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Complying with, Getting Around, and Bypassing the TEKS History Standards: *A Review of Proposed Texas, U.S. and World History Textbooks in Texas*

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About the Author

Edward Countryman, Ph. D, is Distinguished Professor of History at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Since receiving his doctorate in American history from Cornell University in 1971, Countryman has also served on the faculty of Yale University, the University of Warwick and University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, and the University of Canterbury in New Zealand.

He is the sole author of six books and co-author of three. Among his numerous honors and awards are the prestigious Bancroft Prize from Columbia University for his book *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790* and the Godbey Prize from SMU for his book *Americans: A Collision of Histories*. His *The American Revolution* is widely used on college campuses across the country.

Countryman teaches at all levels, from undergraduate courses to doctoral seminar and dissertation supervision.

Reviewers

Michelle Daneri is a doctoral student in History at the University of Texas at Austin. She is a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow and received her BA in American Studies from Whittier College. Ms. Daneri is primarily interested in the history of Native Americans in her hometown, Los Angeles. Since moving to Texas, she has become increasingly interested in Texas history and the experiences of its Native American population. Michelle is passionate about Public History and in the past she has worked for California State Parks and interned at the Smithsonian and Bullock Texas State History Museum. She has served as a Teaching Assistant for both halves of the U.S. History survey course at UT-Austin and has lectured on Andrew Jackson and the Trail of Tears, as well as Asian migration to the United States. Michelle is dedicated to making history accessible and meaningful for all audiences.

Alexis Harasemovitch-Truax is a doctoral candidate and Graduate Instructor at the University of Texas at Austin. She is currently leading discussion sections for "U.S. History: Reconstruction to the Present," a course that is designed to introduce students to both ethical reasoning and modern American history. She has also served as Teaching Assistant and as a Supplemental Instruction leader for "The United States, 1492-1865." Alexis received her undergraduate degree magna cum laude in History from Occidental College in Los Angeles in 2005. During her senior year and after graduating, she worked in Occidental's Special Collections and archives department. As a Mellon Librarian Recruitment intern, and then as Special Collections Assistant, she helped to digitize letters, papers, and periodicals related to Japanese-American internment during WWII. With grants from the North American Conference on British Studies, W.M. Keck Foundation and the University of Texas, she has conducted research for this project in a variety of archives in places such as Los Angeles, London, Gibraltar, and Menorca. She is currently writing her dissertation, "Subjects at Sea: Navigating Power in the British Mediterranean, 1661-1815."

Christopher Heaney is a Harrington Doctoral Fellow in History at the University of Texas at Austin, where he researches, writes, and teaches on the history of knowledge and indigenous peoples in the Americas, in particular that of Peru and its relationship to U.S. and global history. Mr. Heaney earned his BA from Yale University in 2003. He is a co-founder and original Editor-in-Chief of *The Appendix: A New Journal of Narrative and Experimental History*, and the author of *Cradle of Gold: The History of Hiram Bingham, a Real-Life Indiana Jones, and the Search for Machu Picchu* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2011 [2010]). A committed public historian, Mr. Heaney has written for *The New*



York Times, *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, and *The Believer* on topics related to the history of science and literacy in the Americas. His research in Peru and the United States has been supported by a Fulbright Fellowship, a Social Sciences Research Council fellowship, a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship, and the Philadelphia Area Council for the History of Science.

Janine Jones is a doctoral candidate in History at the University of Texas and earned an MA in Middle East Studies from the University of Utah. She has served as a Teaching Assistant for undergraduate courses in U.S. History as well as Texas History (after 1914). In addition, she developed curriculum content and served as a Supplemental Instructor for undergraduate American History courses that carry the new UT-Austin ethics flag, for which she was nominated by the History Department for the 2014 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, a university-wide competition. A three-time winner of the Marion Farouk-Sluglett paper competition for scholarly research, Ms. Jones has also received multiple Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) awards for study in Arabic as well as a State Department Council of American Overseas Research Centers / Critical Language Scholarship Program (CAORC/CLS) scholarship for language study. This past year she was the recipient of the UT-Austin History Department dissertation research fellowship.

Deirdre Lannon is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of History at Texas State University, where, in 2007, she received her M.A. in history. She teaches both halves of the U.S. history survey, as well as courses on popular music and social movements. Concurrently, she is pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin, where she also holds the position of Research Assistant to Pulitzer finalist Jacqueline Jones. In addition to traditional scholarly work, Ms. Lannon has received significant training in pedagogy and instructional design. Among others, she completed a yearlong program for which she earned a certificate from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Sloan Consortium, which focuses on digital pedagogy and course delivery. She has also taught at various community colleges, including "early college start" high school programs.

Nicholas Roland is a doctoral candidate in American History at the University of Texas at Austin, where he has focused on the 19th-century American South and Texas. Mr. Roland holds a BA in History from Virginia Tech and received the 2013 Burleson Texas History Prize for Best Original Thesis at UT-Austin. His presentations include "Slave Hiring in the Southwest: New Perspectives from the Natchez Trace Collection" at the 2013 History Natchez Conference. He served as an officer from the rank of Second Lieutenant to Captain in the U.S. Army. He served in Iraq in 2009-10 and currently is a Captain in the Texas Army National Guard.

Christopher Rose is a doctoral student in History at the University of Texas at Austin and holds a Master's Degree in Middle Eastern Studies from the same institution. He completed his BA in International Service at American University in Washington, DC, and during his study spent a year abroad studying at the American University in Cairo. Mr. Rose has also served as Outreach Director at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin since 2000. He has written or co-written numerous curriculum units for K-12 educators, and has received grants through the Fulbright-Hays program, the Malone Fellowship in Arab and Islamic Studies; several University of Texas Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Awards; and a research grant from the Department of History. He has served as a review panelist for the Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad program, as panelist and chair of the Middle East Book Award committee, and currently chairs the selection committee for the National Council for the Social Studies' Award for Global Understanding given in honor of James M. Bleeker.



Acknowledgement and Disclaimer from the Author

I have written this document in the first person, but its source material is the careful, painstaking, thoughtful, and sometimes very lengthy reports on specific textbooks that my associates from the University of Texas prepared for the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund (TFN) and for me. TFN recruited them, and I have not met any of them face-to-face. But I very much have come to appreciate their hard work and their intense professionalism, as opposed to taking political stands of any sort. I have learned a great deal from their work, and I regard them as co-authors, not as research assistants. I take sole responsibility for any misinterpretation of the reports that they did.

I have taught American History at university level for 43 years at five institutions. These include the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, the Universities of Warwick and Cambridge, UK, Yale, and, since 1991, Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Since moving to SMU, I have worked frequently with high school history teachers, both in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and, through the now-defunct Teaching American History program, in western Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Illinois, Georgia, Florida, and New York City. I also am a three-time participant in the annual Teaching Conference on History at the University of North Texas, possibly the premier teacher-training event in the state. My admiration for the teachers I have met is immense. Without denigrating my own teachers at a Catholic high school in upstate New York, I wish I could have been a teenager in their classrooms. They are serious, dedicated, and intelligent, committed to helping their students come to appreciate the wonder and sheer excitement of studying the human past.

After what I have learned over the summer of 2014 about the conditions that go with teaching high school history in Texas, my heart is out completely to the state's history teachers. Unless they work in private schools, they are forced to teach from a set of curriculum standards that are intellectually incoherent and pedagogically almost impossible. Because of those state-approved standards, they must jam in a vast amount of material that makes no sense at all, that reduces the study of history to the sort of brute memorization that was going out of fashion when I was in high school, and that leads to virtually no awareness of how human beings have connected themselves to one another, whether for good or for ill, whether in this country, through seventh-grade Texas History, eighth- and eleventh-grade American History, or across the globe, through tenth-grade World History.

My heart is out as well to the students who come to my classrooms at SMU from the study of history in the Texas public schools. They are as intelligent and eager to learn as their peers from elsewhere in this country and around the world. But if they have not taken Advanced Placement history, they are woefully underprepared for the college-level study of history. Even more than to them, my heart is out to high school graduates who never get the chance to study history again and thus have no understanding at all of either the richness of human life or, in the case of American history, of who we are, how we have gotten to be that way, when we have full reason to be pleased with ourselves, and when our historical record, like any other, is besmirched. They learn a fairy-tale version of the past that is reduced to not much more than heroes and villains, good guys and bad. They have every reason to look around at the complex, tangled America in which we live without being able to connect its modern reality with what their teachers have had to tell them (because the Texas state standards force it), whether about Texas, America, or the World. What they have been required to "learn" leaves them unable to realize that they are living in history themselves, making it as they go, that in their own lives they will have to struggle with reality, deal with it as well as they can, accept the consequences, and struggle again. They will not have learned history's most fundamental lesson, which is that the people about whom they were supposed to learn had to do exactly the same, but not in the same conditions.



Nor will they have learned that history is a process in which actions have consequences, and in which resolving old problems always brings about new ones.

Here is the basis for what I have just written about the study of history in Texas public schools. Over the summer of 2014, I worked under the auspices of the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund with a remarkable team of doctoral students in history from the University of Texas at Austin. Each of them took on the task of closely reading and evaluating texts that publishers have proposed to the State Board of Education (SBOE) for adoption. Some of those texts are in conventional print form; some are online. To be adopted, a book or site must conform to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) requirements as approved by the SBOE in 2010. Unlike my colleagues Emile Lester (Political Science, University of Mary Washington) and David Brockman (Religious Studies, Southern Methodist University), both of whom reviewed texts in their fields, I did not read all of the history texts proposed for adoption. I could not have done so; there are too many. That is why the doctoral students became involved. My task here is not to report directly, but rather to synthesize their findings. However, I have made forays into the separate texts, and I am completely confident about the quality and accuracy of what the students have found. Not the least reason is that on an independent basis Professors Lester and Brockman found the same problems in areas where religious studies, government, and history overlap.



Scope of the Review: Focus Questions

The doctoral students received two separate assignments. First, they were asked to evaluate each text on its general merits. Errors were to be expected, but where they spotted real problems, they noted them. It was impossible for them to check how their assigned texts conformed to or ignored or dealt with all of the points raised in the TEKS requirements because of the unwieldy quality of those requirements. So for each group of texts, we asked for careful evaluation of specific points. Their directives were:

Texas History (7th Grade)

1. Does the textbook accurately discuss the reasons Texas seceded from the Union during the Civil War? Does the textbook downplay the significance of slavery in the move toward secession?
2. Does the textbook accurately discuss the history of segregation and the movements for civil and equal rights for African Americans, Hispanic Americans, other ethnic/racial minorities, and women in Texas?

United States History (8th grade) to 1877

1. The conservative Thomas B. Fordham Institute sharply criticized the new U.S. History curriculum standards in Texas for exaggerating, and even inventing, biblical influences on America's founding. In fact, Fordham writes, "the complicated but undeniable history of separation of church and state is dismissed." Is coverage of the influence of religion in American history accurate? Does it exaggerate or inaccurately minimize that influence? Consider textbook content involving the establishment of the American colonies; the development of colonial, state and national government; and social movements.
2. The Fordham Institute criticized the U.S. History standards for downplaying the role of slavery in causing the Civil War, with the standards placing sectionalism and states' rights ahead of slavery in listing those causes. Fordham also notes that the issue of slavery in the territories – which Fordham calls "the actual trigger for the sectional crisis" – is never mentioned at all in the standards. Do textbook discussions of the causes of the U.S. Civil War represent current scholarship? In particular, does the textbook accurately portray the importance of slavery in the divisions that led to the war?
3. The SBOE added a requirement that students "contrast" the ideas in Jefferson Davis' inaugural address with Abraham Lincoln's ideas in his major speeches. Is the inaugural address of Davis honestly portrayed? Considering that Davis' inaugural didn't even mention slavery, what does the textbook discussion say about Davis' speech and the reasons for secession? Is that discussion accurate and balanced based on established scholarship?
4. Some have argued that Congress ignored constitutional and other protections and imposed unfair measures on southern whites and the former Confederate states during Reconstruction. On the other hand, the Fordham Institute criticizes the U.S. History standards for poorly covering the experiences of freed slaves during and after Reconstruction, including passage of the Black Codes, the Ku Klux Klan, sharecropping, and Jim Crow laws. Does the textbook accurately portray the history of Reconstruction and efforts for and against legal and constitutional protections for



African Americans after the end of slavery?

5. The Fordham Institute notes: “From the earliest grades, students are pressured to uncritically celebrate 'the free enterprise system and its benefits.' 'Minimal government intrusion' is hailed as key to the early nineteenth-century commercial boom – ignoring the critical role of the state and federal governments in internal improvements and economic expansion.” Are textbook discussions of “the free enterprise system” based on sound scholarship? Does the textbook offer a balanced portrayal of the free enterprise system and the role of government in promoting economic development and progress?
6. Debates over principles that influenced the development of American government, the concept of “states' rights,” and the role of the courts were part of the State Board of Education's revision of the social studies curriculum standards. Are discussions of these issues accurate and based on mainstream historical scholarship?
7. Some members of the State Board of Education members emphasized the necessity of teaching students about their concept of “American exceptionalism.” How does the textbook address these concerns? Are textbook discussions that touch on this concept historically accurate and historically relevant? Does the textbook appear to be biased toward either downplaying or overemphasizing negative or positive aspects of the nation's history?

United States History (high school) from 1877 to the present

1. The conservative Thomas B. Fordham Institute sharply criticized the new U.S. History curriculum standards in Texas for exaggerating, and even inventing, biblical influences on America's founding. In fact, Fordham writes, “the complicated but undeniable history of separation of church and state is dismissed.” Is coverage of the influence of religion in American history accurate? Does it exaggerate or inaccurately minimize that influence? Consider textbook content involving the establishment of the American colonies; the development of colonial, state and national government; and social movements.
2. Some members of the State Board of Education members emphasized the necessity of teaching students about their concept of “American exceptionalism.” How does the textbook address these concerns? Are textbook discussions that touch on this concept historically accurate and historically relevant? Does the textbook appear to be biased toward either downplaying or overemphasizing negative or positive aspects of the nation's history?
3. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is particularly critical of the way the U.S. History standards deal with the treatment of Native Americans and race. “Native peoples are missing until brief references to nineteenth-century events,” Fordham says. Also from Fordham: “During and after Reconstruction, there is no mention of the Black Codes, the Ku Klux Klan, or sharecropping; the term 'Jim Crow' never appears. Incredibly, racial segregation is only mentioned in a passing reference to the 1948 integration of the armed forces. ... Opposition to the civil rights movement is falsely identified only with 'the congressional bloc of Southern Democrats' – whose later metamorphosis into Southern Republicans is never mentioned.” Moreover, some State Board of Education members insisted that students should learn that “the majority” (largely men and white people) were primarily responsible for extending equal rights and protections to women



and ethnic and racial minorities, thereby downplaying the role of women and minorities (as well as the courts) in achieving those advances. Does the textbook accurately portray the history of racial and gender discrimination, segregation and the women's and Civil Rights movement in the United States? Is coverage of the experiences and contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos and other ethnic, racial and religious minorities balanced and fair?

