European contact with the Americas similarly in their textbooks, Houghton Mifflin differs in its effort to keep the story of indigenous peoples connected to the rest of the book. Various lessons are incorporated into the section on "The First Peoples of the Americas," thereby integrating it into the textbook rather than

isolating it. For instance, the section “Understanding Land Use” follows a description of the Makah people and their celebration to honor the salmon. The lesson explains, “These feelings affected how American Indians used the land. They believed, for example, that the land was made for all people and that it should be shared by all people.”³⁶ The lesson refers back to this element of Makah culture, which emphasizes its importance in their history. It also connects their views to global issues of the present, including pollution and nuclear power. This is one example of a meaningful integration of Native American history into our textbooks.

HBJ’s *United States: Its History and Neighbors* does not integrate the Native American peoples’ histories into the main narrative of the book. Rather, they are confined to their designated chapters. The stories are lumped together, and the distinctive nature of each indigenous culture is smeared into the group that follows in the text. A reading comprehension question expresses this characteristic. “Name at least one way the Hopewell culture and the Mississippian culture were alike.”³⁷ The answer sought is one of facts alone. In contrast, *America Will Be* contains a reading check question that asks, “How were American Indian cultures affected by their environments?”³⁸ Students are encouraged to view each indigenous group as an autonomous culture by identifying the different ways they adapted to their climate and terrain. The question indicates that indigenous cultures are complex enough to prompt analytical thought and integration into our nation’s story.

³⁶ *America Will Be*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 92.

³⁷ *The United States: Its History and Neighbors* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1991), 92.

³⁸ *America Will Be*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 86.

Macmillan/McGraw-Hill provides an obvious example of separating the history of early Americans from our national narrative. On the opening page of Unit Two, “Settling America,” the text states, “Thousands of years ago many Indian groups lived here.”³⁹ This statement, coupled with the lack of integration of Native Americans into the side lessons and later chapters, suggests a termination of Native cultures. It seems to say, “Some Indians lived here once, and we’ll tell you about them, but then we’ll get back to the story.” Once the Europeans arrive in both HBJ’s and Macmillan’s textbooks, the indigenous people become transparent, only to emerge in descriptions of Cortés’ conquering of Tenochitlán and Bartolome de las Casas’ efforts to procure better treatment for the Indians. Houghton Mifflin stands alone in its ability to integrate our indigenous cultures into discussions of land use, geography and climate, and the arrival of Europeans.

Another unique characteristic of *America Will Be* is its emphasis on the people’s involvement in making our nation. In the Program Overview of the Teacher’s Edition, Gary Nash explains this approach to history. “Pick any movement you want in history, pick any great event, and as soon as you dig in you begin to see that the person in the street or the worker in the factory or the farmer in the field was involved in that movement.”⁴⁰ The Houghton Mifflin textbooks utilize sections called “A Moment in Time” to bring these people of the past to life. There are six such frozen moments in *America Will Be*, including an Iroquois Clan Leader, a Puritan Girl, a Continental Soldier, a Frontiersman, an Escaping Slave, and A School Reformer. The Iroquois Clan

³⁹ *The United States and Its Neighbors* (New York: Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 1991), 67.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, T14.

Leader is a woman on her way to a tribe meeting (Appendix, Figure 2). The captions describe the meaning of the feather and beadwork in her headband, the smoky scent of her clothes, the dressing on her wounded arm, the tasty corn cake she has prepared for her brother, and her duty at the evening meeting.⁴¹ This description involves most of the reader's senses, leading to a deeper processing and retention of the subject matter. Psychologists such as Alan Baddeley who have studied the processes of learning and memory attest to these effects through empirical research.⁴²

HBJ provides a section similar to 'A Moment in Time,' entitled "People Make History." These pages are not as visually engaging, as they have only a small black and white photo of the highlighted person's face to accompany the text. The brief biographical sketches are not sensory stimulating. The "People Make History" page in the unit on "The First Americans" is an interesting choice. Willard Libby is featured for developing the process of radiocarbon dating, allowing archaeologists to decipher an approximate age of artifacts. Though this scientific achievement is important, it has little bearing on the developmental processes of early Americans. Rather than connecting this section to the indigenous people covered only pages before, the "Think Beyond" question asks, "What things in your classroom do you think could be carbon dated?" In failing to retain discussion of Native American while describing this technological discovery, the text draws the student out of the world of indigenous peoples. Once again, Native American history remains separate from the main narrative of the book.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., 96.

⁴² Alan Baddeley, *Your Memory : A Users Guide* (London: Prion Publishing, 1996), 208-210.

⁴³ *The United States: Its History and Neighbors* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1991), 98.

Along with “A Moment in Time,” *America Will Be* also uses a method called “A Closer Look” to provide a detailed view of objects and pictures with insightful descriptions of the elements on the page. The book’s introduction explains to students, “With the clues you see, you’ll become a historical detective.”⁴⁴ There are fifteen of these visual/verbal spreads throughout the textbook, ranging from the voyage of Columbus to the Boston Tea Party to immigrant children. The description of “The Voyage of Columbus” addresses the sailors’ fears and hardships on the journey across the Atlantic (Appendix, Figure 3). A cross-section of the *Santa Maria* reveals the three subdivisions of the boat: the deck, the hold, and the captain’s cabin. The teacher’s edition asks the instructor to point out, “Sailors had to curl up wherever they could find space on the upper deck.”⁴⁵ The image of Columbus cozy in his personal cabin while the sailors were subject to the elements, making beds of rolled up rope, offers students a new respect for the men who sailed. Though they expressed fear and doubt about the success of the voyage, it becomes understandable to students why they might have been less inclined to keep sailing than Columbus!

Learning about the efforts of people behind our leaders is important if students are to believe in democracy and their ability to have an impact on their environment. In his book *History on Trial*, Nash comments, “That American history textbooks until recently left out the record of common folk seems extraordinary in a democratic society where we live by the motto ‘of, for, and by the people.’”⁴⁶ This is not to say that leaders should be

⁴⁴ *America Will Be*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), x.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

eliminated or their accomplishments belittled. Indeed, Nash explains in the Program Overview that “no one would think of writing a textbook without Abraham Lincoln or Julius Caesar.”⁴⁷ However, the connection between our leaders and the people of their time is a vital element in understanding how movements originated, how mistakes came about, and how battles were won. Furthermore, acknowledging the role of the people in our nation’s momentous moments encourages students to be active citizens, rather than expecting those in office to change the country for them.

A history that fails to include parts of the population is one that fails to touch students, or to explain who we are. In his book *The Opening of the American Mind*, Lawrence Levine expresses the excitement of the recent revival of history through various groups.

In the last few decades we have begun to study women, immigrants, workers, slaves, lesbians and gays, children, Native Americans, African, Asian, and Hispanic Americans, Eastern and Southern European Americans, and indeed Northern and Western European Americans as well... We are breathing life back into the history of people we had allowed to disappear from our consciousness. The result has been exhilarating.⁴⁸

Integrating these “new” stories into the curriculum is understandably an overwhelming task for teachers who have so many responsibilities and such limited time. The Houghton Mifflin textbooks are a useful source for instructors seeking a personable approach to our nation’s history, but who are unable to construct a new narrative for their class. *America Will Be* provides a variety of stories, poems, and excerpts from primary

⁴⁶ Gary Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, & Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1997), 79.

⁴⁷ *America Will Be* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), T14.

⁴⁸ Lawrence Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 146.

sources to create a history spoken through the voices of the people instead of through heroic biographies.

The Contents section of the textbook explains the concept of primary sources to students. “Reading the exact words of the people who made and lived history is the best way to get a sense of how they saw themselves and the times in which they lived. You will find more than 50 primary sources throughout this book.”⁴⁹ These examples of material that historians use to construct ideas about the past are part of Houghton Mifflin’s connection between professional historians and our classrooms. The first lesson in Chapter Three expands this relationship through topics such as “Studying the Past,” “Interpretation,” and “Understanding Historical Perspective.” Students using *America Will Be* develop a clear concept of the historian’s purpose and methods of historiography. The second lesson of this chapter is entitled “What does a historian do?” and covers primary sources, archives, oral history, and artifacts. “A Closer Look” contains pictures of photos, ticket stubs, a statue, toys, and various objects that a historian might use as clues to the past. This visual and verbal combination paints an exciting picture of historical work, encouraging teachers and students alike to seek more information about topics that interest them.