4. The Fordham Institute notes that "the standards list 'the internment of German, Italian and Japanese Americans and Executive Order 9066' – exaggerating the comparatively trivial internment of German and Italian Americans, and thereby obscuring the incontrovertible racial dimension of the larger and more systematic Japanese American internment." Does the textbook accurately address this issue? Does it appropriately compare the experiences of Japanese Americans with Americans of German and Italian descent?
5. Does the textbook portray accurately and without bias the issue of immigration, particularly illegal immigration in the modern era?
6. Some State Board of Education members denounced portrayals of American expansion at the end of the 19th century as "imperialism," arguing that what happened was not anything like European imperialism. They demanded that the standards use the term "expansionism" instead. How does the textbook deal with this issue? Is the term "imperialism" even used in the context of American expansion overseas? Does the textbook accurately portray the debate among Americans at the time about the acquisition of overseas territories and whether they described such expansion as a form of imperialism?
7. The Fordham Institute criticizes the U.S. History standards for "disingenuously" suggesting "that the House Un-American Activities Committee – and, by extension, McCarthyism – have been vindicated by the Venona decrypts of Soviet espionage activities (which had, in reality, no link to McCarthy's targets)." Does the textbook accurately address the history of McCarthyism?
8. The Fordham Institute worries that the U.S. History standards encourage students "to mistrust international treaties" as a threat to American sovereignty. Does the textbook provide accurate or politically slanted discussions of foreign treaties and organizations in which the United States participates?
9. State Board of Education members insisted that the U.S. History standards highlight certain conservative historical figures to "balance" what they saw as an inappropriate bias toward progressive historical figures. They also argued against including in the standards individuals in American history because they were "leftists" or "socialists." Does the textbook provide a balanced and historically accurate account of the contributions of conservative as well as progressive historical figures? Does it appear that individuals and organizations are discussed simply because of their politics rather than their historical relevance?
10. Conservatives on the State Board of Education have argued that government regulation inappropriately limits individual freedom and rights. Does the textbook offer balanced discussions about the pros and cons of government regulation?
11. The Fordham Institute notes: "From the earliest grades, students are pressured to uncritically



celebrate 'the free enterprise system and its benefits.' In addition, conservatives on the State Board of Education insisted that the U.S. History standards address their ideological concerns and beliefs about the Federal Reserve System. Are textbook discussions of “the free enterprise system” based on sound scholarship? Does the textbook offer a balanced portrayal of the free enterprise system and the role of government in promoting economic development and progress? Does the textbook accurately portray the establishment, role and influence of the Federal Reserve?

12. The SBOE debate over the new social studies standards led the Fordham Institute to warn that textbooks might not include a balanced discussion of civil rights, federal entitlement programs and other aid to the poor. In fact, some State Board of Education members argued that students should learn that those measures had negative effects on society. They ultimately required students to learn about the “unintended consequences” of each. Does the textbook offer accurate and balanced accounts of federal domestic programs like those in the New Deal, Great Society, affirmative action, and Title IX?
13. Conservatives on the State Board of Education have insisted that textbooks include their arguments regarding interpretations of the U.S. Constitution and the role of the courts. Does the textbook offer a balanced and historically accurate discussion of these issues? Does the textbook provide an accurate and balanced accounting of the debate over controversial court decisions, such as *Brown v. Topeka* and *Roe v. Wade*?

World History (high school)

1. In 2010 the State Board of Education adopted a resolution condemning world history textbooks that board members saw as giving more coverage (and positive coverage) of Islam than Christianity. Some suggested that Sharia/Islamic law posed a threat to the United States. Does the textbook provide accurate and balanced historical discussions of the world’s major religions? Do any particular religions appear to be favored or disfavored in the textbook?
2. During the debate over new social studies curriculum standards in 2009-10, the State Board of Education voted to revise a proposed standard about the influence of Enlightenment thinkers on revolutions and the development of modern governments since 1750. The board initially removed a reference to Thomas Jefferson from that standard, arguing that Jefferson wasn’t an important Enlightenment thinker. After considerable public criticism, the board voted to return Jefferson to the standard. However, board members removed the reference to the Enlightenment from that standard and added Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and William Blackstone to the list of influential political philosophers. Elsewhere, the board also adopted requirements regarding Judeo-Christian and biblical influences on the development of democratic-republican government and legal traditions – particularly in the United States. Are the textbook’s discussions of these religious influences accurate and balanced?
3. Does the textbook offer a balanced and accurate discussion of the Columbian Exchange and its impact on the Americas, Europe, and Africa? Is it clear that slavery has been an institution common in cultures and societies around the world throughout history?
4. Some critics, including the conservative Thomas B. Fordham Institute, have said that some State



Board of Education members promoted an uncritical celebration of the “free enterprise system” in the new social studies standards. This includes crediting the “free enterprise system” and “free markets” as influential during historical periods when references to such concepts are anachronistic. Does the textbook provide accurate and balanced discussions of the history of the free enterprise system and other economic systems?

5. Does the textbook provide an accurate and balanced discussion of the modern Arab-Israeli relations and conflict?
6. Is the textbook’s discussion of terrorism and radical Islam accurate and balanced?

The Texas Curriculum Standards: Distorting History

Some comment seems in order about the reasons for choosing the focus questions noted above. The first issue is our partial reliance on the explicitly “conservative” Thomas B. Fordham Institute’s (Fordham Institute, 2011) grading of the 50 separate sets of state curriculum standards for U.S. History. Publishers write their textbooks to conform to those curriculum standards.

It is something of a commonplace that the Texas debates on curriculum standards have pitted “conservatives” against “liberals” or “progressives.” There is some truth to that generalization, but the issue really is not so simple. Historian Keith Erikson, then at the University of Texas at El Paso, closely monitored the writing of the TEKS standards in 2009-10, and he notes that a hidden dimension of the public battles in Austin during that process was how those battles pitted self-described conservatives against one another (Erikson 2012 B, 9-10). There is far more to the disputes than simple right/left, red/blue, Republican/Democratic, or religious/secular confrontation. Like the TFN team, Fordham’s analysts were concerned about evidence and quality of argument based on that evidence, not about scoring points or making a politically driven set of insupportable assertions. Fordham gave the Texas curriculum standards for U.S. History a D. It awarded A- grades to (politically liberal) New York and Massachusetts, but it gave its highest grade (A) to decidedly conservative South Carolina. Having compared South Carolina’s standards with those of Texas, I agree with the two grades.

Second, TFN suspected *prima facie* that at least some of the 2010 standards were written to make covert political points that the historical evidence cannot support. Consider the problem of the causation of the Civil War. Repeatedly, TEKS refers to “states’ rights” as among the war’s causes, placing those purported causes in this order: sectionalism, states’ rights, and slavery. The strong implication is that slavery figured last on that list and was of relatively minor consequence. Historian Edward Sebesta demonstrates that this strategy is fully in accord with what usually is termed a neo-Confederate project of freeing southern secession from association with the slavery problem (Sebesta 2012, 149-170). He also shows that the rhetoric of states’ rights did not figure in (among others) the Texas Secession Ordinance; on the contrary, Texas complained not about Washington interference, but about not getting enough *from* Washington.

Lest Sebesta’s point be dismissed as mere interpretation, first-order southern sources make it entirely clear that the decision to break up the United States turned on the perceived danger to slavery from the rise of the Republicans as a northern party committed to active government and to slavery’s eventual destruction, and to the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. The state secession documents of South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas advanced different specific arguments, each drawing on



its own state's situation, but all of them identified slavery as the *primary* reason for the action that they were taking, using the word slavery openly and without shame. The Confederate Constitution did ban the African slave trade (Article 1, Section 9), for the renewal of which there was some clamor, but it explicitly protected "the institution of slavery" in any territory that the Confederacy might acquire (Article 4, Section 3). In many ways it was a direct copy of the United States Constitution of 1787, but like the secession ordinances and unlike 1787 Constitution, it used the words *slaves* and *slavery* openly. Confederate President Jefferson Davis did not mention slavery in his inaugural address on February 18, 1861. However his message to the Confederate Congress of April 29, 1861, announcing ratification of the Confederate Constitution, was entirely open about the protection of slavery having been the foremost matter in the South's decision to destroy the United States as the founding generation had created it.

Before turning to the student reports, I wish to comment more briefly on three other qualities that run through the United States and World History curriculum standards for Texas. The first of these is a multitude of grab-bag lists of individuals about whom the students are expected to learn. The Fordham Institute puts the matter well, suggesting that the lists strive for a spurious "inclusiveness" of all sorts of people simply on the ground of their personal characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity, social class, or politics) and without any basis for students seeing serious connections among them in the contexts of their respective times and situations. Writing about a draft of the 2010 standards, conservative critic David Barton made exactly the same point, including a proposed list of late 20th-century conservative leaders. If they were to be included, Barton said he wanted them included because of whatever they had done to make themselves historical figures, not because of their politics (Barton 2009, 6-7). The Fordham Institute also suggests that like the slavery matter in the context of the Civil War, many of the themes that students are expected to study are ideologically driven, to the detriment of students acquiring serious knowledge. Fordham cites particularly the matter of "capitalism" or "free enterprise," a problem that the student reports on both United States and World History texts address in detail.

Next, it is important to note that at least some of the TEKS requirements are framed around leading questions that never would survive a lawyer's objection in court proceedings. This is particularly the case with World History topics on the modern Middle East and the problem of terrorism. Finally, it also is striking that under both the U.S. and World History headings the spurious "inclusiveness" of the long lists of specific names amounts to mere tokenism, as if to make up for the absence of mandates for serious discussion. The required names do include various Native American figures. But the World History and U.S. History standards pay virtually no serious attention to Native Americans, whether on their own terms as they organized themselves and their worlds prior to contact, or as active participant in the world that emerged from that contact. At best, they emerge as mere outsiders to it or victims of the history that others made. Effectively, Native Americans do not exist; a landscape that they inhabited, often densely, and that they understood and controlled is rendered empty. The same point applies to Africans and their American progeny. Prior to 1815 they, not Europeans, comprised the vast majority of people who moved from the "old world" to the "new." They took a very active part in the long, difficult destruction of slavery between the beginning of that destruction during the Revolutionary Era to its completion with the Civil War, earning the modern descriptive term "African-American" with their bravery and hope. During that time, black leaders emerged and debated the best course to take among themselves. Churches and organizations took form. African-American literature began to be written. But nobody who learns what TEKS requires ever would know.



I will address one further egregious point in the TEKS standards before I move on to specifics, the idea of “American exceptionalism.” The subject was included in TEKS (Munoz and Noboa 2012: 50-51) because just one person on the drafting panel insisted on it. As Michael Soto shows in a detailed, withering discussion of that process, the actual language in the standard is not just “shoddy,” but was also plagiarized from a University of California website and “lifted almost verbatim from *Wikipedia*.” He would give a failing grade for that sort of work; so would I. Going still further, the very concept of American exceptionalism always has been subject to enormous contention, including an extended discussion in Marxist thought about why America never had the predicted socialist or communist revolution it was “supposed” to have. (Lipset 1988; Lipset 1996). So confused is the whole idea that one prize-winning historian dismissed it as in need of burial (Dawley 1988).

I could multiply examples of such fundamental problems. They run through the entire set of TEKS history standards. The process by which those standards came about has been very thoroughly analyzed, and I need not repeat what has been said – except to say that it had nothing to do with any attempt to make the study of history even comprehensible, let alone interesting and stimulating. As my colleague Emile Lester writes about the standards in his review of the proposed U.S. Government textbooks for Texas, the TEKS standards for history represent a triumph of ideology over serious understanding and good pedagogy (Lester 2014). The standards also are the fruit of a process of writing and consultation that was utterly devoid of coherence. Lester is the most recent of many serious teachers and historians who have made such points (Erekson 2012A).

Findings

The UT-Austin doctoral students who worked on the following reviews have addressed the problems noted above and other issues ably and fully. I shall turn now to their separate reports, text by text. I shall report on what the students have found in this order: 8th-grade U.S. History (to 1877), high school U.S. History (since 1877), 7th-grade Texas History, and high school World History.

Eighth-Grade U.S. History to 1877

For courses in U.S. History up to 1877, our reviewers examined six textbook packages that remain under consideration for adoption by the State Board of Education.

U.S. History: Colonization through Reconstruction (Pearson)

Reviewed by Deirdre Lannon

On the whole, Ms. Lannon gives this online product high praise for organization and, with two significant exceptions, content. She notes that Pearson provides information about both the organizations that backed the project and the scholars who wrote it and consulted about it. Since none of the other reviewers made any comment about this matter, it appears to me that Pearson is unique in doing so, in a praiseworthy way. The problems that Ms. Lannon notes in her report appear to stem from a policy choice to conform to the TEKS requirements, a point that other reviewers of its products have noted. In this instance the problem seems to be not a matter of jamming in material only because TEKS says so (as on the spurious issue of direct Mosaic and Biblical influence on eighteenth-century republicanism) but rather of leaving out important material because the TEKS standards also ignore it.



Religious/Biblical influences: Ms. Lannon finds no problems with this subject.

Slavery and the Civil War: Ms. Lannon finds that slavery is “appropriately foregrounded” throughout the product, including its importance as the primary problem that led to the Civil War.

I did note in my own examination of the Pearson text this passage from the section titled “Causes Leading to War”:

“Now a new issue emerged: whether southern states were allowed to secede under the Constitution. Most southerners believed that they had every right to secede. After all, the Declaration of Independence said that ‘it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish’ a government that denies the rights of its citizens. Lincoln, they believed, would deny white southerners the right to own African Americans as slaves.

For many southerners, secession was an issue of states’ rights and sovereignty, or independent control of an area. Many in the southern states believed that states had the sovereign right to secede. According to this view, states had the authority to make decisions without interference from the federal government, and the Constitution created a Union made up of states that could decide to leave the Union at any point. Those states also had the sovereign right to join together to form a new government, such as the Confederacy.”

While the issue of slavery certainly isn’t hidden in the discussion of the run up to the Civil War, the requirement in the curriculum standards that compels coverage of “sectionalism, states’ rights, and slavery” (in that order) as causes of the war leads publishers to misleading passages such as this one.

The concept of “states’ rights” in an abstract sense as a defense of secession did not appear until after the conclusion of the Civil War. Contemporaneous documents and statements by southerners make it plain that slavery was the underlying reason for their action. In their secession ordinances, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi and Texas all stated their understanding that slavery had been placed in danger by Lincoln’s election and made that their major theme. Moreover, high officials, such as Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Vice President Alexander H. Stephens, made plain the absolute centrality of protecting slavery as the reason for secession. That point is important for two reasons. One is that both Davis and Stephens revised their positions *after the war was over* to argue that slavery had not been the issue at all, maintaining instead that it had been about abstract constitutionalism. The other is that these passages, which appear designed to fit the TEKS requirement of considering “states’ rights” as a separate issue, does dovetail with current neo-Confederate ideology, which is deeply false to the historical record.

Comparing the speeches of Davis and Lincoln: Ms. Lannon finds that Pearson’s handling of this topic is “not just acceptable but laudable.” Given that the main thrust of the TEKS requirement on comparing these speeches seems to have been a neo-Confederate attempt to displace slavery as the primary problem behind the Civil War, her discussion is worth quoting: “The student is asked to analyze and reflect upon excerpts of each speech.” She quotes from the textbook: “Davis did not directly mention slavery in his inaugural address, while Lincoln said he would not interfere with slavery in the states where it already existed. Why do you think neither man explicitly made pro- or antislavery arguments in his speech?”



Reconstruction: Ms. Lannon finds Pearson’s handling of this subject is acceptable.

Free enterprise/capitalism: Ms. Lannon finds Pearson’s handling of this subject also is acceptable.

American exceptionalism: On the whole, Ms. Lannon finds that Pearson deals with this issue in an acceptable way. She notes, however: “Native American Indians [are] downplayed, as is their experience with broken treaties, warfare, disease, and assimilation attempts.” She also notes that the discussion of early European ventures is Anglocentric, with two bare references to the Spanish (Columbus and St. Augustine) and none to the French, the Dutch, or the brief Swedish venture on the Delaware River.

Despite her general praise and overall judgment that “this is one of the better publications out there,” Ms. Lannon finds that both its handling of Native Americans throughout and its handling Africans in the early period are inadequate, although acceptable. On the first count, the Powhatan people of the lower Chesapeake are presented as “stubbornly refusing” to help the settlers with food supplies, provoking the settlers to use “force to seize what they needed.” In fact, without the help of the Native people the ill-prepared settlers would not have survived at all. Given that the settlers were guests whom the Indians had welcomed and aided at first, “seizing” what they “needed” hardly seems to be appropriate behavior. Taking this problem into the 19th century, the pioneers of that era are treated in an entirely heroic way, again ignoring the fact that they were invading land that belong to other people (often under guarantees from the United States government) and disrupting those people’s way of life.

On the matter of slavery, Ms. Lannon calls particular attention to the discussion of early Carolina, which the text portrays as a melting pot, bringing English migrants from overcrowded Barbados into contact with people from Germany, Switzerland, France, and even Spain. The text acknowledges that these settlers were unable to grow rice, which became Carolina’s cash crop and a source of great wealth, “until Africans from rice-growing areas arrived in the colony.” Although the text acknowledges slavery’s importance, this quote seems to imply that the Africans came freely, rather than in the deadly conditions of both the Atlantic slave trade and subsequent rice cultivation. Nor does it really acknowledge that what those Africans *knew* about rice was as important to the enslavers as the labor that they could be forced to perform. Despite these deficiencies, the text does attempt in more general ways to incorporate Africans as a significant part of the colonial population. But, Ms. Lannon notes, placing them together with “farmhands and indentured servants” in a “lowest class” misses the huge gap between their situation as people who were hopelessly enslaved and people who had some reason to believe that they could win through to a better future. I would add that earliest Carolina would be a perfect setting to at least mention the enslavement of Native People, which was practiced in a fairly large scale by English, French, and Spanish colonizers alike. However, I also would add that this is a subject that is presently being explored, and it perhaps is too much to expect the authors of a school-level text to either know of it or be able to incorporate it, particularly since the TEKS standards do not provide any opportunity to do so.

Here, as in so much else, the problem is the TEKS standards more than the vision or the efforts of the people who have produced the separate texts. Ms. Lannon finds good reason to give genuine praise to Pearson’s product; the flaws that she finds clearly are the results of attempting to conform to what TEKS requires. In this case, the problem is that conforming to the TEKS standards leads to the omission of what actually made “early America” distinctive from the pre-colonization western hemisphere, or Europe, or Africa.



United States History to 1877 (McGraw-Hill)

Reviewed by Deirdre Lannon

In her summary Ms. Lannon describes this online textbook as “on the whole [doing] an exemplary job of presenting a variety of viewpoints and an inclusive look at United States History.” She adds that “this is a solid publication that presents a balanced and thoughtful look at United States history.” Ms. Lannon simply reports “no issues” with how the text handles the problem of church and state, slavery’s relationship to the Civil War, and the issues of states’ rights and American exceptionalism. The immediate side-by-side discussion of the Lincoln and Davis inaugural missed the slavery problem, but the larger text supplies that information fully. It seems clear that the Davis-Lincoln issue is only addressed because of the TEKS requirement that students compare the two texts.

I did note this passage in my own examination of the McGraw-Hill text this passage about “states’ rights”:

“Southerners used states’ rights to justify secession. Each state, they argued, had voluntarily chosen to enter the Union. They defined the Constitution as a contract among the independent states. They believed the national government had broken the contract by refusing to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act and by denying Southern states equal rights in the territories. As a result, Southerners argued, the states had a right to leave the Union.”

As with the Pearson textbook, the issue of slavery isn’t hidden in the discussion of the run up to the Civil War. But the requirement in the curriculum standards that compels coverage of “sectionalism, states’ rights, and slavery” (in that order) as causes of the war leads publishers to misleading passages such as this one.

The concept of “states’ rights” in an abstract sense as a defense of secession did not appear until after the conclusion of the Civil War. Contemporaneous documents and statements by southerners make it plain that slavery was the underlying reason for their action. In their secession ordinances, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi and Texas all stated their understanding that slavery had been placed in danger by Lincoln’s election and made that their major theme. Moreover, high officials, such as Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Vice President Alexander H. Stephens, made plain the absolute centrality of protecting slavery as the reason for secession. That point is important for two reasons. One is that both Davis and Stephens revised their positions *after the war was over* to argue that slavery had not been the issue at all, maintaining instead that it had been about abstract constitutionalism. The other is that these passages, which appear designed to fit the TEKS requirement of considering “states’ rights” as a separate issue, does dovetail with current neo-Confederate ideology, which is deeply false to the historical record.

Ms. Lannon finds wording problems with the treatment of the Black Codes during Reconstruction, criticizing the text for describing them “as necessary to ‘control’ the black population.” The major fault with the discussion of capitalism/free enterprise is a failure to recognize actual workers as necessary to and an integral part of the process.



Ms. Lannon judges that the textbook generally recognizes the importance of state and federal government support for economic development by the providing the necessary infrastructure either at public expense or indirectly.

On the other hand, I should note a specific textbook passage about early industrialization in the United States that could have been clearer: “The capitalist economic system of the United States helped spur industrial growth. In capitalism, individuals and businesses own property and decide how to use it. The people—not the government—control capital, which includes the buildings, land, machines, money, and other items used to create wealth.”

I would argue that the above passage ignores a very important dimension of American economic development after the Revolution: the argument, developed by Alexander Hamilton, that government power is needed to foster development in an active way, including projects that are beyond private capital’s reach. The declarative statement that “people – not the government – control capital” seems to dismiss even the possibility of this more complicated relationship between individuals, the government and capital. In addition, the debate over public regulation of both individual and corporate enterprise remains an active subject of contention in American economic and legal life to the present day. Students should have a context for understanding that debate.

Finally, Ms. Lannon is sharply critical of the text’s handling of Native American issues in both the colonial and early national periods. This seems to me to be a direct consequence of the woeful inadequacy of the TEKS requirements for the subject. No serious scholar of the colonial, revolutionary, and early national eras can ignore them or relegate them to mere outsiders or victims. But TEKS virtually requires that textbook writers and editors do so. That deficiency is very serious. But Ms. Lannon’s judgment is that within the TEKS parameters, the site is acceptable.

Basic American History I (WorldView Software)

Reviewed by Deirdre Lannon

In her overview Ms. Lannon describes WorldView as offering a “a fairly comprehensive look at many of the main topics of American history,” without significant evidence of deliberate bias. However, she also finds a great deal of shoddiness in the form of factual error and omission, to the level of outright distortion, particularly on matters of American “expansion.” The site includes a glossary of historical terms that Ms. Lannon studies fully, finding many significant errors.

Religious/Biblical influences: Chapter 1 “seems to equate civilization with Christianity.” Chapter 4 finds the roots of Enlightenment thought in the “teachings of Jesus Christ.” Chapter 5 displays anti-Catholic bias.

Slavery and the Civil War: Ms. Lannon found this discussion to be acceptable.

Comparing the speeches of Davis and Lincoln: Acceptable, but the section does not mention slavery.

Reconstruction: Inadequate and biased. Ms. Lannon writes: “The portrayal of the freedman’s experience is grossly downplayed and sugarcoated.”



Free enterprise/capitalism: Inaccurate, both in the text and in the glossary.

States' rights: Ms. Lannon finds this discussion is acceptable.

American exceptionalism: In Ms. Lannon's words, "what a mess."

General Comments: Ms. Lannon finds two main faults with the WorldView site. As noted above, the first is the handling of religion and the founding era, particularly the colonial years. The site might not raise problems for a class full of evangelical Protestant students, but Catholics might take umbrage at seeing their faith described as "despotic" in Chapter 5. That usage could be written off to a specifically New England Puritan view of their long time French enemies (and of the more distant Spaniards), but it falls into line with Ms. Lannon's understanding of the primary TEKS objective, which might best be understood in terms of "exceptionalism," with a developing Anglocentric and Protestant emphasis. Early in the text, civilizing "barbarian" Germans is equated with converting them to Christianity. Parallel to that point, there is no mention of the pre-contact civilizations that flourished for millennia in many locations in the Western Hemisphere, from the Andes to the Mississippi Valley. The Crusades, which do figure in the mentality of early colonizers, were (according to WorldView) for the purpose of driving Muslims out of "the Holy Land (present day Israel)" without noting that present-day Palestine also covers much of that ground.

John Cabot's ill-documented voyage to North America in 1497 provides ground for giving primacy to the "famous" 13 colonies over areas of both dense and sophisticated Native habitation, control, and organization, and over other European "trespassers," including the "despotic" Governor Peter Stuyvesant of Nieuw Nederlands. I will add on that count that when the "famous" colonies amounted to no more than a straggling line of hovels, Mexico City was one of the great urban centers of the world, organized in ways that expressed both Spanish and Native Mexica concerns. Turning the clock forward, the Enlightenment "advocated a calm, rational religion that stressed the ability of common men, using logic and reason, to accept the moral laws laid down by Jesus Christ," a proposition that many French, English, Scottish, and American Enlightenment thinkers would have rejected.

The real issue, however, is the supposedly exceptional way in which supposedly Anglo-Saxon Protestant colonists and, later, Americans, imposed their ways across the continent. Earliest Virginians endured "merciless attacks" from Native Americans, with no understanding of the Virginians' outrageous behavior as invaders. Andrew Jackson's administration (like its predecessors and successors) sold off "public land" with no reference to how that land had been acquired from the Native people who had owned, used, divided, organized and ruled it. Texas rebels "vowed to fight for their rights" against Mexico although under international law they owed obedience to a government that had welcomed them into its territory. The "manifest destiny" of the United States to acquire all the land it could get was "not always peaceful," when in fact it hardly ever was peaceful, from earliest colonization to the end of the Plains Wars. The "great age" of expansion ended in 1848, with the conquest of Mexico and the seizure of its northern third, as if the eventual conquest of Hawai'i and Puerto Rico on a permanent basis and of Cuba, Panama, and the Philippines on a temporary basis did not lie in the future. The text treats the whole notion of Manifest Destiny in a triumphant way, without mention of considerable opposition both to the general idea and to specific events (most notably the Mexican War) among the Republic's citizenry. Perhaps one sentence sums the issue up: "While the idea of 'Manifest Destiny' did not include bloodshed, unfortunately the expansion of the United States often came with violence." As



Ms. Lannon notes, violence was central to American expansion long before John L. O’Sullivan coined the phrase Manifest Destiny in 1842. I would add that such violence was waged against Native people, against Spanish authorities in Florida, and against British authorities in Canada, despite treaty obligations in relation to all of them. The U.S.-Mexico War is the most extreme of many examples. I’d add further that O’Sullivan himself later conflated Manifest Destiny with the cause of the Confederacy and the specific expansion of American plantation slavery into such places as Cuba and Nicaragua.

This problem extends into the competing visions of northerners and southerners about westward expansion after 1850. As Ms. Lannon notes, WorldView not only confuses outright abolitionists, who wanted an end to slavery immediately and everywhere, with Free Soilers, who wanted to stop its expansion as a first step toward destroying it. In the text’s discussion of John Brown, who was an outright abolitionist and who might rightly be described as a terrorist for his action against non-slaveholding southern settlers in “Bleeding Kansas” in 1856, the problem was not just Brown himself but rather a general breakdown there, beginning with pro-slavery southerners’ sack of anti-slavery Lawrence.

Finally, Ms. Lannon notes WorldView’s total inadequacy on Reconstruction, the discussion of which exaggerates the former slaves’ gains and ignores how former secessionists who regained political power and the outright terrorists of the Ku Klux Klan waged a concerted and ultimately successful campaign against African Americans.

On balance, however, Ms. Lannon finds this text acceptable, despite its inadequate handling of some issues.

U.S. History 1828-1850, Westward Expansion, Slavery, Sectionalism, Civil War, Reconstruction (Social Studies School Service)

Reviewed by Deirdre Lannon

Because this site is ungainly and disorganized, analysis of it was split. Ms. Lannon reviewed coverage of the period following 1828. A review of coverage from 1828 to 1877 was not complete by the time of this publication. The Social Studies School Service site has no single author; instead it is a collection drawn from diverse sources. At the organizational level it presents problems that appear in all its offerings, as reviewers of other Social Studies School Service products have noted. On this count, world history reviewer Christopher Rose discusses the sources’ general strengths and problems most fully. Before proceeding to Ms. Lannon’s comments, I insert his summary assessment of the whole Social Studies School Service project:

The Social Studies School Service contribution is a collection of materials from several different suppliers. The wealth of perspectives – both among writers and publishers – is both a strength and a weakness of the submission. Although on the whole, the materials are complete, include some of the most accurate and timely materials submitted for this review, and are engaging for both students and teachers, there are notable exceptions. It is probably out of the realm of possibility that a teacher can use all of the material presented (the earliest origins of human history, for example, could take months to complete if all of the materials were used, which is impractical for a one-year world history sequence), but this flexibility and allowing for both different



teaching styles as well as different learning styles means that educators can choose materials that work best in their classroom.

Another issue, especially with the Power Basics materials [among the online package of materials], is that they are already over ten years old.

The wealth of choices can be a bit overwhelming. It is not immediately clear what order the materials should be used in – while teachers and users can create their own lists, it would have been nice to have a recommended order in which to use them. Every time a unit is selected, a popup window appears advising the user that the selected lesson or activity will open in a separate tab or window. This gets old very quickly, and there is no way to turn it off.

The selections also include far too many web activities for my comfort – these being units that consist mainly of quizzes and research projects that are based on a pre-selected series of links to outside, third-party web sites whose material and content is not under the control of the publishers. While the wealth of such activities precluded this reviewer from going through each one to test every last web link, I did encounter more than one broken link in my random sampling of these units.

Because of the source's peculiarities, Ms. Lannon did not feel comfortable responding to the specific questions that TFN posed about religious influence, slavery and the Civil War, and so forth. Instead, she concentrated on an additional problem that stems from the publisher's sourcing methods: a particular set of videos whose content and presentation are very problematic. All of the questionable videos come from Ambrose Videos, and Ms. Lannon reviewed 18 of them. I will include here a four-video sample of her comments. Ms. Lannon's comments are in italics; mine are not.