The energy devoted to understanding history as a profession and a subject in *America Will Be* provides an answer to the question, “Why are we studying this?”

⁴⁹ *America Will Be* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), ix.

Knowing the importance of a subject and its relevance to their lives is significant to students. Social studies teacher Charles Nitsche, of Geneseo Central School in New York, annually collects suggestions and comments from his students in regard to their social studies lessons and the textbook used by his class. He notes one student's suggestion to "provide the Big Picture that we're looking for in class."⁵⁰ Houghton Mifflin does just this in their lesson "Why Study History?" Reasons include developing empathy for other people and understanding the people and events in our world.⁵¹ This section discloses the value of studying history and the development students will achieve if they invest their energy into it.

The reconnection of professional historians and our school curriculum has made it possible for our textbooks to reflect contemporary knowledge of various groups and events. With specialists available in every area of history, it is necessary for textbook editors to find a balance between a pluralistic narrative and a staggering stream of stories. Advocates of a multicultural national narrative are aware of this danger. Todd Gitlin warns, "If multiculturalism is not tempered by a stake in the commons, then centrifugal energy overwhelms any commitment to a larger good."⁵² There is great pressure on textbook companies to create products that contain details about many different events and people without including too much. However, this pressure stems from a misunderstanding of the role of social studies textbooks in the classroom. It is not meant to be the sole curricular source, but rather to provide a backbone for social studies

⁵⁰ John Herlihy, *The Textbook Controversy* (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing, 1992), 115.

⁵¹ *America Will Be* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 70-73.

⁵² Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995), 236.

education. Teachers and students must determine which sections of history are most pertinent and interesting, and then seek more information through their community, local historians, and both educational and historical journals.

It is no coincidence that these developments in the social studies curriculum occurred alongside the Quincentenary of Christopher Columbus' voyage. Quincentennial writings are dated from 1979 to 1994.⁵³ The California standards, established in 1987, were not exempt from the influence of this wave of historical print. Ligature's 1991 interpretation of these standards provides evidence of the Quincentenary's influence. One of the first events in a fifth-grade social studies textbook is the voyage of Columbus.

The Quincentennial commemoration of the first voyage of Columbus provided a forum for communication across these educational boundaries. In this period, our nation witnessed extensive media coverage of a historical event, the dethroning of one of our American heroes, and various accounts of the experiences of indigenous tribes during the conquest and colonization that followed the arrival of the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria*. The widespread coverage of these topics was disillusioning to many students, bringing the nature of our historical study under question. Many educators scrambled to prepare themselves to tackle these events in a way that would provide a beneficial learning experience for students. Journals for both historians and educators provide a historical account of this development in our schools.

⁵³ David Block, "Quincentennial Publishing: An Ocean of Print," *Latin American Research Review* (volume 29:3, 1994), 102.

Awareness of other cultures has grown in the United States, and cross-cultural education and critical thinking skills are increasingly prevalent. These values have not developed out of a void, but have been growing within our society throughout the 1980s. Musical endeavors such as “We Are the World” and “Do They Know it’s Christmas?” stimulated the American sense of a world beat. The proliferation of satellite communication and television programming enhanced the interconnectedness of cultures around the world. Space exploration aroused feelings of international unity, emphasizing our status as inhabitants of the planet Earth. Literature for educators has reflected the spirit of the times, with journal articles focusing on “Methodologies for Cross-Cultural Education” and “Teaching History through Analytical and Reflective Thinking Skills.”⁵⁴

Journal articles have provided teachers with ideas for classroom activities as well as motivational accounts from other educators. These messages between fellow educators and professional historians are imperative to make revisions effective. “To prepare students for global citizenship, teachers need reliable, logical guidance from their profession.”⁵⁵ Historians present various views of history, and educational journals reflect these changes in their discussion of how to incorporate contemporary views into lesson plans. Utilizing such suggestions for classroom activities, educators expand the most relevant lessons in their textbooks. Textbooks need not be viewed as the limiting vessel of consensus history that members of the NSS considered them to be. Rather, they can provide a foundation on which teachers build a course of study applicable and

⁵⁴ Sandra LeSourd, “A Review of Methodologies for a Cross-Cultural Education,” *The Social Studies* (January/February, 1992), 30-35; and Richard Mumford, “Teaching History through Analytical and Reflective Thinking Skills,” *The Social Studies* (September/October, 1991), 191-194.

⁵⁵ LeSourd, 30.

interesting to their students. This potential is activated through controversial events such as the Quincentenary, in which discussion is stimulated between historians and educators.

CHAPTER IV

QUINCENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION

The commemoration of Columbus' trans-Atlantic voyage directed professional and public attention to the importance of studying global encounters. The Quincentenary became the focus of books and articles well before 1992. The flood of publications on the discovery and encounter was great enough to become its own genre of historical writing. In 1994, the *Latin American Research Review* printed an article entitled "Quincentennial Publishing: An Ocean of Print" which overviewed the surge of quincentennial-related publications.⁵⁶ This literature connected historians to the American public by informing them of the vast knowledge that had been gathered on the effects of Columbus' voyage on various peoples. With a new awareness of the historical community and the diverse array of stories to be told, Americans developed a thirst for a more pluralistic national narrative.

Though the number of articles, essays, translations, and Columbus texts grew extensively in this period, it has been said that the United States commemoration of 1992 was somewhat subdued in comparison with Latin American and European activities. David Block, of Cornell University, attributed this difference to the fact that "substantial government subventions for the quincentennial were never approved in the United

States.”⁵⁷ He asserted that poor organization of the Columbus Jubilee Commission, combined with a political and intellectual climate that was hostile to the implications of “discovery” and “conquest” served to stifle the event in the United States. The result was a 53 million-dollar international floral and garden exposition that lasted six months. According to Block, the commission’s product reflected an avoidance of the issues involved in the Quincentenary.

Perhaps the funding appropriated in the United States did not equal the expenditures of Spain and Italy. However, the nature of the American commemoration promoted diverse perspectives of the event. Though a major product of government funding, the AmeriFlora ’92 exposition was by no means the sole quincentennial event in the United States. Various foundations and organizations underwrote exhibitions and events. Shows such as “Art in the Age of Exploration” were displayed in the Washington National Gallery of Art. The “Choctaw Trail of Tears Memorial Walk” retraced the 500-mile route taken from Mississippi to Oklahoma. The Smithsonian mounted a travelling show entitled “Seeds of Change,” which addressed the cultural and biological effects of Columbus’ arrival in the Americas.⁵⁸ Hundreds of other large and small events speckled the country during 1992, addressing a variety of aspects of the voyage of Columbus and the legacy that ensued. The approach was different from those of European countries such as Italy, Spain, and Portugal. The United States addressed the Quincentenary as a commemorative event rather than a celebration. Whereas a celebration would have

⁵⁶ David Block, “Quincentennial Publishing: An Ocean of Print,” *Latin American Research Review* (volume 29:3, 1994), 101-128.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

perpetuated the mythological and heroic status of Columbus, a commemoration provided the grounds for a deeper public and pedagogical impact to be made.

The impact was made through the theme of “encounter” rather than a focus exclusively on Columbus himself. This theme allowed for a broad view of 1492, which many authors utilized. The Library of Congress published a resource guide for the study of the Age of Discovery entitled *Keys to the Encounter*. In the section on Columbus, author Louis De Vorsey explicates his departure from the traditional tale of the trans-Atlantic journey. “Rather than attempting a review of that voyage here we will keep a focus on those elements and passages that bear on the Admiral’s encounters with the Native Americans he met and interacted with.”⁵⁹ Some Native American activists felt the term “encounter” to be too neutral, preferring to describe it as an “invasion.” However, the shift from “discovery” to “encounter” was a step toward an appreciation of their heritage and history during the Quincentenary.