1831 – Nat Turner Begins His Rebellion: This video characterizes Nat Turner's violent uprising as "gruesome" and "heinous," without acknowledging the horrific treatment of slaves.

1851 – Sojourner Truth: She is called an "ex-slave," which minimizes the fact that she undertook a dangerous escape to achieve her freedom. I would add that because Truth is an iconic figure, it's important to know that the enslavement from which she escaped was in early 19th-century Ulster County, New York, during that state's long, slow destruction of slavery within its borders, and that one of her sons (conceived by force) was sold into southern slavery despite New York State law.

1865-1869 – 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments Establish Civil Rights for All: The title and content of this video belie the lack of enforcement of the amendments and the onslaught of Jim Crow. They include three black men reading excerpts of the amendments – this deflects from the lived experience of blacks who never received the actual protections described in these lofty words.

1876 – The Battle of Little Bighorn: The interpretive position of this video is terribly, dangerously, skewed. It claims, "for over 200 years, the Plains Indians were a major force in North America." This trivializes the millennia of Native American heritage, and frames their existence from a Euro-centric point of view. It goes on to say "but a new



Native American culture arose around the horse and buffalo and a formidable warrior class grew up with it.” This makes it appear as if buffalo were not indigenous and as if horses had not been a part of Plains Indian life for centuries. By claiming that the horse/buffalo/warrior culture “was a way of life that successfully controlled the Great Plains up until the middle of the 19th century,” the video misleads the student into believing that the Plains Indians appeared with the Europeans and then suddenly became bad warriors who controlled land that was up for grabs. It says that the gold rush “saw the Plains Indians succumb to the white man’s diseases and their superior numbers,” neglecting to include the aggressive American tactics to decimate Native American culture, deplete their numbers, and usurp their land. The narrator claims that the Indians “viewed” a violation of the Treaty of Fort Laramie (here only identified as “the 1868 treaty between the Sioux and the federal government”) as an invasion, necessitating a deployment of the heroic U.S. Army to subdue the warriors. This is appalling.

Given its format and sourcing, Social Studies School Service presents both a much larger range of choices and different problems for textbook selectors. Those systemic problems seem to apply to both its U.S. History and World History offerings. I will reserve my further comments on Social Studies School Service for my own summary at the end of this report.

U.S. History Through Reconstruction (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Reviewed by Alexis Harasemovitch-Truax

Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax describes this publisher textbook as “a straightforward and historically accurate, if a traditional and somewhat dry political history of the US through 1877.” The text generally “escapes bias by providing scant analysis of the historical events that it describes.” The text addresses the TEKS requirements directly. However, in her own words, its:

major weakness . . . is that the focus on political history often leaves out the voices and experiences of politically marginalized groups such as women, African American, immigrants and, most seriously, Native Americans. Although coverage of issues pertaining to these groups improves as the textbook advances into the 19th century, politically and socially marginalized groups largely receive attention (particularly in the case of Native Americans) only in the context of political debates and events (for example, the Indian Removal act, or the 15th Amendment). [Houghton Mifflin Harcourt] does a lackluster job of helping students explore the quotidian experiences and perspectives of those not directly involved in political debates.

Religious/Biblical influences: The textbook does not even consider the historically unjustified proposition that Moses exercised any influence at all on the framers of the American Republic. Its prime concern under this heading is with the problem of religious freedom. In the context of colonial life it gives the misleading impression that religious freedom in the post-independence and modern sense was part of the English colonial project, even in the New England colonies, whereas the founding premise was that they were to be Godly commonwealths. Allowing for the example of Roger Williams in Rhode Island, who thoroughly opposed religious persecution, and the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, which allowed non-church member males to vote, early New England’s concept of religious freedom



was the freedom to worship together in what the colonists believed to be God’s ordained way with the full possibility of persecuting people and groups that differed. As Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax notes, “on the whole religious bigotry, intolerance, and violence are brushed aside as ‘community conflicts.’” Such conflicts led to the banishment from early Massachusetts of two of the figures the text names as pioneers of American religious liberty, Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams. They led in a few cases to the executions of defiant dissenters, most notably Quaker Mary Dyer, who returned to Massachusetts after being banished (and, to be fair, disrupted a Congregational church service by stripping naked). All of this was in direct defiance of England’s Toleration Act of 1649, which Massachusetts refused to implement until 1684. As late as the Revolutionary Era, Baptist leader Isaac Backus was protesting forcefully against Massachusetts laws that discriminated against his people. Virginia Baptists did the same, and the experience of the latter strongly influenced James Madison’s thought about the need to keep church and state apart. The text does acknowledge the importance of Thomas Jefferson for the development of the American idea of religious liberty in the Revolutionary Era, though in a cursory way. *Slavery and the Civil War*: The discussion of this topic is entirely acceptable. The slavery problem became entangled with all others, including Yankee ingenuity and inventiveness (the Cotton gin), westward expansion (crops and who would grow them), and economic development. Students learn that “the biggest difference between the regions was the southern system of slavery” and that “[t]he most heated debates about sectionalism were often linked with slavery. Leaders in the southern states knew that many in the North wanted the practice to be abolished.” Despite the text’s general orientation towards political history, it explores African-American life under slavery in some detail.

Comparing the speeches of Davis and Lincoln: Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax describes the handling of this topic (which clearly is a matter of complying with the TEKS requirement) as doing an “adequate job of providing both context and definitions.” Her comment indicates that the text actually shows how Davis evaded the real issue, slavery, the first instance in the student-reviewer reports of any of the texts doing so. In her words, when Davis spoke of “*The desire to preserve our own rights, and promote our own welfare,*” he actually was defending “*the act of secession as a protection of the rights of slaveholders.*”

Reconstruction: Ms Harasemovitch-Truax describes the text’s handling of this problem as “biased,” which appears to be a consequence of its general orientation towards political rather than social, cultural, and economic history. As she notes, “the textbook goes into great detail about Lincoln’s 10 percent plan, the Wade-Davis Bill, Andrew Johnson versus Thaddeus Stevens the Civil Rights Act of 1866, Johnson’s impeachment and the 15th Amendment (to name a few.)” Coverage is “adequate” but the text:

misses an opportunity to challenge students to contemplate the tremendous new liberties, opportunities, and successes, as well as the disappointments, oppression and terror that Reconstruction and its failure meant for newly free African Americans – experiences whose legacies lasted well into the 20th century and reverberate today.

Free enterprise/capitalism: Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax presentation is acceptable, including a discussion of both the important role of government in providing the enormous, expensive infrastructure that underpinned post-revolutionary development and the great debates at both the state and federal levels about what role government should play, in very considerable detail. She finds some sources of confusion in that detail (particularly in regard to the relationship between the Supreme Court’s decision in *McCulloch vs. Maryland* (1819) and President Andrew Jackson’s “war” against the



Second Bank of the United States (1831), but as I read her comments the text seems lucid on a complex and potentially boring matter that is of great relevance to contemporary American debates, showing how current arguments about public and private development all have occurred earlier in American history.

States' rights: The text's treatment is "straightforward" and "factually accurate," but limited, with some discussion of the Federal Bill of Rights, the 1790s problem of civil liberties that led to the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions of 1798, or the reasons why Jefferson and Madison looked to state power whereas Alexander Hamilton looked to federal power. The issue of states' rights comes up in the context of 19th-century debates over economic development and in relation to secession where, despite the TEKS directive to "explain the causes of the Civil War including sectionalism, states rights and slavery," the text is clear "that slavery was the root issue at the heart of sectional tension."

American exceptionalism: The text's authors recognize that "exceptionalism," which can mean appreciation of what is specific and genuinely admirable in any people's history, can slide easily into triumphalism, which asserts outright and usually unqualified superiority. The text avoids that pitfall.

Overall: Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax's main criticism of the text is its relative weakness in its handling of the actual experiences of specific groups, other than African Americans under slavery. This appears to be an artifact of the choice of the editors and authors to take a political-history approach. From her analysis, it does seem that the book's handling of its material is "fair and balanced" (as the saying goes) although becoming overloaded with confusing detail in a few instances.

United States History: Prehistory-Reconstruction (Discovery Education)

Reviewed by Alexis Harasemovitch-Truax

Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax finds that on the whole this text is "well-balanced and historically accurate," "representing the diverse experiences of America's past, and" and presenting "the perspectives of marginalized and traditionally underrepresented groups such as Native Americans, women, African Americans and immigrants." However, it does have "two major weaknesses." One is inadequate treatment of "the complex debates and evolution of the separation of Church and State . . . from the founding of the colonies, through enlightenment philosophy, during the creation of state constitutions or as an addition to the Bill of Rights." The other is how it handles "the growth of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution."

Religious/Biblical influences: Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax finds that the text does "a balanced and historically accurate job describing colonies founded for financial profit, those founded on principles of religious toleration and colonies founded on religious dogma." She leads with Pennsylvania, whose founder William Penn specifically intended that all religions should be practiced freely and openly there. So unique (I add) was that Pennsylvania situation in British America that in 1774 John Adams reported from the Continental Congress to his wife Abigail with astonishment that he had been to a "Romish" Mass, which could not have happened in Boston (or New York, Williamsburg, or what was then called Charles Town). The text also stresses Maryland, founded in 1635 as a refuge for English Catholics, where acceptance of tolerating *Protestants* was part of the arrangement (a practice also followed in France at the time). However, I add, the text does not seem to note that after Protestants took over in Maryland late in the 17th century, Catholics lost both the right to worship in public and to take part in public



affairs, not to be regained until the Revolution. New England Puritans, as she notes, were another matter. They sought freedom from English restrictions on practicing their own sort of Christianity, but intended their New England “city upon a hill” to exclude people who did not believe and worship in the Puritan way. The text correctly states: “*Anyone who did not could be punished. They could be put into the stocks, branded like cattle, banished, or even killed!*” I add that England’s Parliament passed an Act of Religious Toleration for the colonies in 1649, but Massachusetts did not implement it until 1684, when the Crown seized control of the province. Baptists and other Evangelical Protestants suffered disabilities under Massachusetts and Connecticut law until 1833 and 1838 respectively, and in Virginia until after independence. Thomas Jefferson wrote his famous phrase about a “wall of separation” between church and state in 1803 in that context, addressing it to a Baptist Church that sought his help against Connecticut’s discriminatory law against them. He and James Madison had responded to similar pleas from Virginia Evangelicals with the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom of 1786.

Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax notes that in contrast to the text’s handling of religion in the colonial era, it does a less than adequate job of discussing the relationship between the Enlightenment and the founding of the Republic. The text avoids the TEKS requirement regarding religious influences on the American founding (reinforced also in the U.S. Government and World History TEKS), implicitly acknowledging that neither Biblical thought in general nor Mosaic thought in particular had any serious effect on how the Republic gave itself shape. However, other than briefly citing the First Amendment, the text misses the Revolutionary Era’s intense discussion, from all sides and at all levels, about the proper relationship between church and state. She notes that the text very rightly stresses the enormous importance of religion, particularly Evangelical Second-Great Awakening Protestantism, in the reform movements that transformed 19th-century American life by their fervid moral insistence in the face of general lassitude that slavery, women’s rights, temperance, prison reform, and the treatment of prisoners and the mentally ill all belonged on the American public agenda.

Slavery and the Civil War: In Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax’s words, “The textbook does an excellent job explaining the fraught role that slavery played in causing the Civil War.” It deals with militant abolitionism, southerners’ defensive response, how slavery became interconnected with the problem of westward expansion, the failure of the Democratic Party as a body that crossed sectional lines, the Dred Scott case, the emergence of Lincoln, and Lincoln’s development from a Free-Soiler who opposed expanding slavery into an outright enemy of the “peculiar institution.” She finds that the text is less good on the complexities of anti-slavery thought and practice in the North, a topic that even college students do not grasp easily. From my reading of her assessment, all that I would add is the great importance of African Americans between the partial breakup of slavery during the Revolutionary Era and its final, violent end in the Civil War.

Comparing the speeches of Davis and Lincoln: Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax confesses confusion at this requirement. It really makes sense in the light of the argument that spokesmen for the defeated Confederacy, such as Davis himself, made *after the war* that slavery had not been the cause. Davis and others who tried to advance that position, such as former Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens, had spoken very differently at the time of secession, a point that I addressed earlier in this report. I understand her confusion, since the requirement works to endorse a latter-day position that cannot be justified from the record of how the United States broke apart. The text does an adequate job, however, with this material.



Reconstruction: In Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax’s reading, the text handles this topic very well. From a neo-abolitionist standpoint it is easy to villainize white southern resistance, and there is no question that the resistance was fierce and, ultimately, victorious. Without in any sense endorsing the white South’s clear determination to hold on to slavery in all but name, the text explores the reasons for that determination as its starting point. From that, the text goes on to show how the unrepentant South held on, resisted, and ultimately won both the peace, when Northern Republicans abandoned Radical Reconstruction as part of the Compromise of 1877, and ultimately won a subsequent battle for historical memory that tarred Reconstruction as foul and corrupt. It does not seem from her reading that the text does an adequate job with what former slaves and their allies (including at least some white southerners) actually did with the opportunities that ending slavery brought, for a while. Nor does the text seem to touch on the high political issues that are discussed fully in the Houghton Mifflin text. A really good treatment of Reconstruction would integrate all three themes, white resistance, black effort, and high politics. But this text’s treatment is acceptable. This text does note correctly: “Although Reconstruction had long-lasting achievements, it did not succeed in protecting African Americans’ rights. Even while federal troops remained in the South, groups such as the underground Ku Klux Klan harassed and terrorized people to maintain white power and privilege.”

Free enterprise/capitalism: Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax finds this to be the “weakest section of this textbook.” The problem starts with the choice to begin with Adam Smith’s theories, rather than with how the combination of a national market, state encouragement, institutions such as banks and stock exchanges, publicly sponsored infrastructure, technological innovation, and mass production of goods did transform American production, consumption, exchange, work, and personal life. Instead, she notes that the text provides a long list of “tepid generalizations,” which she quotes. She notes that the text draws no connection between the developments that I listed just above and the vast expansion of slave labor across the Cotton South, which produced the raw material for factories on both sides of the Atlantic. The text is inadequate on the issue of active government involvement, missing the chance to trace the ideas of Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury through Henry Clay’s “American System” of the 1830s and 1840s to the Lincoln-era’s Republican Party finally getting a chance to put such ideas into practice. It misses the problems of urban and working-class development as well. As she points out, it uses “typically vague” language like “*As industrialization progressed during the middle of the 1800s, working conditions somewhat improved and, in some instances, wages increased. However, there were still many new challenges due to technological innovations and continually changing patterns of migration and urban growth.*” This sort of prose would tell a curious student absolutely nothing.

States’ rights: Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax reports that the text succeeds in showing how the concept and problem of states’ rights were not always connected with the protection of slavery and (later, in the post-Reconstruction era) white supremacy. The text begins with what in her summary appears to be a solid discussion of the political and institutional issues that emerged as the victorious Republic worked out its settlement of the problems that emerged during and from the Revolution. It deals lucidly with the emergence of federal judicial review, which often has dealt with the respective rights of the state and federal governments, as an American principle of jurisprudence, and it shows in its discussion of the debate within Washington’s early cabinet between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton the earliest instance of the American penchant for turning political, economic, social, and cultural questions into constitutional questions. In these senses states’ rights was not linked to slavery.