A flood of cultural events connected to the Quincentenary capitalized on this opportunity. One such example was The Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival’s performance of “Music of the Americas” in ten cities. The ensembles consisted of music from Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the United States. As one of many events focusing on the “encounter,” this production addressed the blending of cultures that resulted from the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. More than 30 Indian photographers compiled pictures from various reservations to form an exhibit entitled “A

⁵⁸ James Baker, “Quincentennial Fever,” *Newsweek* (Special Issue, Fall/Winter, 1991), 79-80.

⁵⁹ Louis DeVorsey, *Keys to the Encounter* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1992), 63.

Day in the Life of Native America,” displayed in New York City in 1993.⁶⁰ These events reflect the meaning of the “encounter” stated by De Vorsey in the introduction of *Keys to the Encounter*. “The final point to be made concerning encounters as a focus when studying the Age of Discovery is that the impacts of those encounters often echo in the world of the moment.”⁶¹ In commemorating the existing influences of Columbus’ voyages in contemporary music, living conditions, and art, these Quincentennial events emphasize the continued impact of the encounter. The Houghton Mifflin textbooks emulate this emphasis through elements such as “A Closer Look.” The aforementioned section that demonstrates the relationship between conga drums and electric guitars exemplifies the potential for such an approach in our classrooms.

Along with publishing *Keys to the Encounter*, the Library of Congress also established a six-month exhibit entitled “1492: An Ongoing Voyage.” Dr. John Hébert and Barbara Loste, both experts on Latin America, developed the content and layout of the exhibit. Their goal was to present an image of pre- and post-contact America and the Mediterranean world of 1492 through a rich selection of rare documents, hand-drawn maps, original testimonies, and other artifacts. Loste explained that when determining the composition of the exhibit, they asked themselves, “What things would both the general public and scholars like to know about this period of time?”⁶² Their final product consisted of a variety of materials that had previously been seen only by scholars. In this

⁶⁰ James Baker, “Quincentennial Fever,” *Newsweek* (Special Issue, Fall/Winter, 1991), 79-80.

⁶¹ Louis DeVorsey, *Keys to the Encounter* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1992), 10.

⁶² John Hébert, *1492: An Ongoing Voyage* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1992), 5.

way, the commemoration served as a tool for breaking barriers between professional historians and the public.

The combination of a commemorative approach with a flexible theme provided a forum through which many groups could publicize their perspectives on the long-range impact of the encounter between Europeans and Native Americans. William Phillips, co-author of *The Worlds of Christopher Columbus*, compiled an account of works written in 1992 and 1993 on the exploration and settlement of Latin America. Based on the ten books he reviewed, he concluded that the unifying theme was “the recuperation of history for and by aboriginal peoples.”⁶³ A “recuperation of history” implies a restoration or a mending of our views of the past. Efforts to establish a shelf on which various groups could display their stories unsettled the spot held by Columbus. After over a century of fairly unchallenged reign as our nation’s hero, Columbus was blatantly attacked from some sides and historically reevaluated by others.

This critical view of Columbus did not develop from a void. Works by many authors and historians called for a re-examination of our views of Columbus. Much of the written attention given to Columbus during the quincentenary was of a skeptical, hostile nature. This extreme reaction to his lengthy status as a national hero was necessary if he was to be jostled from his deified position. Books such as *American Holocaust*, by David Stannard, depict the conquest of the Americas in shades of disgust.

⁶³ William Phillips, “Recent Works on the Exploration and Settlement of Latin America,” *Latin American Research Review* (vol.32:1, 1997).

He centers his account on the cruel treatment of the indigenous peoples of North and South America and Africa. According to Stannard, this portrayal of the encounter is accurate, and is rightly becoming “common knowledge of the ‘every schoolboy knows’ variety.”⁶⁴ The United State’s hero was quickly evolving into a villain.

It has been said that when school children are asked to name a person in history that they hate, many will answer, “Hitler.” Adolf Hitler is considered a monster and a madman by most standards, as he set out to destroy an entire population. Stannard parallels Columbus with Hitler in his description of Columbus’ first voyage:

On the very day that Columbus finally set forth on his journey that would shake the world, the port of the city he sailed from was filled with ships that were deporting Jews from Spain. By the time the expulsion was complete between 120,000 and 150,000 Jews had been driven from their homes.⁶⁵

Though Columbus’ intentions and hopes for his voyage had little to do with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Stannard carefully connects the two events. Though this description of the first voyage demonstrates the role of Spain’s disposition regarding “otherness,” the two leaders who are related are Hitler and Columbus. In relating the once heroic Admiral to the most universally detested man in history, Stannard’s view represents another extreme depiction of Columbus. Such misleading literary techniques give the work a reactionary tone, and ultimately weaken the valid arguments against Columbus’ heroic status.

To understand the events from 1492 into the sixteenth century, it is necessary to study the exploration and colonization of the Americas in context. However, the setting in which we view these events can be constructed in a variety of ways. Stannard

⁶⁴ David Stannard, *American Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 13.

emphasized the world of Columbus as “a world wracked by disease...a world in which the wealthy hungered after gold...a world, as well, of cruel violence and certainty of holy truth.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, Franco Cardini’s context for Columbus emphasizes the state of higher learning in European universities at the time of Columbus’ first voyage.

Rolando La Guarda Trías provides an account of Spanish science up to 1492.

Biographers William and Carla Phillips reserve a section early in their book for “Columbus in Context.” Columbus’ voyage is described as “part of a long process extending European trade over increasing large areas.”⁶⁷ They also discuss technological advances such as the printing press, the demographic shift in Europe as the population increased, and the climate of religious ferment that lead to increased missionary activity. The image of a dark and greedy Europe and the image of a European Renaissance set very different stages on which biographers and authors act out the events of 1492.

The increasingly popular story of a tainted Columbus advocating genocide and destruction was present in the media, historical work, and political protests and demonstrations. The great degree of publicity made it inevitable that this view would find its way into bloodstream of the classroom. Students watching the news, listening to their parents discuss events and reports, and passing by demonstrations such as the International Treaty of Indians Council Protest became aware of the cognitive dissonance between the classroom and the world around them. With textbooks claiming Columbus a champion and the news reporting stories of protests of Columbus Day, students needed an explanation of the complexity surrounding Columbus. The debate over what the

⁶⁶ Ibid., 62.

Admiral and his voyage meant to Americans made it necessary to re-evaluate the messages in our textbooks and classrooms. Textbook restructuring had been undertaken by Houghton Mifflin, yet it would take years before some teachers were able to purchase the new books.

In response to this immediate need for change, articles on the legacy of Columbus and how it should be taught in the classroom swelled in journals written for educators. Though the purpose of these articles was to establish methods and standards for classroom procedure, they were not isolated from the historical works published. A 1992 volume of *The Social Studies* contains a book review of Hans Koning's book *Columbus: His Enterprise, Exploding the Myth*. In this review, Ronald Pahl expresses the educational value of such a provocative view of Columbus and the events surrounding his voyage. "Our young people need to be aware of both views of Columbus to understand the history of both our nation and world."⁶⁸ Pahl favors the point-counterpoint approach to analyze Columbus and the European-American encounter, making use of opposing views to present students with all sides of the issues.

Other articles written for and by educators address themes of cross-cultural education and the development of critical and analytical thinking skills in the classroom. In a 1991 volume of *The Social Studies*, professor of history Richard Mumford describes an effort to move beyond the memorization that such rhymes as "In fourteen hundred,

⁶⁷ William & Carla Phillips, *The Worlds of Christopher Columbus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 11.

ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue” promote. He explains, “All collections of data worthy of serious study are best coalesced and attached to problems (issues, theses, dilemmas, or questions) rather than arranged in sequential form around standard topics.”⁶⁹ In other words, students learn more by studying problems and struggles in history than by recording a chronology of events in their mind. This theory mirrors that of Gary Nash in the opening of the Houghton Mifflin textbooks. Mumford’s article asserts that linear methods of history, pairing dates with names and events, are not sufficient forms of education. It is necessary for students to be immersed in an amalgamation of the issues involved in a particular topic. The result of such education is a full-bodied view of various time periods and interactions among peoples.