However, my own examination of the Discovery Education materials revealed a particular concern. The materials include a two-minute video that argues that the states’ rights concept originated



in the tariff disputes of 1828-1832. The video goes on to present the nullification controversy as strictly a matter of states' rights and interests, and gives a sympathetic account of John C. Calhoun's developing political position on the matter without any mention that he culminated that development in 1837 when he announced that slavery was a "positive good" for all involved, including slaves. The video closes with a song from the period endorsing the southern position.

As I have noted earlier, the concept of "states' rights" in an abstract sense as a defense of secession did not appear until after the conclusion of the Civil War. Contemporaneous documents and statements by southerners make it plain that slavery was the underlying reason for their action. In their secession ordinances, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi and Texas all stated their understanding that slavery had been placed in danger by Lincoln's election and made that their major theme. Moreover, high officials, such as Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Vice President Alexander H. Stephens, made plain the absolute centrality of protecting slavery as the reason for secession. That point is important for two reasons. One is that both Davis and Stephens revised their positions *after the war was over* to argue that slavery had not been the issue at all, maintaining instead that it had been about abstract constitutionalism. The other is that these passages, which appear designed to fit the TEKS requirement of considering "states' rights" as a separate issue, do dovetail with current neo-Confederate ideology, which is deeply false to the historical record. In addition, while the Discovery Education text demonstrates the triumph of national over state power during the Civil War, it seems not to foreshadow how the states' rights argument survived to underpin white supremacy and, more recently, to become a major theme in political rhetoric criticizing federal authority.

American exceptionalism: On the whole, Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax concludes, "The textbook provides a fair and balanced account of American History." It deals well with the relationship between the dynamic political development of pre-American Revolution Britain and the even more dynamic political development of the emergent United States. More important, it handles what she calls the "moral complexities of American history" in a way that neither celebrates in a blind, uncritical way nor denigrates without appreciation. That problem began, she suggests, with the Declaration of Independence's fine and genuinely inspiring language about the equality of all men, which offered a challenge that all sorts of people whose lives and liberty have been decidedly unequal have taken up. To my mind that puts the matter rightly.

Ms. Harasemovitch-Truax's only criticism at the very end of her report is that though the text certainly takes women seriously as historical actors, it does nothing like justice to the problem of gender, as historians now understand it as a field and subject of inquiry. But, to borrow the last line in one of Hollywood's great explorations of gender issues (*Some Like It Hot*), nothing is perfect.

High School U.S. History Since 1877

For courses in U.S. History since 1877, our reviewers examined seven textbook packages that remain under consideration by the State Board of Education.

United States History (Civil War-Present) (Discovery Education)

Reviewed by Michelle Daneri



In general, Ms. Daneri presents a positive report on this “techbook.” She finds that it addresses the specific questions that TFN asked her to consider in a balanced and non-ideological way, bringing students into the issues that are raised rather than endorsing any particular position. She regards its “real strength” as how it covers “the histories of different racial and ethnic groups in U.S. history,” with the exception of Japanese internment during World War II.

Religious/Biblical influences: This is a post-1877 text, so the question of Biblical influences on the origins is not relevant. Ms. Daneri singles out really good coverage of African-American churches during the Reconstruction and Civil Rights eras and of Evangelical Christianity’s importance for the late 20th-century and 21st-century New Right. She finds no problems on this count.

American exceptionalism: Ms. Daneri finds no evidence of indoctrination or outright triumphalism in the product’s handling of this problem. She construes the question in terms of World War II, which was the height of U.S. global power, aside, perhaps, from the time between the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and all that is signified now by “9/11.” On World War II she finds good coverage of the Allied conflict in Europe (which has to include the long, terrible Russian campaign to repel the Nazi forces, with some 20,000,000 lives lost), but sees an overemphasis on the virtually solo American campaign in the Pacific. The effect is to imply though not directly suggest that the U.S. won the war on its own. Moreover, the material’s campaign-by-campaign approach does not expose students to the complex questions of studying modern warfare.

Native people, African Americans, Civil Rights, immigration, and “the majority”: This topic might also be understood in terms of “exceptionalism,” since sugarcoating of these issues easily could lead to students drawing the impression that U.S. history is simply a long tale of progress toward liberty and justice for all. Ms. Daneri finds that this techbook handles all of these themes well, with full attention to African and Native Americans, Jim Crow, western hostility to Chinese immigration, the impact of the New Deal on specific groups, Latinos, and recent immigration. The techbook describes all of these in a way that shows how the experiences of the distinct groups present variations on a common theme, so that students can see a coherent whole and not miss how the parts fit together. She notes, however, that the techbook’s account of the Oklahoma Land Rush, which ended Native control of what to that point had been Indian territory and turned it into the state of Oklahoma, is uncritical.

I will add one point, bearing on the insistence of some State Board of Education members that texts show how “the majority” (largely white men) were primarily responsible for extending equal rights and protections to women and ethnic and racial minorities, thereby downplaying the role of women and minorities (as well as the courts) in achieving those advances. This insistence is drawn straight from a document by ideological critic David Barton, during the drafting of TEKS, to which I have access (Barton 2009, 2). Barton makes good historical points elsewhere in his document. But this TEKS requirement is based on Barton’s opinion of how historical process works, nothing more. If followed, it would simply cut out how people of all sorts actually do make history. In court it would be called mere “dictum” and would have no legal relevance. It has no historical validity either. Given another TEKS requirement, that Alexis de Tocqueville be studied, this suggestion is profoundly ironic, since de Tocqueville was very critical of the possibility of majority tyranny in the democratic America that he observed. James Madison dealt with the same issue in his thoughts in *The Federalist* about the American Republic he was helping to create.



Japanese internment: Ms. Daneri finds that the techbook does cover Japanese internment well, but that the issues of German and Italian internment work to obscure what is really important about the Japanese-American experience.

Immigration: The techbook handles the issue well.

Expansion and imperialism: The goal of the TEKS standard is clearly to reinforce the idea of American exceptionalism, this time in order to contrast American behavior in the Caribbean and the Pacific to the behavior of the European powers in Africa and Asia. The argument goes that when the United States completed its present boundaries, it did not acquire overseas territory on the scale of the English, French, Germans, Belgians, Dutch, and Italians and therefore cannot be described as imperialist. Ms. Daneri finds that the techbook does a good job of both linking U.S. expansionism in North America to the overseas imperial ventures that it did make and of showing how the ideology of 19th-century expansionism transmuted into the justification for further ventures, citing Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis in particular. Continental expansionism became overseas imperialism. She criticizes the techbook, however, for paying no attention to economic reasons for U.S. interest in Cuba, Panama, the Pacific Islands, the Philippines and, eventually, the decaying Qing empire in China.

McCarthyism: In Ms. Daneri's view the techbook deals well with the rise of McCarthyism and with the generally militant and fearful anti-communism in the early Cold War years. However, the techbook does not treat the damage done to American lives and careers by the usually baseless accusations that such figures as Senator McCarthy made. I will add that one effect of the paranoia and fear McCarthyism generated was to drive people who actually understood the situation in mid-20th-century China and Southeast Asia out of positions where they could share their knowledge with policy-makers, assuming that the policy-makers wanted to hear it. Actual U.S. conduct toward China and particularly Southeast Asia might have benefitted from having what these people knew available among the people making policy.

Treaties and sovereignty: The techbook deals with this issue in reference to situations, as opposed to making any sort of general proposition about treaties, international obligations, and national sovereignty. In Ms. Daneri's words, it "does show that at different times in U.S. history, the U.S. has been isolationist, or fond of treaties. This all depends on the context."

Balance of coverage of conservative and liberal historical figures: Ms. Daneri finds that the techbook includes explicitly conservative and explicitly liberal figures in their appropriate contexts, liberals figuring heavily in mid-20th century and conservatives toward the century's end. In this she agrees (as do I) with David Barton's proposition that the criterion for inclusion should be historical significance in the subject's time, not mere identity, whether political or of any other sort.

Government regulation: Ms. Daneri finds no fault with the techbook's handling of this subject, including the pronounced and perhaps tragic contrast between the hopes for a better alcohol-free future that supporters brought to Prohibition and its ironic self-defeating effects, including large-scale organized crime. She finds a similar point in the text's handling of the Reagan-era rollback of New Deal regulation measures; the results differed from the intentions. In each case, the techbook treats the problem historically rather than ideologically.



Free enterprise/capitalism: Ms. Daneri finds that the techbook treats the topic historically in the context of 19th- and early 20th-century high industrialism, extreme inequality, workers' grievances and labor unions, and the decline of unions in the Cold War context. She faults the techbook for overemphasis on late 19th-century industrialists, who might be either glorified as Captains of Industry or vilified as Robber Barons but who are better understood as products and illustrations of their time.

Civil Rights: The TEKS requirement is that students learn about "unintended consequences" of the legislation of the Civil Rights Era. Ms. Daneri finds no fault on this count and notes that the techbook does explain the hostility of some people to such measures as affirmative action. I will add that the techbook seems to have missed the unintended consequences of including "sex" as a prohibited reason for discrimination in Title IX of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, given that the modern feminist movement, which was just barely emerging at the time, has made the most of the issue in many fields, including such areas as women's sports, a subject in which students might be particularly interested. The inclusion of sex as a protected category in the Act was done with nothing like that goal.

The Constitution and the courts: Ms. Daneri finds that the techbook handles this issue well, including the *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board*, and *Roe v. Wade* decisions and the late 20th-century politicization of the Supreme Court and the Federal judiciary. This topic overlaps with issues under the heading of American Government, which is the subject of a separate report.

General: Allowing for some deficiencies, this offering appears to Ms. Daneri to be acceptable.

U.S. History: Semester A and B (Edmentum)

Reviewed by Michelle Daneri

Ms. Daneri's report on this text is short and simple. She has only high praise for this textbook and finds no faults with it. Overall it "does the best job of presenting an accurate and inclusive narrative of U.S. history" that she saw in the texts she analyzed. She singles out its overall presentation and its handling of westward expansion, indigenous peoples, race, ethnicity and civil rights, women (on which it does a particularly good job of integration), Japanese internment, economics and race in the context of overseas imperialism, the two World Wars, foreign policy, industrialism, free trade, capitalism, the Great Depression, and regulation. In summary, she writes, "this text does a solid job of covering U.S. history in an accurate, inclusive, and appropriate manner. It emphasizes the experiences of everyone from the president, to the poor. In doing so, it creates a picture of American history that is richer and more complex than seen in the other texts I have reviewed."

The Americans: U.S. History Since 1877 (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Reviewed by Michelle Daneri

Ms. Daneri plunges straight into her detailed comments on the specific questions that TFN asked her to consider and makes her detailed comments at the end of her report. I shall follow her format. *Biblical and religious influences:* Biblical and religious influences on the colonization era and the founding of the Republic are irrelevant to this text. Ms. Daneri finds that its handling of religion deals mostly with Christian progressives early in the 20th century, the New Right late in that century and the



21st, and Islam during the Civil Rights era. Overall, she found “the discussion of religion to be minimal and evenhanded.”

American exceptionalism: In Ms. Daneri’s reading, this topic emerges from a comparison of how the text deals, respectively, with World War II (“the good war”) and Vietnam. Discussion of World War II is largely “positive and heroic,” with a strong, strictly military narrative, although the text does deal with the rejection of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany and with financial gains from trade in military goods prior to active involvement in the war after Pearl Harbor. The handling of the Vietnam War is a different matter, dealing with how the war emerged from Cold War-era containment doctrine, with the effects of the war on everybody involved, and with the very important question of “how race and class influenced who got drafted and who fought in Vietnam.” Other than this contrast in its treatment of the two wars, the text does not seem to deal explicitly with the “exceptionalism” issue.

Native People, African Americans, Civil Rights, immigration, and “the majority”: Ms. Daneri finds that the text does an excellent job with Native American experience as the Plains Wars ended and such policies as the Dawes Severalty Act, which was intended to break up collective tribal ownership, took hold. Rather than presenting a single “Indian” position, it shows dispute both among Native people and between them, as a whole, and the dominant culture. It does not do as well with subsequent disputes about legal tribal sovereignty or land claims. Its discussion of Mexican-, African-, and Native American issues during the 1950s is “great.” But despite the text’s “great effort to include the stories of minorities and underrepresented peoples” throughout the textbook, their presentation in chapter subsections makes it possible for them to just be skipped. She notes that the book says nothing about the eugenics movement, which had horrific consequences within the United States in terms of forced sterilization of supposedly inferior people and far worse consequences elsewhere as an influence on Nazi ideology. Nor does it look at how different sorts of people experienced Hurricane Katrina, which laid bare the tensions and dividing lines of the early 21st century in lower-Mississippi Valley society and, by extension, in the United States as a whole.

Japanese internment: The textbook handles this well.

Immigration: In Ms. Daneri’s judgment, the text handles this problem very well, following “Immigration of Europeans, Latinos, and Asians . . . from the Industrial period all the way into the 21st century.” However, as with the previous topic, she is criticism of the presentation of these themes separate subsections, arguing that it could allow them to be skipped in favor of the supposed “main” story.

Expansionism and imperialism: Ms. Daneri describes the text as “very cautious and measured” on this count. Perhaps this is a matter of deference to TEKS. However, she credits the textbook for its handling of the Spanish-American War, noting that it even shows African-American soldiers deployed to the Philippines who “defected to the side of the Filipino people because they did not want to spread the inequality of American racial prejudice to a new country.” She finds that the text does not do an adequate job of explaining the economic motivations for U.S. involvement in Cuba (via the Platt Amendment, written for an Army appropriations bill in Congress and incorporated into the Cuban Constitution, which authorized continuing U.S. intervention in Cuba) and with the overthrow of the independent government of Hawai’i. The book shies away from the terminology of imperialism and comparisons with European actions in Asia and Africa, but it demonstrates how its U.S. version operated in the Caribbean and the Pacific.



McCarthyism: The text shows that the Venona report on information from Soviet archives espionage in the mid-20th century United States had no bearing on the actions of either Senator Joseph McCarthy or the House Un-American Activities Committee toward United States citizens. In Ms. Daneri's reading, the text deals both with genuine Cold War era threats, as both sides armed to the point where each could destroy the other, and the hysteria that the threat produced thanks to figures like McCarthy, who died disgraced.

Treaties and sovereignty: Ms. Daneri finds the text's handling of this subject neither acceptable nor inaccurate or biased. Instead, it is merely inadequate, not doing much more than reporting that Congress "did or did not favor a treaty for whatever reason, without any clear discussion of the U.S. as a world player."

Balance of coverage of conservative and liberal historical figures: Ms. Daneri finds that the text does not favor either supposed "side." She cites as one instance its handling of the Scopes Monkey Trial over teaching evolution in Tennessee schools, describing it as illustrating deep divisions of belief and understanding within U.S. society. On the count of including or excluding politically visible individuals, she criticizes the text for paying far too much attention to presidents, to the exclusion of most others. She does not deny the importance of the presidency, but the text seems, in her reading, to regard the men who have held it as the only political figures worth serious attention.

Government regulations: Ms. Daneri comments primarily on the book's handling of the Pure Food and Drug Act, showing the debates at the time. From her account the book does not seem to deal with current public debates about regulation and non-regulation or deregulation in principle, particularly in regard to matters of business conduct and economic affairs. Nor, in keeping with what seems to be its general caution, does it deal with matters where TEKS raises a specific issue.

Free enterprise/capitalism: The text gives good coverage to the changing experiences of American workers during the eras of heavy industrialization and official hostility to unions, the New Deal's active intervention and support of labor causes, the decline of unionization, and the contemporary service economy. It is lacking, however, both in its treatment of criticism of capitalism and in its treatment of hostility to the New Deal. In Ms. Daneri's words, it almost takes for granted "that the reader would relate to disdain for a strong Federal Government and a preference for free enterprise," missing the chance for serious historical understanding of a most serious historical subject.

Civil Rights, the New Deal, and the Great Society: Ms. Daneri treats this in contextual terms, showing how the domestic goals and programs of the Johnson administration became mired in the problems raised by the Vietnam War and how modern conservatism has sought to roll back much of what the New Deal accomplished. However she finds the text's discussion of criticism of the New Deal in its time to be "vague and unhelpful," not giving any "clear impression of why people disagreed with the New Deal at the time outside of disagreeing with its impediment on free enterprise capitalism."

The Constitution and the courts: TEKS asks for discussion of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board*, and *Roe v. Wade*, all in their respective contexts. In Ms. Daneri's view, the text deals well with *Plessy*, *Brown*, and how civil rights lawyers led the court on its journey from the one to the other. It deals much less well with *Roe*, presenting the issue of abortion as a strictly political matter raised by late 20th-century feminism, without any attention to the larger dimensions raised by women in the deeper past



or more recent positions taken by *Roe*'s defenders, who receive far less attention than its critics. On this count, as on many others, the text seems to suffer from an overdose of caution on contemporary subjects.

General: Ms. Daneri's comments at the end of her review jibe with the theme of excessive caution on recent issues that I have been drawing from her specific comments as I read them. She notes the absence of gay rights as an aspect of civil rights and inadequate handling of the political and social disaster that emerged from the natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina. She also criticizes the compartmentalizing of many themes that, although well handled, remain separate from the main story, as told in terms of successive presidencies. Where the text needs to deal with the TEKS requirements, it seems to shrink historical specificity and engagement to mere vapid generalization, which may well be an artifact of the organization and content of TEKS in the first place.

U.S. History (Reconstruction to World War II) (Social Studies School Service)

Reviewed by Michelle Daneri

As noted by other reviewers, this web-based product is completely different from conventional texts, whether print or electronic. It allows teachers (or, perhaps better, local text-choosers) to choose from a very wide range of possible sources, some of very high quality, others less so. Ms. Daneri's review of the material from around Reconstruction through World War II is very short. She regards the Social Studies School Service product very highly for its handling of different groups. Her first paragraph is worth quoting in its entirety:

This textbook stands out amongst the rest for being organized both chronologically and topically. The text does a strong job of giving broad overviews of an era, like the 1920s, but also having many diverse topics to offer, like the first wave of migration from Europe to the United States. Although the content was a little confusing to navigate at first, its strength is in the real diversity of topics presented. Another strength is the variety of materials the package presents. Both primary sources and different forms of media are available to students. The text is also written in a way that encourages students to engage in historical thinking and put themselves in the mindset of people at any given time. The text also includes a variety of activities that call on students to engage with primary sources and think about how they would have acted in any given historical circumstance. This teaches students that history is not inevitable, and events could have played out in a multitude of ways. More than any other product, this package presents its content in a way that encourages active student learners, while not skimping out on content or information.

Because the Social Studies School Service package offers a far wider range of possibilities than would a conventional text, it is impossible to assess how well it meets the specific TEKS requirements. Other reviewers seem to have found this problem as well.

It seems likely that a teacher could find material within Social Studies School Service to address all of the TEKS requirements, possibly from several different perspectives in regard to each of them. That, however, would require navigating the site, which is organized in both chronological and topical terms. Problems of navigating the site can quickly be overcome, however, leading teachers and students



to much richer possibilities than conventional texts can offer. From my own experience with undergraduates, I will add that resources (as opposed to single textbooks) such as this may well present the future of historical teaching, not just in high school but in higher education as well. That's because the problem for instructors at all levels above the most elementary is not to impart information that is readily available to anybody with a computer but rather to show students how to understand that information comes in many degrees of quality and how to turn the availability of mere information into historical (or any other sort) of understanding.

U.S. History from World War II (Social Studies School Service)

Reviewed by Janine Jones

Ms. Jones reviewed the Social Studies School Service materials that cover the period of U.S. History from after World War II to the present. She regards the peculiar features of this package in a very positive light, particularly for "instructors who are teaching visual, digital, and auditory literacies." She also notes that the nontraditional format allows teachers to comply with the specific requirements not just of Texas but of all 50 states, so there is no question of a powerful state forcing its views on another state with smaller buying power. In her judgment, the Social Studies School Service package for U.S. History *"is by far the most likely to get students to understand what professional historians actually do; it includes the most information about critical analysis of sources and walks students through the problems of bias in primary sources."* All of these qualities are likely to render this package attractive to committed teachers while, in Texas, complying with the requirements of the TEKS standards. Part of what she finds attractive about the package is its nontraditional way of what could be a dull subject into an exercise in which students have to participate. Given her assignment, Ms. Jones did not try to cover all the TEKS requirements. Here are her thoughts on the ones she did follow.

Civil Rights, entitlement programs, and "unintended consequences": Without elaborating on the subject, Ms. Jones finds that this package contains "the most thorough, accurate, unbiased discussions of affirmative action and Title IX of any of the products under review." On the question of entitlement programs, an exercise asks students to imagine themselves in the position of President Lyndon Johnson and invites them to consider conflicting advice on Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, low-income housing, and low-income housing subsidies, all of which became Great Society programs. I would note that the George W. Bush Presidential Museum invites visitors to undertake a very similar exercise.

Religious/Biblical influences: Serious scholars agree that there was no direct continuity from Mosaic or general Biblical thought on the shaping of the United States Constitution, but none would doubt that a general if ill-defined and often contentious Christian heritage pervaded the emerging United States, even reaching people who did not regard themselves as Christians (which means far more people than Thomas Jefferson). That said, Ms. Jones finds that the material she read equivocates, with such slippery language as: "The Founders may have also drawn ideas about government from the Law of Moses, as set forth in the Bible." On the other hand, the package notes that "Judeo-Christian morality was different from Greek and Roman ideals of civic virtue," the latter meaning "the virtues that are important for acting in the community." Both Greco-Roman ideals and Judeo-Christian ideals address large problems of human frailty, but they address those problems in different ways. I would add that according to the reports I have seen about both the eighth-grade and the high school history texts, none of the others seem to draw this important distinction. Ms. Jones concludes that the Social Studies



School Service “language leaves the impression that [the publisher’s package] was attempting to maintain accuracy while appeasing the demands” of social conservatives.

Race and minorities: Ms. Jones finds that, on this topic, the Social Studies School Service package is far superior to any of the other products she has seen, both in terms of coverage and in terms of originality. Breaking free of simplicities about a segregated southern educational system and an integrated northern educational system, the site poses the problem of practical (rather than legal) northern segregation, citing in particular the bitter disputes about busing school students for the sake of integration in 1970s Boston. However, she finds the handling of women’s issues weak.

Immigration: The treatment of the issue of undocumented immigration is weak. But it does show students that debates about immigration akin to those of the present day “have not changed over the history of the United States” and that “suspicion, fear, and derision” of newly arrived foreigners are long-running American themes.

Balance of coverage of conservative and liberal historical figures: Ms. Jones does not find that this subject appears in the Social Studies School Service material but does note that the package’s “most impressive feature is the number of individuals and movements from different minority groups that it showcases.”

The Constitution and the courts: Ms. Jones praises Social Studies School Service materials for their discussion of the Courts. In her view they deal very well with the development of judicial thought about the “equal protection of the laws” that is promised by the Fourteenth Amendment.” Then they take the matter further. As with the question of presidential decision-making, the materials invite students to consider difficult situations in which specific circumstances and general rules of law might collide. These include such problems as “rejecting an 85- pound woman from the firefighters’ academy” and requiring all drivers over 75 and male drivers under 25 to take annual driving tests. The issue is whether the vexing issue of judicial scrutiny can apply to specific groups without violating the principle of equal protection.

Ms. Jones concludes her assessment with high praise: “The Social Studies School Service package does a superb job of balancing the varying requirements of different state legislatures with the needs of high school students . . . includes a diverse array of voices from all walks of American life and encourages students to think critically not only about what happened, but about how we are to interpret and draw conclusions from events of the past.” Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all textbook, it requires students to “to think critically about the information it includes.” I would note my comments elsewhere that from my own classroom experience with undergraduates, this approach is far superior to conventional textbook learning.

American History II (WorldView Software)

Reviewed by Janine Jones

Ms. Jones’ final comments on this text suggest that as “a political history whose narrative framing centers upon major U.S. foreign and domestic policy initiatives post-Civil War, WorldView is a very general text. Many of the primary concerns of the Texas Freedom Network are absent from this



book, which, though rendering it devoid of obvious markers of bias, also call into question its utility and adequacy as an eleventh-grade history text.”

That may say enough all by itself. There does not seem to be enough material in the product to deal with the specific topics that TFN has asked the student reviewers to address. Her review makes this point clear. She criticizes the text’s bare-bones, one-thing-after-another quality powerfully, illustrating her point by quoting a sequence of three short paragraphs that deal with foreign policy after the 2004 election. The first paragraph deals in four terse sentences with the value of the dollar in relation to the euro. The second jumps to military operations in Iraq, as American and coalition troops tried (successfully) “to regain control of the city of Fallujah from the Sunni rebels who had taken it over.” The third paragraph consists of just one sentence about American troops in Iraq scavenging scrap metal to fashion armor for their vehicles. That’s it, with no explanation or continuity or context at all. From that example, this text appears to be a matter of history-as-sound bites.

Given such utter skimpiness even at the level of simple description, let alone interpretation, continuity, contextualization, and understanding, the examples that Ms. Jones notes of independent projects seem far beyond the range that students who use it can be expected to reach. Drawing on one point where the text does address a specific TEKS requirement, she quotes in full its directions for a project on American exceptionalism. It should be noted that the subject of exceptionalism does not come up in the main text. The directions locate the idea in Alexis de Tocqueville’s 1830s classic of political sociology *Democracy in America*, list the five characteristics that de Tocqueville cited (“liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and *laissez-faire*”), and link those characteristics to such later issues as labor organization, American socialism, and liberal ideology. Then they invite the student to read de Tocqueville and:

“A. Define the values de Tocqueville identified, both in terms of 1830s society and in terms of today’s society.

1. Evaluate the claim that these values were found only in America; that is, that these values are different and unique from those of other nations.
2. Evaluate the claim that these values are necessary for a successful constitutional republic.
3. If de Tocqueville were observing the United States today, would he still see these values represented? Why or why not?

B. Define America’s continuing exceptionalism in today’s globalized world.

1. Did the values de Tocqueville identified evolve over time? How?
2. What values, if any, are necessary to promote in America today?
and
Present your findings either orally or visually.”

De Tocqueville’s classic is well worth reading by any serious student of the United States. It also is more than 900 pages long. Just to read something of that length is beyond any realistic expectations



of high school students. To address the specific questions that the assignment poses would require an understanding of nearly two centuries of both American and global development that this book certainly does not begin to present and that students cannot be expected to have carried over from World History classes. The best that can be said of the project is that it does speak to one specific TEKS requirement, but in a way that is optional for the student and that would be beyond the capabilities of all but the very most highly motivated students. From the other example that Ms. Jones provides, such incoherence and over-ambition in the suggested projects seems characteristic of the text.

Ms. Jones does give the text credit for good coverage of African-American history, but that coverage stands in stark contrast to its “minimal discussion of minorities and social movements,” adding that “the causes and influences leading social movements are, more often than not, either given short shrift or left unmentioned.” To borrow from her, it seems as if the editors made some minimal changes to a previous text for the sake of bringing their offering for Texas into bare compliance with TEKS, and nothing more, while avoiding all issues that are salient in our time, most notably issues of sexuality, including abortion and gay rights.

The text’s main strength is that it is politically neutral. But it achieves its neutrality by simply dodging most serious issues outright, and by a bland, uninformative prose style that presents no basis for any serious student thinking. It seems either to duck issues on which TEKS presents points for serious discussion, to deal with them inadequately (for example, as Ms. Jones notes, the whole issue of LGBTQ activism and rights), or, as with the issue of American exceptionalism, to make consideration optional and then to frame it in a way that high school students cannot be expected to fathom.

Clearly, this text does not even try to present American history to young adult minds in a way that will engage them and help them to understand the world in which they live. As Ms. Jones comments, “*this exercise has reminded me of why I disliked history in high school, and why I only discovered its delights once I started university (and escaped high school history texts).*” (Personal communication, August 2014). I cannot think of a better reason for not adopting it.

United States History Since 1877 (McGraw-Hill)

Reviewed by Janine Jones

Ms. Jones rates this offering very highly among the four texts that she reviewed. She states her reasons as she works through the specific TEKS-related issues that TFN asked her to consider.

Religious/Biblical influences: The issue of religious influences on the founding is not really relevant to the content area of this text. She notes that early 20th-century fundamentalism is discussed in a “brief, factual way” in the context of discussing the Scopes Monkey Trial. The book does not give religion undue weight. However, she also notes that the book deals with religion “as a factor influencing people and movements throughout.”

Japanese internment: As TEKS requires (and perhaps because TEKS requires it) the text does note that non-citizen German and Italian nationals were interned after the United States became a belligerent in World War II. There is more detail on the issue of Japanese internment, and the text calls students’ attention to President Ronald Reagan’s apology in 1988 to the people who had been interned, as well as the \$20,000 compensation that surviving internees received. However, the racial element is



underplayed. I add that an alert teacher might notice that German and Italian internment was in accord with the Enemy Aliens Act of 1798, which remains in effect, since the people interned were not citizens. On the other hand, Japanese internment was based on the people it affected being ethnically Japanese, regardless of their citizenship.

Imperialism and expansionism: On this issue the text does not mince words, calling its first lesson on the subject “The Imperialist Vision.” It shows how “politicians, thinkers, and influential businessmen of the time” debated the matter, citing such figures as industrialist Andrew Carnegie, labor leader Samuel Gompers, social worker Jane Addams, and writer Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain). The text presents the ruminations of President William McKinley over whether to annex the Philippines, which placed the islands under United States sovereignty until after World War II. McKinley decided that “that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died.” Perhaps McKinley did not realize that Spanish Catholic missionaries had planted Catholicism there in the 16th century, establishing a separate diocese in 1571, that by the time he spoke of Christianizing the Philippines seven successive cathedrals had stood on the same site in Manila, and that most Filipinos were Catholics (as most Filipinos still are).