Education journals from the quincentennial period contain an abundance of articles on multicultural, cross-cultural, analytical, and critical thinking. The copious presence of these articles represents an evolution in our schools. Though a product of the historical debunking of the myth of Columbus, this evolution is not a rebellion against the explorer, but a rebellion against the perception of our country. Kirkpatrick Sale, who authored *The Conquest of Paradise*, discussed the Columbian legacy in a 1992 volume of *The Social Studies*. He states that the quincentennial “should call forth the most searing re-examination of who we Americans are as the guardians of a rapacious industrial society and whether the values we have inherited to support that society- values in effect

⁶⁸ Ronald Pahl, “How Should We Teach about Columbus- as a Hero or a Villain?” *The Social Studies* (January/February, 1992), 29.

⁶⁹ Richard Mumford, “Teaching History through Analytical and Reflective Thinking Skills,” *The Social Studies* (September/October, 1991), 192.

brought to these shores by Columbus- are the ones we wish to perpetuate any longer.”

⁷⁰ Sale’s comment calls educators to consider the messages American students receive through their social studies lessons alongside recent historical lore.

Just as historical work is valuable to educators, educational journals and materials are useful to historians as well. These articles are less concerned with the details of Columbus’ life, or the implications of his voyages. The writings and events of the quincentenary lead educators to ask, “How do we teach this?” This question was not unheard by the historians and program coordinators of the Quincentenary. Dr. Hébert and Ms. Loste sought to create an exhibition that would not only bring scholarly materials into public view, but would also be useful to the educators who brought their classes to view the exhibit. Dr. Hébert noted during its construction, “We realized that throughout the educational process many of us have developed misunderstandings about what is history.”⁷¹ In the spirit of bringing the developments of scholarly work to our classrooms, the Library of Congress published a *Quincentenary Teacher’s Packet*.

The *Teacher’s Packet* expressed five objectives: introduce the concept of “self” and “others” in our world view, introduce the concept of cultural values as a shared reservoir of meaning, consider technological factors influencing history and people, consider communication factors influencing history and people, and consider geographic factors influencing history and people. The suggested topics for classroom discussion and individual writing assignments consistently relate history to contemporary life. For example, students are to brainstorm various ways people can be different, then decide

⁷⁰ Kirkpatrick Sale, “The Columbian Legacy: An ‘Honorable Fame’?” *The Social Studies* (January/February, 1992), 25.

which of these characteristics apply to them as a group. Questions asked include, “How do others see your group? What stereotypes do they apply?” Students are encouraged to employ their observations and thoughts from this activity to understand the history of the encounter between the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the explorers. These activities provide teachers with tangible elements that can be incorporated into the classroom to investigate the various sides of the encounter.

This re-examination of our values was carried out most noticeably in the arguments and debates that surrounded textbook adoption in the years of 1991 and 1992. The Houghton Mifflin fifth-grade social studies textbook *America Will Be* embodies many of the educational developments this re-examination of our identity has wrought. In comparing the contents of *America Will Be* to the fifth-grade textbooks of competitors Harcourt Brace Jovanovich and Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, it is possible to derive a sense of the potential of a multicultural education based on critical thought.

CHAPTER V

SEEKING CENTER

Riding my bike down the main avenue of campus on October 12th, I noticed a small traffic jam of cyclists and pedestrians. Students and faculty members were making their way around a semi-blockade composed of several men and women in their early twenties. The zealous group had constructed a ship labeled the “Santa Maria” out of cardboard and markers. They held a large banner behind the ship, on which was scrawled in an intimidating, black print, “CELEBRATING COLUMBUS IS LIKE

⁷¹ John Hébert, *1492: An Ongoing Voyage* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1992), 7.

CELEBRATING HITLER.” I was impressed with their deep feeling for the issue, but cringed at the simile they were advertising. Like Stannard in *American Holocaust*, these students had created an oversimplification of the problems associated with conquest and colonization. Though there is a parallel in the estimated numbers of indigenous lives lost during the sixteenth century and the massive loss of Jewish lives at Hitler’s command, the context in which these lives ended is the key to understanding and learning from the past.

The tendency for students to overshoot their judgment of Columbus is understandable. University students of today were raised in two eras of social studies curriculum. Their education overlapped the 1992 Quincentenary and the beginning of a revolution in history lessons. In elementary school, these children were told to honor Columbus, for he was a man who defeated the odds and stuck to what he believed to be true. This truth led to the discovery of the land of the free: America. During their adolescence, however, this tale of heroism and success was slandered through the press. Suddenly, the other side of the coin was revealed, and it bore an ugly picture. The destruction of the indigenous peoples of the Americas took the spotlight, and the character of Columbus shifted from the handsome prince to the evil villain.

These views of Columbus address what some refer to as the “heroification” of historical figures. On one hand, Columbus is portrayed in nearly spotless terms. On the other, he is burdened with the shame of humanity, a scapegoat for all who have participated in the stamping out of American Indian culture. It is not a question of which

image is correct; they are both flawed. Columbus could not have been either of these characters. They are inhuman constructions perpetuated by right-wing nationalists and left-wing separatists that serve only to polarize our country. The energy squandered in arguing which pole is the better ignores all of the life at the equator.

Historian Gary Nash has spent the past decade attempting to bring a “multicultural” perspective into United States history lessons. The term “multicultural” has become a catchword in our culture, and different groups will inject it with meanings that serve their own purpose, be that national or separatist. Nash explains his take on teaching history in the opening of the Houghton Mifflin textbooks.

I think for students we’re making history more real, more accessible, more exciting, and more accurate by showing that great people were always interacting with ordinary people. History is the better for it. Women, minorities, and the working person can now find themselves in the historical pageant, the historical process.⁷²

To Nash, a multicultural education diverges from the chronological string of events that have filled textbook pages for centuries. “Multicultural” is not only the presence of various stories, but the interaction among different peoples that has produced the world we live in today.

Not surprisingly, the Right has had plenty to say about the development of multicultural history and social studies textbooks. In her book *Telling the Truth*, former chairperson of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Lynne Cheney, discusses the disruptive potential of multicultural education. She explains the impact that the negative

⁷² *America Will Be* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), T14.

tone will have on students. “They will not respond to calls to use American force...and [we will] be able to return to the golden days of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when no president was able to build support for Vietnam.”⁷³ Such comments demonstrate the deep-seeded connection some make between social studies and civic obedience. Right-wing critics of the multicultural movement fear that learning about opposing perspectives on American history will cause the country to fall apart at the seams. For some, the term “multiculturalism” is enough to trigger defensiveness devoid of reason. An article in *The National Review* by Jeffery Hart claims, “The Left hates America so much that it wishes to vilify its European roots.”⁷⁴ Such a statement is based in emotion, lacking substance or truth in its accusation.

In many ways, the Right and Left are polar opposites. Yet the similarity behind these opposing views that is worthy of discussion. Advocates of multicultural education and their critics are in agreement about the value of the nation. Neither party is out to undermine democracy, freedom of speech, or the will to succeed. Both sides agree that the nation’s history is a powerful tool in the shaping of a young student’s mind. They differ in their ideas of how to depict this history. The Right favors a simple painting, framing the highlights of American leadership, scientific and technological achievement, and efforts to preserve democracy for the whole of mankind. The Left promotes a complex image of our history, combining the perspectives of many groups, highlighting the involvement of the people in historical movements, and describing the efforts of the oppressed to obtain the rights offered in the Constitution.

⁷³ Lynne Cheney, *Telling the Truth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 29.

Both sides are calling for a reformation of our social studies curriculum. This is largely a reaction to the 1983 publication by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* provided evidence that our school system was failing to educate students at the same level as other world powers. Whether liberal or conservative, Americans were struck by the idea that its students were falling behind on an international scale. What would become of our country if our children were not able to maintain our status as a world power? Waning skills in science, technology, mathematics, and an understanding of international relations threatened to weaken our position in an increasingly competitive world. This report helped to launch an intense period of self-examination within the educational community by forcefully stating, “The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.”⁷⁵ As a subject in our schools, history fell under the spotlight of evaluation.