McCarthyism: The issue raised by the TEKS standards is whether “the Venona decrypts of Soviet espionage activities” vindicate the mid-20th century extreme red-baiting of Senator Joseph McCarthy and his supporters. Ms. Jones finds that the text correctly distinguishes actual espionage, which unquestionably happened (and which most nations practice), from Sen. McCarthy’s “infamous legacy.”

Treaties and sovereignty: Recognizing that the relationship between treaties (which are part of the “Supreme Law of the Land” according to the Constitution) and American sovereignty is presently a highly politicized issue, the text takes the matter on, not to argue a case but by discussing the United Nations, the Law of the Sea, and the problem of international arms control in relation to internal American debates about the Second Amendment and the right to bear arms.

Balance of coverage of conservative and liberal historical figures: Ms. Jones finds that the figures whom the text lists as historically significant indeed *are* historically significant, rather than simply being included because of their politics. Beyond those figures, she quotes two excellent paragraphs from the text that reach to the core of the issues that separate conservatives from liberals in contemporary United States politics. I know of no other textbook that attempts to make such a distinction, and the way that this text does, it seems to me to get to the heart of the relevant contemporary issues.

Free enterprise/capitalism: Ms. Jones finds that “the free enterprise system is not a significant and enduring topic of analysis” in this text. It does discuss the Federal Reserve in descriptive terms, “without discernible critique or praise.”

Native people, African Americans, Civil Rights, immigration, and “the majority”: Ms. Jones finds the text “uneven” on this topic, except for the African-American Civil Rights Movement. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal and Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society receive factual rather than analytical treatment, as does affirmative action, whose treatment of *Bakke v. the University of California* (1978) receives attention. Given the current salience of affirmative actions issues in public higher education, I suggest that teachers could make good use of this coverage in class. Ms. Jones notes that the text singles out the text’s coverage of Title IX of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which banned discrimination



according to sex. She finds that the text handles immigration in a dry, facts-based way and thus avoids problems.

On balance Ms. Jones finds this textbook praiseworthy for the quality of its prose, its handling of minorities beyond African-Americans (particularly, she notes, Native-Americans), and women's issues. However she finds it deficient in regard to LGBTQ issues, which it barely touches, and in regard to Asian Americans. Despite this, she concludes that this "is a strong text that covers a great deal of ground and is significant for its lack of bias."

United States History: 1877 to the Present (Pearson)

Reviewed by Janine Jones

Of the texts that Ms. Jones has reviewed, she finds that Pearson's product hews far more closely than the others to the TEKS requirements. It contains direct links between materials in the text and the relevant TEKS standards, so that if teachers want they can literally teach to the standards. Indubitably, that offers a convenience that busy teachers are bound to appreciate. Whether teaching that way would be good classroom practice is another matter.

Such close adherence to TEKS appears to be characteristic of all the Pearson products that the reviewers have considered, and it clearly seems to be the result of a policy decision by the company. Whether there is significant variation between Pearson's products for the Texas market and its analogous products for use outside Texas is an open question at this point. If there is, it might be an indication of cynicism on Pearson's part, for the sake of easy adoption for the large Texas market. In this case, Ms. Jones finds that the text not only adheres to the issues TEKS requires, but also comes close in some places to endorsing particular positions. In her view the text is "uneven . . . written in extremely general prose that often appears below grade level. Nevertheless, of all of the texts under review, Pearson follows the TEKS standards the most closely, making its shortcomings more a reflection of the problems of TEKS than of the text itself." I would opine that this product is likely to find strong support when the State Board of Education considers its adoption for that reason and whatever its other assets and deficiencies.

Religious/Biblical influences: Discussions of the religious influences on the founding apply primarily to the eighth-grade, pre-1877 course and are not of great relevance to the high school course. Ms. Jones finds the strongest coverage of religious issues in the unit on the Scopes Monkey Trial. However, in what she describes as "an excellent unit on landmark Supreme Court decisions," the text invites students to consider such cases as *Wisconsin v. Yoder* and the Hastings Law School case in California, both of which raise issues of religious freedom in relation to the requirements of public institutions. She notes that "by limiting its discussion to specific historical events, Pearson avoids making sweeping generalizations about the nature and influence of religion in American political history." This strategy allows the text to comply with the TEKS requirement without forcing an interpretation upon the students.

American exceptionalism: Pearson does not use the phrase "American exceptionalism," which, as already noted, has a complicated history of its own. But, Ms. Jones writes, the text presents "American history in a relentlessly cheery light." She notes that the text complies with the TEKS requirement that students learn about Alexis de Tocqueville's (in the language of TEKS rather than de Tocqueville himself)



“five values crucial to America's success as a constitutional republic: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and *laissez-faire*.” The text provides excerpts, which make the project manageable. But by doing so out of a 900-page book, it almost certainly slides from de Tocqueville’s masterly and subtle treatment to a simplification that de Tocqueville might find surprising.

Japanese internment: The text complies with the TEKS requirement that the internment of West Coast Japanese, immigrants and citizens alike, be presented, and Ms. Jones regards the approach as “excellent.” The point I made in discussing another reviewer’s comments under this heading, that German and Japanese interment was in accord with the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 and applied only to non-citizens, whereas the internment of Japanese was based on ethnicity regardless of citizenship, might apply. Ms. Jones praises Pearson for noting that there was no internment of Japanese in Hawai’i, where the Japanese population was much larger than on the continental West Coast. It would be left to students to ponder the differences between the two situations in simple terms of the relative voting strength of Japanese-American citizens in local politics, but it seems to me that a skillful teacher could draw them out.

Immigration: On this subject, the text shows “remarkable bias,” with a gallery of immigrants that is “skewed” towards European and Russian (and male) immigration, most of them cultural and artistic high achievers. Where, Ms. Jones wonders, are immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America? She finds these people not in the book’s discussion of immigration but under the subject of civil rights. The book treats the contemporary issue of undocumented immigration primarily from the standpoint of public policy, not of the immigrants themselves.

Expansionism and imperialism: As the TEKS requirement that the word “imperialism” be set aside in favor of “expansionism” demonstrates, the State Board of Education regards this issue of terminology as very sensitive. The Pearson text does use the word imperialism, but so sparingly that in Ms. Jones’ judgment a student is unlikely to notice it. She describes the text as “walking a very careful line in trying to appease all sides of the debate over how to characterize U.S. actions in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, and the Philippines at the turn of the [20th] century.” The actions of the United States as it moved into these places, dominating Cuba and taking over the others, cannot be described as expansion in the sense that the country acquired the Louisiana Territory or its share of the Pacific Northwest. The text acknowledges that point but in a way that in Ms. Jones’ opinion would lead “students [to] more readily associate the concept of “expansionism” with United States behaviors and “imperialism” with Europe.” That would appear to be the goal of the TEKS requirement.

McCarthyism: The text accurately distinguishes the hysteria associated with Sen. Joseph McCarthy from the issues of genuine espionage that the Soviet archival material confirms.

Treaties and sovereignty: Following TEKS, the text explores the concerns of people “who feel distrust toward international treaties,” which is appropriate, without endorsing either their position or their opponents’ internationalism, which also is appropriate.

Balance of coverage of conservative and liberal historical figures: The text does not appear to show bias in its choice of figures to be included, treating them in terms of their historical significance rather than their politics. As I have noted elsewhere, conservative critic David Barton endorses this criterion. So do I.



Free enterprise/capitalism: In the words of Ms. Jones, “although otherwise a strong text, Pearson’s unrelenting praise of free enterprise as the progenitor of any and all American successes is, to put it mildly, problematic.” She provides a long series of instances in which the text highlights the benefits of free enterprise, to the exclusion either of serious critical thought about the concept (and its related concept of capitalism) or of serious historical understanding of any political position other than that government’s only appropriate role is to facilitate private enterprise. Leaving such issues as socialism entirely aside, this approach sidesteps any attempts to understand the costs of unlimited enterprise as well as its benefits or to appreciate the entirely American position that the appropriate role of public power in relation to private enterprise can be to regulate and limit it as well as to facilitate it. It also sidesteps a debate about whether to *use* the power of the Federal Government (for the sake of the “general welfare”) or to *fear* it (for the sake of the “blessings of liberty”) that began when Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson began to quarrel about constitutional interpretation in President George Washington’s first cabinet.

Civil Rights, the New Deal, and the Great Society: Ms. Jones finds that “Pearson is, on the whole, balanced in its discussion of the New Deal and the Great Society, and, like the other texts under review, includes a thorough section on the African American civil rights movement. The primary concern of this topic – that the poor may be implicitly demonized for their poverty and that government should not help them – is unrealized in the text.” She illustrates this with the text’s discussion of the Great Society’s programs in relation not just to civil rights but in such areas as social welfare and the nation’s artistic and cultural life. Rather than the text denigrating the Great Society era as a time of governmental overreach that did not achieve its goals, the text concludes that though she finds that its “victories may not have been as grandiose as Johnson predicted . . . they were victories.” Certainly on this subject the text complies with what TEKS requires without endorsing a political line.

General: At the end of her report Ms. Jones presents two criticisms that bear on whether the text endorses any contemporary political position, as opposed to showing different positions and exploring why people have taken them. One of these issues is gun rights in relation to violent crime and the best interpretation of the Second Amendment. As part of a slide show about firearms, the text reports that “Wayne LaPierre, the Chief executive officer of the National Rifle Association (NRA), spoke in the aftermath of the December 2012 shootings in Newtown, Connecticut, in which 20 children and 6 adults died. According to LaPierre, ‘The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.’ LaPierre’s remarks added to the debate about the best way to protect innocent lives.” The slide does not present any counter-argument from people who do not share LaPierre’s interpretation, although a previous slide does show shooting victim and former presidential press secretary James Brady, an active supporter of gun control who had served President Ronald Reagan (and now deceased), in his wheelchair. Following the slide show, the text presents statistics that seem to show, as Ms. Jones suggests, that students might have reason to “doubt about any correlation or causation between gun regulation and violent crime.” In a similar way, and unique in the text’s handling of modern presidents, the text presents Reagan in a way that “undercuts critical thinking skills” and that suggests that the only correct assessment of Reagan is that “he exhibited exemplary leadership.”

Seventh-Grade Texas History

One reviewer, Nicholas Roland, examined the Texas History textbooks under SBOE consideration, and his task was different from the others who dealt with U.S. History and World History. TFN asked him to consider only two issues: how each textbook deals with the causes of secession in 1861 (particularly



the question of slavery, which also was a topic for the reviewers of textbooks for U.S. History prior to 1877) and how the textbooks cover the era of Civil Rights. Mr. Roland commented fully on each of these topics, but he was not asked to expand beyond them. Of the four textbooks reviewed by Mr. Roland, three remain under consideration by the State Board of Education. A summary of the textbook no longer under consideration can be found in the appendix at the end of this report.

Texas History (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Secession: In large terms Mr. Roland finds, this text “implies” that slavery was the primary cause of secession. But he also finds that in an attempt to comply with the specific TEKS language, the book makes a bow towards the idea of abstract states’ rights in a way that Mr. Roland finds could be confusing to students. This is particularly so because this is the only mention of the states’ rights concept. The book does not deal adequately with abolitionism, which, as all the secession documents (including Texas) show, was a cause of great fear among slaveholders. Nor does it deal with the actual end of slavery in Texas, which appears only in passing. Nor is its coverage of the Battle of Palmito Ranch, “where the bulk of the Union force was made up of black soldiers,” adequate. He notes that this would have been a perfect place in a specifically Texas context for dealing with the very important theme of how black people took an active and determined part in slavery’s destruction, rather than simply waiting for it to happen. As it is, the end of slavery in Texas seems to just happen suddenly rather than as the resolution of a long, hard, and determined struggle between slavery’s supporters and its enemies, of all sorts.

Civil Rights: Mr. Roland finds that the text treats this issue thoroughly, including women’s rights.

Texas History (McGraw-Hill)

Secession: Mr. Roland praises the text as “a well-balanced account that gives appropriate weight to slavery as the main source of sectional tensions in the antebellum United States.” It shows that other issues, such as tariffs intended to benefit northern industrial development, were secondary to the slavery issue. However, he would prefer to see more extended discussion of the problem of states’ rights, demonstrating that “Southerners were eager to invoke states’ rights when it meant protection of slavery, but had little regard for states’ rights when it was employed against slavery.” No other reviewer dealing with this problem in the separate texts has raised that idea.

Civil Rights: Mr. Roland finds this coverage excellent, seeing it as appropriate for seventh-graders, “in keeping with the TEKS standards,” and a continuing theme in the book throughout the post-slavery period. He does note the “myth” that the Hall of Negro Life (so called) at Fair Park in Dallas was the first site at a major fair to recognize African-American achievement is repeated in the text, and points out that the building had predecessors at fairs in Atlanta, Nashville, and Jamestown, Virginia.

Texas History (Pearson)

Secession: Mr. Roland finds that the text “discusses states’ rights, slavery, and tariffs in accordance with TEKS standards” and that “(s)lavery and Southern fears over Republican antislavery are given the most credit for Texas’ decision to secede.” However, he finds that in an apparent bow to the placement of states’ rights first in the TEKS listing of causes, the text gives the matter attention that it does not deserve. He notes that “states’ rights” by itself is a “legal theory that was employed to justify



resistance to perceived federal overreach,” and that in the case of secession, the perceived overreach stemmed from the fact that the newly emergent Republicans, a strictly-northern, anti-slavery party (which also favored the idea of an active government rather than a minimal one) had come to national power by winning the presidency. As with his first review, Mr. Roland is critical of the limited attention that the text gives to how slavery ended, whether as the consequence of a long struggle or as an actual event or as the start of a different African-American agenda in Texas and the United States. Texas was slow to accept slavery’s demise within its borders. Though the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which banned slavery throughout the Republic, took effect on December 6, 1865, Texas did not ban slavery under its own constitution until the following year, and then only under pressure from Washington. It finally ratified the Thirteenth Amendment on February 18, 1870. Only Delaware (1901), Kentucky (1976), and Mississippi (1995) took longer than Texas to finally accept that slavery was over.

Civil Rights: Mr. Roland has strong praise for treatment of this subject in the text on all counts, save for relative inattention to grassroots activism. In my reading of his analysis, the text does not attempt to deal with the U.S. History TEKS requirement of considering “unintended consequences.”

World History

A word of introduction is in order. World History and its correlate “Big History” are relatively new fields in a discipline primarily characterized by intense specialization. Historians who have turned in this direction enjoy the challenge of dealing with what early practitioner Charles Tilly called *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (Tilly 1984). One danger is merely to add a few more elements or components to the long-established but still sprawling subject called “western civilization.” Another is mere fragmentation, on the basis of drawing on specialist knowledge for each aspect, without any intellectual coherence. A third, reversing the second, is to make sprawling generalizations without any regard for the specifics that show how places, peoples, situations, and times differ from one another. A fourth, which any textbook faces, is mere inclusion for its own sake. Finally, the task is complicated by the TEKS requirements, some of which are politically or ideologically driven (particularly but not exclusively on issues involving Islam) and some of which are simply incoherent.