The education community responded to this news with calls for developing more critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of historical events. In her article “Columbus in the Curriculum”, Multicultural and Gender Equity Consultant Sharon Knopp expresses the danger of a shallow curriculum coupled with the educationally barren content of television programs.

Thus, our children who grow up with the relatively uncensored violence of their television sets, are schooled in the censorship of real life violence, and thereby lose an opportunity to study the causes, consequences, and prevention of future violence. Not knowing their own history, they are condemned to repeat it.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Marvin Lunenfeld, “What Shall We Tell the Children? The Press Encounters Columbus,” *The History Teacher* (February, 1992), 140.

⁷⁵ Bernard Gifford, *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach?* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 1.

Knopp warns that children raised on television develop misperceptions of violence.

Violence on television does not involve real people, and viewers have a detached sense of such incidents. In regard to studying history, this translates into an inability to comprehend the struggles of various groups in the past and present.

Another interesting point in the discussion of violence on television, in movies, and in print is the early exposure of our children to such distressing scenarios. Take, for example, the cartoon "South Park." Though this is said to be an "adult cartoon," a frightful number of children are sporting t-shirts bearing images of the main character, Kenny. Harmless enough, one might think. However, this boy suffers death in most episodes, a theme that may be amusing to some, but leaves the show devoid of any educational message. For this reason Americans should find it alarming to see ten-year old boys wearing t-shirts that proclaim, "You killed Kenny!"

This may seem a digression unrelated to the education of American children. However, the hours in front of a television set are a form of education, even if the time is considered recreational. Considering a child's exposure to careless images of death, the argument that children should not hear about the devastating effects of colonization on indigenous peoples is absurd. It is necessary for these young students to explore the nature of events in which violence is committed in an educational setting. This allows educators to encourage students to think deeply of the humanity involved: the sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers who were torn from their families by slave raiders and infected with foreign diseases that took their lives. This is not to say that the perpetration

⁷⁶ Sharon Knopp, "Columbus in the Curriculum: Shoring Up a Hero," *Equity & Excellence in Education* (vol. 28: 3, 1995), 60.

of violence should be the prime focus of the social studies curriculum. It should be an element that is addressed in an intellectual, educational setting, where discussion is encouraged and an understanding of all sides is sought.

Such an environment cannot be fostered by a clean-cut, consensus portrayal of history. The deified image of Columbus that has been maintained in our textbooks may be perceived as reverence for our nation's heroes to some. Washington Irving, who wrote the embellished biography of Columbus that has influenced our perception of him for over one hundred years, expresses his intent to counter the earlier blood-stained reports of colonization.

There is a certain meddlesome spirit, which, in the garb of learned research, goes prying about the traces of history, casting down its monuments, and marring and mutilating its fairest trophies. Care should be taken to vindicate great names from such pernicious erudition. It defeats one of the most salutary purposes of history, that of furnishing examples of what human genius and laudable enterprise may accomplish.⁷⁷

At the time of publication of *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* in 1828, the nation was starved for a hero. The public preferred Irving's knight in shining armor to Navarette's historical rendition of Las Casas' journal of the first voyage. Irving's biography may seem an innocent effort to give the public a hero who could overcome the odds, yet it is a mechanism to brush over the faults that our leaders have exhibited. It conceals the truth. These faults exist, and are as worthy of study as honorable characteristics and successes. Though Irving's stated purpose to instill a sense of national

⁷⁷ Claudia Bushman, *America Discovers Columbus* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992), 107.

pride in young students is laudable, it leaves out the most salutary purpose of history: learning from the mistakes of the past.

A classroom that provokes critical thought from its students is one that contains different voices. In spite of their claims against multicultural education, conservatives such as Lynne Cheney often exhibit views that correspond with such a curriculum. A reader unaware of Cheney's political siding might interpret some of her statements on education as being somewhat left of center.

Denying the idea of truth is deeply unsettling. We have to worry not only about whether our educational and cultural institutions will pass along an accurate and balanced history to our children, but also about whether they will communicate to them the importance of reason, of trying to overcome bias, of using evidence to arrive at conclusions—understandings that they will have to have if they are ever to be able to judge what they are told.”⁷⁸

The overlapping concerns of the Right and Left are evidence that there is potential for the two sides to find a common ground. Just as extreme views of Columbus do nothing for our historical understanding of the many parts that were played in the colonization of the Americas, the opposing views of how we should present our national story to our children are worth little on their own. It is necessary for each side to understand its weakness in order for a more complete, useful history to be accepted.

Conservatives who espouse the traditional linear telling of U.S. History must overcome their disdain for the overused terms “multicultural” and “PC” to see the worthy arguments that lie within. They must also admit that the changing tide of American public opinion regarding history in our schools is making a revision of our story inevitable. In an article discussing this calling, Marvin Lunenfeld explains, “Nations

⁷⁸ Lynne Cheney, *Telling the Truth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 20.

outgrow heroes, the way children must learn to live without Santa.”⁷⁹ In this light, our newfound ability to criticize the myths and legendary figures that have gone unchallenged for so many years is a rite of passage into maturity as a nation. The Right may mourn our loss of respect for our forefathers, but a more appropriate response would be to encourage the country’s coming of age. In a sense, this opens a new plane of respect on which we as citizens may revere our history.

The Right is not the only source of criticism for multicultural education. The extreme views of pluralism that have developed in the Left are another obstacle in the way of an accepted curriculum. This split between advocates of a multicultural education and those urging secession from the national story altogether has created a weakness in the Left’s cause. In fact, it has completely undone a unified “cause” for liberals. In the field of history, this division is partly attributable to changes in the profession during recent decades. In his book *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars*, Todd Gitlin addresses the changes occurring within university history departments, stemming from the social movements of the 1960s.

From their endeavors flowed – and continue to flow – splendid achievements. Spurious wholes were decomposed, exposed as partial and partisan. Studies of women and labor, of African Americans and Native Americans, of immigrants and racism mushroomed. Two decades on, histories of the world, of culture, and of literature are still shaking.⁸⁰

The increasingly diverse demographics of historians compounded with the specialization in various ethnic histories have divided historians among special interests. The result is a multitude of alcoves into which professionals retreat.

⁷⁹ Marvin Lunenfeld, “What Shall We Tell the Children? The Press Encounters Columbus,” *The History Teacher* (February, 1992), 137.

Coalitions have formed that focus on the history of various ethnic, religious, economic, and gender groups. These sub-departments generate environments in which they may study their interest, unchallenged. Claims of injustice and oppression receive empowering nods from other faculty members, often encouraging historians to bulldoze other stories in an attempt to increase their allotted space in our nation's history books. Some actually perceive attempts to construct an integrated history as a new form of cultural imperialism. An article in *The Public Interest* by David Kirp describes the impact this latter view has on history education. "In place of a common history shaped by a coherent point of view, these critics would carve up history and social studies into fiefdoms, each ruled by the interested party, with no common standard of historical authenticity."⁸¹ Though Kirp's article urges educators to continue the quest of forging an American commonwealth in a multicultural tone, he expresses a fear similar to that of Cheney and her right-wing counterparts. It is the fear of a nation divided, unable to function as the powerful entity it is hoped to be.

The most extreme separatists think the purest form of multicultural education is not connected to European-American history at all. It is written and taught by people who fit the ethnic or cultural frame under study. For example, Native American history would only be taught by a person of that descent. Such a view reinforces the fears of the Right by proclaiming there to be no national history. It sabotages the progress of creating a more inclusive history by devouring each attempt with an insatiable appetite for secession. Gitlin analyzes the break in the Left's ideology:

⁸⁰ Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995), 145.

⁸¹ David Kirp, "Textbooks and Tribalism in California," *The Public Interest* (volume 104, 1991), 27.

The tendency of multiple identities and perspectives is to multiply boundlessly. The result is vertigo. Textbooks fall apart. Traditionalists want to shore up the former center. Radical perspectivists resent any center at all. From the logic of their point of view, it is never possible to be polycentric enough. To try to create a commons athwart these currents is a perilous project indeed.⁸²

Gitlin warns that in pursuing the advancement of their group only, extreme separatists undermine the development of a multicultural curriculum. In demonstrating an inability to compromise and an unwillingness to seek out a narrative that unifies the nation in any way, these extremists present those in favor of a traditional curriculum a launch pad for many attacks of multiculturalism.

Authors such as Allan Bloom have capitalized on this opportunity. Bloom's book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, argues that the "democratization of the university" has "led to the collapse of the entire American educational structure."⁸³ The book mourns the loss of classical education, and points an accusing finger at the vast array of subjects offered today. The accusation is ill-conceived, as it is a paradox. Bloom is claiming the work of university students and faculty to be "closed" to the truths of a classical education. However, the demographics of our universities are becoming more diverse each year. The classes offered in these institutions continue to blossom, thereby *opening* more doors for students to explore avenues of interest. However, critics such as Bloom argue that an education compiled of these new subjects is inferior to what used to be taught exclusively.

⁸² Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995), 197.

⁸³ Lawrence Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 6.

Let us return to the students who decorated 13th Avenue last Columbus Day.

The propensity for these students to create polar views of an event seems natural. They are angry. They have been lied to. Indeed, such extreme views are necessary to shake the complacent acceptance of untruths and one-sidedness that has permeated our views of history for so long. Historians have established a fine collection of work debunking the myth of Columbus. Hans Koning's *Exploding the Myth*, Kirkpatrick Sale's *Conquest of Paradise*, and David Stannard's *American Holocaust* represent only a piece of the literature devoted to this theme. These authors stimulate thought in their readers by offering a different perspective of the contact between Europeans, Africans, and the indigenous peoples of the Americas. However, we must evolve past this reactionary perspective to construct a narrative that offers a just explanation of the involvement of these groups in making America what it is today.

Lawrence Levine challenges Bloom's argument that our educational system is deteriorating. "History...is in one of its most exciting and original periods and has in the past several decades produced large numbers of significant works that have advanced our thinking about the past considerably."⁸⁴ He goes on to explain that universities have not caused the fragmentation of our society. They have mirrored it in their studies, and in so doing have actually magnified it. Like Gitlin, Levine is also wary of the growing particularity in professional history. "We must stop talking about *dominance* and *purity* and begin thinking about *transformations*."⁸⁵ Such a transformation will not occur among historians alone. It requires greater communication between colleagues in various

⁸⁴ Lawrence Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 23.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

disciplines, between faculty and students, and between the university and the educators of our children.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

In 1987, the same year in which the History-Social Studies Framework was established in California, E.D. Hirsh published a book entitled *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Between its covers are columns of names, dates, and terms considered essential. Its “best of the West” approach to history spells out our national identity in Eurocentric terms, leaving little room for the development of critical thinking about the past. Hirsh’s book calls for a return to traditional history lessons, in which the nation’s history is mapped out through the lineage of our presidents and the dates of major battles. *Cultural Literacy* was written during the educational reform movement of the eighties, and its sentiment reflected the conservative tendency to proclaim the excesses of multiculturalism. However, the quest for an inclusive national narrative continued in our universities as professional historians sought a variety of mediums through which they could pass their knowledge on to teachers and students.

Historian Gary Nash of UCLA has devoted more than a decade of work to develop national narrative that is inclusive of a variety of peoples in emphasizing the roles they have played in the shaping of our country. He believes that such a narrative must go beyond the textbook, and has submerged himself in the undertaking of establishing a new form of history in our schools. Not only did he play a leading role in the creation of the Houghton Mifflin textbook series, he expended much effort in the

development of the National History Standards. This project began at the close of 1991, the year of Houghton Mifflin's adoption in the state of California. Co-directors Nash and Charlotte Crabtree express the initial sentiment of the project in their book *History on Trial*. "For historians, the prospect of national history standards represented both an opportunity to bring recent scholarship into the schools and a danger that this scholarship would be rejected by standards writers hostile to it."⁸⁶ The nature of the task was challenging from the beginning, as the content of our national narrative often kindles heated political disputes.

The National History Standards project was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, which was at the time chaired by Lynne Cheney. The standards would be an account of the events and concepts that historians and teachers felt to be necessary in order for students to achieve a complete understanding of our history. Their use was completely voluntary, but they would be made accessible to all teachers. In order to maintain a politically neutral focus in the establishment of these standards, the committee included a variety of interests and backgrounds. "They also agreed that the council should represent a wide range of interests and perspectives among scholars, teachers, and advocates of history education, but not a microcosm of American cultural politics from the far Right to the extreme Left."⁸⁷ Political extremists were avoided in order to form a group that would be able to come to a consensus about the content of the history standards. More than fifty individuals were selected for the job, which soon commenced a three-year task that yielded United States and World History standards.

⁸⁶ Gary Nash, *History on Trial* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 158.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

The committee's fear that their scholarship would be rejected became a reality two weeks before the National History Standards were even released. Interestingly, this attack was led by Lynne Cheney, who initially granted the funding for the project. Cheney also played a large role in the selection of the committee members, with the intention of keeping the team from being too liberal. However, the opinion piece she published in the *Wall Street Journal* associated the standards with "The End of History." The basis of her criticism was a roster of important and unimportant people and places. She summed this up for readers in an effort to caricature the standards as a ridiculous ploy to recreate our national identity.

Counting how many times different subjects are mentioned in the document yields telling results. One of the most often mentioned subjects, with 19 references, is McCarthy and McCarthyism. The Ku Klux Klan gets its fair share, too, with 17. As for individuals, Harriet Tubman, an African-American who helped rescue slaves by way of the underground railroad, is mentioned six times.

Though technically true, Cheney's claims are not accurate. She manipulates the content in a way to reflect a message that suits her goal of slandering the document. For example, the name "Ku Klux Klan" is mentioned 17 times, but each of these instances arises within two pages. One teaching activity contains eight of these citations:

Gather evidence from a variety of sources including the Ku Klux Klan's book of rules (The Khloran) and descriptions of Klan ceremonies to examine the purposes and goals of the "New Klan." To what extent did the "New Klan" differ from the earlier Klan? How did the ritual and ceremonies of the Klan appeal to a need for community? To what extent were the immigration laws related to the revival of the Klan? What was the role of women in the "New Klan"?⁸⁸

Cheney's article was misleading; it inferred that the Ku Klux Klan was emphasized over such leaders as Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee. In actuality, the standards utilize the

⁸⁸ Ibid., 209.

nature and evolution of the Ku Klux Klan to engage students in critical thinking about how such an institution arises and persists in a country that is based on the clause “All men are created equal.”

An editorial published in the *New York Times* commented on the fallibility of Cheney’s attack. “Enumeration- McCarthy 19, Edison 0 –would make sense if the standards were a textbook, a compendium of all important facts. But the sample lessons, from which the numbers are taken, are just that. Samples.”⁸⁹ In essence, Cheney led conservatives in a raid on the standards that criticized them out of context. The document was meant as a supplement for the classroom, from which teachers could pick and choose classroom activities and topics of discussion. Gary DeBolt, an educator in New York, has compiled a list of the concerns of the classroom as a result of his interaction with other educators. He explains that the greatest shortage of resources for teachers is time. “Teachers lives are so packed with preparation, classes, paperwork, phone calls, and meetings that they must seek aids to their constantly shrinking time... Teachers often find their time so restricted that creative, inventive lesson planning often gets skipped.”⁹⁰ Having examples of classroom activities covering non-traditional subjects on hand is a useful tool for teachers. Conservative critics do not realize that the standards are not meant to overshadow what has consistently been taught, but to add to it.

The National History Standards are ambitious in their attempt to establish high expectations of our students to understand United States history in a way that is useful in their decisions as citizens and constituents of a democracy. The first chapter of the

⁸⁹ “Maligning the History Standards,” *New York Times* (February 13, 1995), A18.

⁹⁰ John Herlihy, *The Textbook Controversy* (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing, 1992), 141.

standards proclaims, “Knowledge of history is the precondition of political intelligence.”⁹¹ Nash has stated that this approach to social studies is “nothing short of a new American revolution in history education.”⁹² A revolution instigated by a bipartisan group of veteran educators and celebrated historians. The product reflects a national consensus of the historical information our students should have the opportunity to learn. This breakthrough is a noteworthy accomplishment in our nation’s growth, which makes it difficult to accept such comments as that of Rush Limbaugh who suggested the standards be “flushed down the toilet.”⁹³ Though there is always room for improvement, the media attacks by conservatives were hardly constructive in their criticism.

Such were crafted to make the most of our media, surfacing in brief accusations that told only half-truths. For example, Cheney claimed that the standards failed to mention the Constitution. This was true in the sense that the word “Constitution” did not appear in any of the thirty-one main standards headings. It was a misrepresentation in the sense that a handful of *sub-headings* explain that students should “demonstrate understanding of the issues involved in the creation and ratification of the United States Constitution and the new government established” (Nash, 202). In this manner, conservative attacks revealed either a failure to have read past the table of contents or a deliberate manipulation of the truth in order to further their political agenda. Indeed, Cheney’s credibility in making such statements against the standards is dubious. In her book *Telling the Truth* she explains, “I had been away from the academic world for a

⁹¹ *National Standards for History Basic Edition* (Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools, 1996), 1.

⁹² “Now a History for the Rest of Us,” *Los Angeles Times* (October 27, 1994), B6.

decade or so working as a writer and editor, and in those years there had been a sea change.”⁹⁴ To compound this admitted lack of connection to contemporary educators and the issues of our classrooms, Cheney later replied to a challenge by David Skaggs (D-Colorado), “Maybe I read them too quickly.”⁹⁵

The vehemence that conservative critics expressed against the standards resembles the censoring that occurred during the “Red Scare” of the 1940s. Though initially the intention was to protect our country, McCarthyism became a fanatical wave of censoring anything that was not mainstream out of our society. Those suspected to be communist were blacklisted, thereby dampening alternative flames before they singed the progress of the “American dream.” Efforts to challenge the values of our society were stomped out. In the 1990s, the term “politically correct” elicits a similarly disdainful reaction as “communist” did in earlier decades, though “PC” itself has become part of our mainstream culture. Negative views of the term are now factual, as though “PC” was another way of saying, “an attempt to sabotage society as we know it.” Such a view is what allows people like Rush Limbaugh to announce that the work of the National Standards for History committee should be tossed into the sewer system with the rest of our societal excrement, without a good reason for doing so. The fact that so many American citizens fall victim to believing such manipulative political charades in our media is all the more evidence that the development of critical thinking skills in our classrooms is essential. We must understand the nature and consequences of such

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Lynne Cheney, *Telling the Truth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 14-15.

⁹⁵ Gary Nash, *History on Trial* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 240.

“unpleasant” events in our past as the Red Scare in order to deal with similar situations more effectively in the future.

No one contests the saying “History repeats itself.” However, history does not repeat itself in the image that rose-colored glasses create. It arrives in many forms, many of which involve the struggle for justice and the need for change. History provides the most pertinent area in which students may develop critical thinking skills in these areas. More than ever, these skills are essential. The growing influence of the media and internet bombards us with information that arrives in the form of quotes, 60-second news clips, headlines, and non-refereed web sites. Students must develop the ability to evaluate the source from which information arrives in order to weigh potential biases and misrepresentations. Critical thinking skills go hand in hand with multicultural education; the ability to see multiple perspectives of the same event leads to informed decisions and actions. Though it is feared that such an education will cause our national to crumble into special interest groups, destroying forever a sense of unity and American pride, such a reaction is based in the fear that must always accompany progress. As students build an awareness of varied political and personal agendas that influence our media, they also become more conscious of the many cultural and ethnic groups that play a part in making America what it is today.

Gary Nash is a firm believer of the need for a multicultural national narrative, and has demonstrated his commitment through his work with Houghton Mifflin and the National History Standards committee. Though the standards were voted down by Congress, 99-1, Nash and co-director Crabtree still believed in the value of their project. They rallied with their fellow teachers and historians to keep their invaluable document

from going unseen by the educators it was meant to help. With support from the National Council for History Standards and the American Association of School Administrators, orders from all parts of the country were filled in 1996. Free copies were also sent to each of the nation's sixteen thousand school districts. By 1997, more than seventy thousand copies were in circulation. An article in the *New York Times* claimed that "history teachers in the classroom are already embracing the spirit of the standards."⁹⁶ The evolution of social studies education had been taken out of the political realm and placed into the hands in which it belonged, those of our educators.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The writings and events of the Quincentenary were indicative of a climate that sought a more inclusive version of history. The tales of indigenous people were elevated, and our formerly unquestioned national hero was criticized for the negative impact he had on the early inhabitants of the Americas. Many Americans realized that their education had been incomplete in its scope of our national story. The spirit of authors such as David Stannard and Kirkpatrick Sale was mirrored by much of the public. A reactionary genre of writing ensued, opening a market for non-conventional accounts of historical events. Historical work, which had been developing into departments focusing on many different cultures and people, experienced an increase in public interest. The silenced voices of our past were uncovered.

⁹⁶ Gary Nash, *History on Trial* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 268.

With the voice of school reform in the air, the knowledge disseminated through historical work was applied to the lessons in our school textbooks. The Houghton Mifflin social studies series represents the product of rejuvenated lines of communication between professional historians, the public, educators, and textbook publishing companies. *America Will Be* addresses the interests of contemporary students, as well as the suggestions of educators faced with the task of teaching on unfamiliar ground. The book's layout demonstrates an understanding of the psychological development of learning and memory that surpasses conventional textbooks. Educators have been pleased with the product, and the series has been adopted in California, Oregon, West Virginia, Indiana, and Arkansas, as well as Newark and Dubuque, Iowa.⁹⁷

The work of historians such as Gary Nash reveal a growing interest within university history departments in the content of our school curriculum. Working in conjunction with textbook publishers and the National Standards for History committee, these historians have stimulated the transformation from a eurocentric version of American history to a story of many cultures within one nation. This process, however, is not complete. It is an ongoing procedure that is fueled by critiques and revisions. Textbook and curriculum revision has provided a mechanism that perpetuates the interaction of historians, teachers, and the public. However, we must work to keep the lessons in our classrooms up-to-date. The Quincentenary sparked a fire for historical reform in the American public, and we must continue to channel that energy in the direction of our schools. If the content of our textbooks is to reflect the norms of our society, revisions should not be feared, for our society feeds on visions of a better

tomorrow. Houghton Mifflin has encouraged us to see our potential as citizens of a great pluralistic country through *America Will Be*.

⁹⁷ Robert Reinhold, Class Struggle, *The New York Times Magazine* (September 29, 1991), 27.

APPENDIX
SAMPLE PAGES FROM THE HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
GRADE FIVE TEXTBOOK
AMERICA WILL BE

MAKING DECISIONS

Money for Exploration

▼ Ferdinand and Isabella provided money for Columbus's voyage. They are shown in the painting and coins below. Columbus gave coins like these to natives on his arrival in America.

The end of Spain and the beginning of India are not far distant but close, and it is evident that this sea is navigable in a few days with a fair wind.

Imago Mundi (A World Geography), c. 1410

His (Columbus's) promises and offers were impossible and vain and worthy of rejection . . . (It was not . . . proper . . . for their royal authority to favor an affair that . . . appeared uncertain and impossible to any educated person . . ."

Bartolome de las Casas, on the report of the royal committee

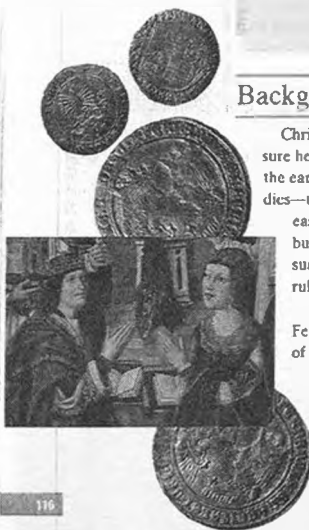
Background

Christopher Columbus was sure he could sail west, circle the earth, and reach the Indies—the European name for eastern Asia. But Columbus had a hard time persuading any European rulers to fund his voyage.

In trying to persuade Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, Columbus explained how Spain could benefit. He pointed out that a better trade route to Asia could bring Spain great wealth and power. Spanish merchants would have

wonderful new metals, cloth, and spices to sell. Spanish products would find new buyers. The Spanish flag would lead the way across the "western ocean." The power of Spain would circle the globe. And along the way, the Spanish could bring Christianity to foreign places.

Ferdinand and Isabella's committee of advisors foresaw other results. They warned that the earth was far larger than Columbus thought. The "western ocean" was huge and dangerous and could not be crossed. Supporting Columbus's plan would waste Spanish lives and money. The country and its government would be laughed at for believing such nonsense.



Conflict over Exploration

Would Ferdinand and Isabella listen to their advisors or would they grant Columbus's request? The decision was a difficult one. We cannot know what line of thinking finally led them to support Columbus. However, they must have carefully considered the possible consequences of each alternative.

The safe choice would have been to reject Columbus's request. The advantages of saying no would include putting money to other uses such as strengthening the army and navy, improving roads and public buildings, and funding the arts. The main disadvantage would be giving up the possibility of gaining wealth and trading advantages.

Saying yes was the high-risk choice. If Columbus succeeded, Spain would get all of the benefits

that Columbus had promised. If he failed, Spain might suffer just as the royal advisors had warned.

Ferdinand and Isabella finally decided to risk giving Columbus ships and money. Their decision had one major consequence that no one could have predicted—Columbus reached a land entirely unknown to Europeans.

The Spanish flag (below) carried a castle and a lion, symbols of Ferdinand and Isabella.

Flag from The World Book Encyclopedia © 1993 World Book, Inc. All rights reserved.



Should we pay for Columbus's voyage?

- Expand Spain's power
- Christianize the Indies
- Trade with the East
- Discover new lands

- Fear of failure
- Dangers of journey
- Waste of money

Pay

Don't pay

Decision Point

1. What advantages and disadvantages might King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain have considered before making their decision?
2. Why do you think Ferdinand and Isabella decided to support Columbus? Do you think you would have made the same decision? Why or why not?
3. Based on this example, do you think it is possible to predict all the consequences of a decision? Explain.
4. For more than 30 years, the United States has launched missions to explore outer space (see Minipedia p. 601). What are some advantages to continuing this exploration? What are some disadvantages?
5. Do you think that space exploration might lead to an unpredictable discovery? If so, how might that affect your decision about whether the United States should spend billions of dollars on space exploration?



Modern explorers like astronauts have used flags to mark their discoveries.

Figure 1. An example of the graphical nature of the Houghton Mifflin series. Though Ligature designed such pages to reinforce the text, critics have claimed that the layout “bounces around.”

A MOMENT IN TIME

An Iroquois Clan Leader

5:45 P.M., September 17, 1597
In a long house on Onondaga Lake

Headband
The beadwork advertises her position as clan matron. She'll use her authority tonight to settle an argument between her husband and her brother over winter hunting plans.

Buckskin Dress
All her clothes give off a smoky scent from the indoor fire that burns 24 hours a day.

Corn Cake
Available to snackers and guests all day, the food will taste good to her younger brother. He has just arrived from his wife's long house for the clan council meeting.

Feather
She placed her feather at the back of her headband when she married during her 15th summer, 13 years ago.

Green Corn Leaves
The homemade dressing under her sleeve covers a gash. She cut herself while harvesting squash this morning.

Buckskin Cord
She wears this string to secure her wraparound dress and to bring good luck. Her husband gave her the cord after he last went hunting.

Moose-Hide Moccasin
She decorated her shoes with fine moose hair and porcupine quill embroidery especially for tonight's meeting. She wants to look like the strong leader she must be to decide her husband's and her brother's claims.

Figure 2. A Moment in Time: An Iroquois Clan Leader, p. 96

A CLOSER LOOK

The Voyage of Columbus

On September 9, 1492, Columbus wrote in his ship's log: "This day we completely lost sight of land, and many men sighed and wept for fear they would not see it again for a long time." The log tells the story of the trip aboard the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria, as the expedition sailed into unknown regions of the Atlantic Ocean.

September 20, 1492

The sailors grew afraid the ships would get stuck in thick seaweed called *sargassum*.

Sargassum



Nina

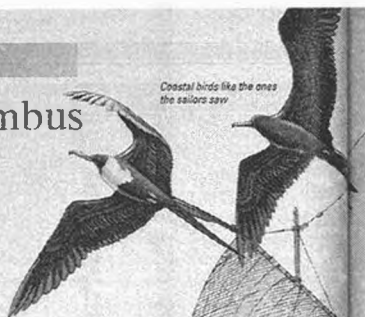
September 22, 1492

"The crew is agitated, thinking that no winds blow in these parts that will return them to Spain."
The Log of Christopher Columbus



Pinta

Coastal birds like the ones the sailors saw



Santa Maria

Deck—where the men worked and slept

September 24, 1492

"I am having serious trouble with the crew. . . . I am told by a few trusted men (and these are few in number) that if I persist in going onward, the best course of action will be to throw me into the sea some night."
The Log of Christopher Columbus

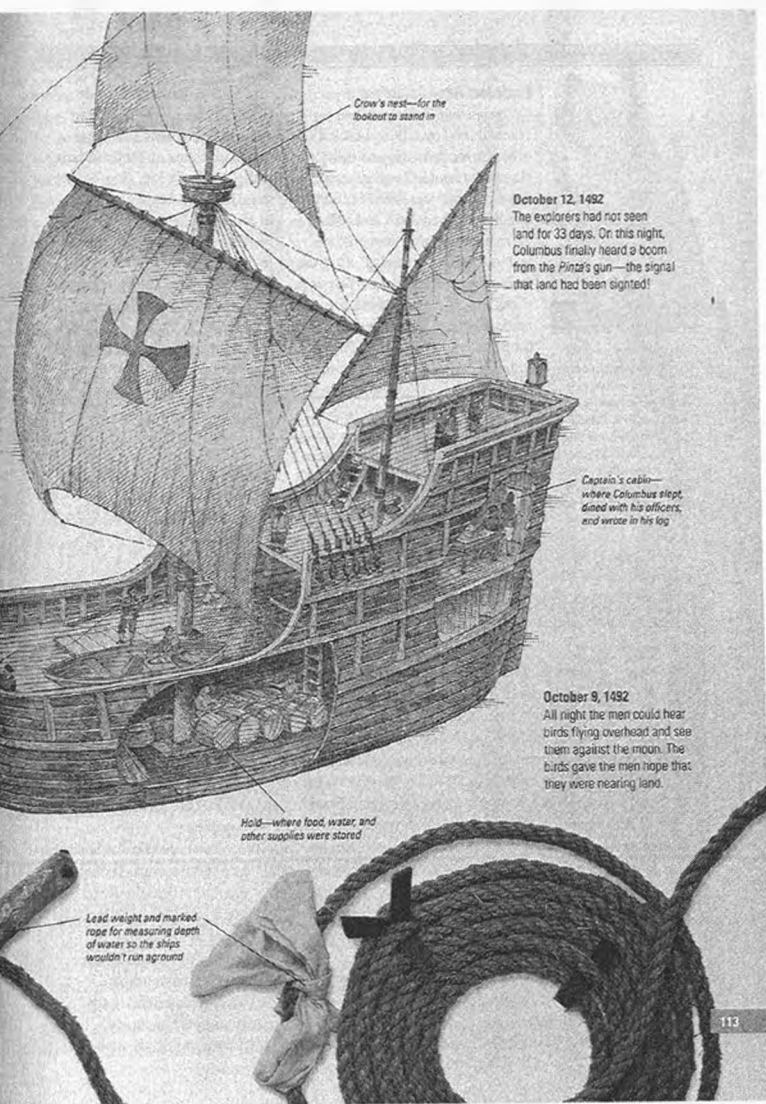


Figure 3. A Closer Look: The Voyage of Columbus, pp. 112-113.

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