Two reviewers examined three World History textbooks each. Publisher Edmentum has since withdrawn its World History textbook from consideration by the State Board of Education. The review of that textbook can be found in the Appendix at the end of this report. TFN asked the two reviewers to comment on six specific points.

World History (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Reviewed by Christopher Heaney

Mr. Heaney provides a thorough analysis and attention to significant detail to his reading of Houghton Mifflin’s offering. On a very positive note, it “is the most polished, in the classical textbook sense: beautiful layout, images, visual source analysis, interesting quizzes and tests. It’s clear that HMH knows what they’re doing in terms of presentation, and they do it well.” His reading of this text seems fair. His major proposition about the text is that “its treatment of the New World and Africa ... along with its attempt to shoehorn in Texas-mandated lessons on ‘free enterprise’ make it less adequate as a book on ‘World History.’” I would go somewhat further and suggest from his reading that the textbook



presents a somewhat ungainly and unsatisfactory attempt to tack “world history” onto an intellectual framework that is too small to support it, with a result that left him “less than impressed.” Here is a summary of Mr. Heaney’s responses to the specific questions that TFN posed.

Religious balance: Mr. Heaney takes this question broadly, to consider how the text deals with the large issue of religion in relation to the development of society. He considers the ancient world (wondering why the Greeks had “myths” but not “religion”), China, and deplores the text’s very cursory treatment of Africa and Indigenous America, in religious and other terms. He finds that the “long section on Jesus and rise of Christianity is wholly positive, [and] triumphalist” but he also regards the chapter on the rise of Islam as respectful and “to be praised” for its discussion of Islam’s “preservation of tradition . . . message of equality and hope . . . advancement of learning.” But distortions and anachronisms begin to appear, perhaps most notably a description of a high 11th-century Persian official as “the leading terrorist of his age,” as if there were a direct line from this man to Osama bin Laden. The handling of the Crusades, of the Ottomans in Turkey and of the Mughals in India appears to be fair and well informed.

Religious influences and Western political thinkers: From Mr. Heaney’s account this chapter seems to me to have simply capitulated to the TEKS requirements, which add up to direct and untenable propositions about Biblical and Christian thought in relation to 18th-century republicanism. At worst, the text posits a relationship in terms of “don’t do bad things,” ignoring the point that such an injunction is at the heart of all forms of ethical thinking; the rub is the definition of bad things. Vague generalization at that level holds for the text’s treatment of Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin (whose political thought and practices in Geneva are ignored), the Reformation in relation to the formation of an amorphous “modern world,” and even the Enlightenment, despite the text’s own statement that the Enlightenment “led some to reject all religions.”

Without any evidence, the text tries to link the Declaration of Independence to Sir William Blackstone, who gets only the barest of mentions in the two most important accounts of the Declaration’s making. I would add, to drive home the absurdity of including Blackstone on the required list, that one of those studies quotes Blackstone’s fairly well-known statement that “there is and must be in every state a supreme, irresistible, absolute, uncontrolled authority,” which is some distance from what the Declaration has to say about the right of an aggrieved people to overthrow a truly oppressive government. The text goes on to cite the Bible, Aquinas, and Luther as the prime shapers of American ideals, completely in defiance of evidence and ignoring the point that none of them endorsed anything resembling “American-style democracy.” It also suggests that “many” clergy raised their voices on political matters during the era. The point is correct, but they raised their voices on both sides of both the debate about Independence and the debate about the Constitution a decade later. On the latter count, “many” clergy opposed the Constitution because the word God does not appear in it.

Columbian exchange and slavery: The text rightly deals with slavery prior to Columbus, which is right because slavery long predated 1492. After a cursory mention of Roman slavery and some broad generalizations about Africa (and without mentioning that almost every society has had some form of slavery), the text turns to Africa, where it seems to blame “the slave trade’s expansion on Arab Muslim Traders.” There is no mention that both Portuguese and Spanish explorers sought places to acquire slaves, or that the Portuguese found such sources well south of the sub-Saharan areas of Muslim influence, or that except for a very few places (notably France and England), Europeans were perfectly familiar with slavery in the age of exploration and contact. Christopher Columbus certainly was; prior to 1492 he carried slave-grown sugar from the Atlantic islands to Portugal, and he enslaved some Taino Indians on his very first voyage. This is not to single him out; he and fellow Europeans of his day took



slavery for granted. It even turns up as a “given” in Miguel de Cervantes’ great novel *Don Quixote* (1605).

Mr. Heaney finds the textbook’s treatment of the Columbian exchange similarly inadequate. Not the least reason, which the book does not mention, is that enslaved human beings (and what those human beings could produce if forced to do the work) figured very large in the back-and-forth of living species and goods that the term Columbian Exchange connotes. Mr. Heaney finds the text inadequate in its reduction of the Spanish venture in the Americas to the simple caricatures of violence, atrocity, and greed summed up by familiar phrase “Black Legend.” Taking the point further, the text portrays the eventual East Coast North American colonies in terms of freedom and opportunity for the colonists, as opposed to domination and exploitation in the areas Spain claimed. Native people who encountered the English would not have agreed, though they did have the means to adapt and to resist. The text almost ignores “the massively important Haitian Revolution” and it misconstrues the dynamics that led to Latin American independence. In a most serious error, it suggests that the American Revolution inspired “groups seeking social equality” whereas in Latin America “many places kept the plantation system.” I will simply note that the American Revolutionary *Era* (not just the American Revolution) did see the world-historical beginning of slavery’s destruction, but that among its major consequences was the Cotton Kingdom, based entirely on slavery and willing, ultimately, to wage the titanic struggle that we call the Civil War for the sake of slavery’s survival. The book does note that slavery was the root problem behind the Civil War. But as Mr. Heaney points out, it does not link slavery to its generally upbeat story about American free-enterprise success. Finally, under this general heading, Mr. Heaney finds the treatment of slavery, quasi-slavery and rebellion in Africa and South Asia inadequate but also notes that unlike the United States, the Latin American republics made the destruction of slavery part of their respective national projects.

Free enterprise/capitalism: As with the eclectic and incoherent list of thinkers who supposedly influenced 18th-century republicanism, the way that TEKS frames this topic is political, ideological, and simplistic, rather than genuinely historical. This text seems to accept the TEKS requirement in a wholly uncritical way. It overstates the importance of free private enterprise in the medieval and early modern periods in Europe. As Mr. Heaney rightly stresses, it simply ignores the fundamental importance of the different conditions that obtained in Europe, as free enterprise and free labor did gain in importance, in relation to conditions in colonized Africa and the Americas. He points out a student exercise in the African context that invites the students to ask “how might free trade have benefitted both sides” in an African-European exchange. The date is not specific, but until the slave trade finally ended, one major commodity in such free trade was slaves. Even after that, the quasi-slavery of the Belgian Congo is notorious, and enslaved Africans transported the vast number of elephant tusks that were traded to make piano keys and trinkets, most especially to one town in late 19th-century Connecticut. It is true that in 1696 the British Parliament abolished the monopoly held on that country’s African trade by the Royal African Company, thus introducing free trade opportunities to non-company merchants and seafarers based in both British and North American ports. But their cargoes of human beings and what they could produce under force only increased in volume and economic importance, on a truly vast scale as the colonial plantation economies boomed.

Following that combination of anachronism and blindness to historical reality, the text goes on to posit the existence of a “welfare state” among the pre-contact Incas and poses this issue in the teacher’s guide: “Contrasting the cultural and political practices of the Incan Empire, such as Incan burial practices and ‘welfare state’ policies, can help us better understand our own beliefs and practices.” It refers in the



student edition to the Incas in terms such as “socialist” and “modern welfare.” Mr. Heaney is a Peruvian specialist, and he finds this outrageous. From the point of view of having some knowledge of the Iroquois and other eastern Woodland Indians, who understood property but not in anything like the European sense and who valued personal freedom, I concur. Mr. Heaney goes on to show similar problems with the text’s treatment of the economic dimensions of Renaissance Italy, Reformation Europe, the post-revolutionary United States, and even the era of high industrialization. I have dwelt on the slave trade and the gross anachronism about the Incas not to harp on them specifically but rather because the treatment of them seems to exemplify a pattern that runs through this entire theme.

Arab-Israeli relations: In contrast to most of Mr. Heaney’s report, he gives this point a relatively short discussion. He finds the general treatment adequate and reserves his main criticism for the handling of the TEKS requirement, which presupposes sole Arab responsibility for what actually is a tangled and seemingly intractable situation. He notes that the text does not deal with “internal colonialism” or with active U.S. involvement in the situation, laying the whole blame on supposed Arab unwillingness “to give up violence.” In Mr. Heaney’s words: “There’s no discussion of Palestinian civil rights. There’s no discussion of Palestinian deaths. The text does not bend over backwards to defend Israel’s position [a position that the TEKS requirement presumes], but nor does it lay out its contradictions or the activist movement advocating for Palestine.”

Terrorism and radical Islam: As already noted (and as seems to be characteristic of a text that abounds in anachronism), this text identifies an 11th-century Persian official as a “terrorist.” Closer to our own time, the text stresses specifically Arab terrorism and seems to both to root it in the Arab-Israeli conflict and to use it as a way to explain such decidedly non-Arab, not-Muslim and often non-religious developments as the Irish Republican Army, the Basque ETA, and Colombia’s FARC, which, as Mr. Heaney notes, is a guerilla group rather than a terrorist group.

General: From Mr. Heaney’s report, this textbook seems to present a classic instance of a Eurocentric structure that is not strong enough in conceptual terms to deal with subjects outside that structure, which is riddled with anachronism, and which does not really deal with the problems that TEKS poses for the study of World History, either in terms of how it forces the agenda or in terms of actual historical problems. Mr. Heaney closes this report with a list of a number of the TEKS requirements beyond the ones that TFN asked him to consider, briefly showing the faults inherent in all of them.

World History Texas (McGraw-Hill)

Reviewed by Christopher Heaney

In contrast to Houghton Mifflin’s offering, Mr. Heaney offers praise for this online source. He begins his review by noting that “in general, it offers a critical history of how economies and ideas have moved over time, neither giving cultures ‘passes’ nor singling out any for special criticism.” He noted that it uses videos that “weren’t awful,” a comment that he intends as “high praise, given most video treatments of history.” Although he finds the text “deficient” in its handling of “Indigenous” religion, he praises the way that it deals with the great religions of the Eurasian landmass, including its Christianity and Islam in relation to each other, and of the contemporary problems of the Middle East. Its treatment of Israel and terrorism by radical Islamic actors is also balanced, showing how Israel’s creation led to specific geopolitical challenges and loss of rights by Palestinians, the radicalization of Islam due to



economic disadvantage vis-à-vis Western powers, and a global conflict over ‘terror’ “that doesn’t – as some textbooks do – clear the U.S. of responsibility for subsequent destabilization.” However, he finds that this text displays the same problem of inadequate treatment of indigenous America that seems to plague attempts to write genuine “world history.” With that point noted, I shall proceed to his discussion of the specific TFN points.

Religious balance: Referring students to a “World Religions Handbook,” the text treats both Islam and Christianity as (important) parts of world religious history. In terms of the specific Islam/Christianity binary, it gives the two great religions approximately equal treatment in terms of origins, dogma, practices, and historical development in relation to the secular world. Thus, discussion of early Christianity in relation to the Roman and Byzantine Empires, the medieval kingdoms of Europe, and the Crusades is balanced by discussion of Islam in relation to the Arab Empire, Islamic expansion, particularly eastwards, and the succession of “Muslim” empires that appeared. Modern radical Islam is presented not as somehow essential to Islamic history and identity but rather as “a product of nationalism and colonial economic exploitation in the 20th century without soft-pedaling its relationship to women’s rights and terror.”

Religious influences and Western political thinkers: Mr. Heaney cites numerous instances of reasonably good discussion (or lack of it, in the case of Blackstone, as befits his unimportance in this context). The text does attempt to find the origins of jury trials in the Ten Commandments, which cannot stand as historical analysis. But other than some generalizations that might be true of the teachings of any religion or ethical system, the text does not assert the unsupportable assertion that Biblical and specifically Mosaic thought directly influenced late 18th-century republicanism.

Columbian Exchange and slavery: The text demonstrates the world-ubiquity of slavery but also underplays its importance in the era of exploration and early colonization. It does show that the Columbian Exchange was driven by the exploitation of slave labor (rather than by some sort of free trade across the Atlantic in species of plants and animals that mysteriously moved themselves). On the whole, Mr. Heaney finds that the treatment of early slavery is good but that the textbook falls short on slavery’s lasting importance, until the 19th century and its long, difficult death. The textbook also seems to posit that “English colonization elsewhere in the Americas, meanwhile, [was] very gentle.” I will note that this was hardly the case in the English Caribbean, where sugar slavery was a killer on an enormous scale, in war-torn Iroquois Country until the “Great Peace” established Iroquois neutrality between the English and the French, among the 17th-century English settlers, or in the 19th-century colonization of the lower Mississippi Valley.

Free enterprise/capitalism: As with the previous topics, Mr. Heaney’s comments are short by comparison with his other two reports. On the subject of feudalism, he notes that “the Crusades – not ‘free enterprise’ – helped break down feudalism, by breaking up manors and consolidating nation states.” His report does not indicate any coverage of the relationship between developing free trade and free labor practices in Europe and vast slave labor in the distant American colonial world. On this issue the book seems cautious, as if its authors were not ready or willing to take on the full implications of the TEKS requirement. But it does present the issue in terms of economic history from the Middle Ages to the present, presenting issues and problems rather than presupposing ideologically established positions. In this sense the text meets the TEKS requirements by transferring the issue from the realm of value judgment to that of historical problems.



Arab-Israeli relations: As with the rest of this text, Mr. Heaney finds that it explores problems, including problems that have yet to be resolved. The TEKS question presupposes solo Arab responsibility for the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Mr. Heaney's summary seems worth quoting as a response not just to that inadequate formulation, but also to the seeming intractability of the situation itself:

Efforts to reach a comprehensive peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, represented by the Palestinian Authority, have failed due to unresolved disputes regarding final borders, including the status of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish State, the return of Arab refugees and their descendants to Israel, and more. Continued terrorist attacks, often carried out by groups like Hamas that are inspired to a significant degree by radical Islamic fundamentalism, further complicate the quest for peace.

Terrorism and radical Islam: Obviously, this is a highly provocative issue, which easily can slide in a classroom situation into emotion and mere generalization. Without any justification or excuse for terrorism, the text explores the reasons for its appearance in the *modern* Middle East, separates it from larger issues of Islamic belief and history, and deals with the U.S. response. I will add that it might have noted the many contemporary instances in which terrorism has nothing at all to do with Islam, including in Europe (ETA in the Basque Country, the Irish Republican Army) and the United States (most notably but not exclusively Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing).

Additional Issues: Mr. Heaney does find a number of problems in the text, primarily outside the European framework. He faults its coverage of Indigenous Americans, Africa, the late 18th-century revolutions (a bare mention of Haiti and none of the Tupac Amaru rebellion in Peru) and generally inadequate handling of Latin American history. Nonetheless, on the whole he finds this an acceptable text. It does not yield to the ideological pressure inherent in some of the TEKS requirements but instead uses them as opportunities to address serious and historically valid issues.

World History (Pearson)

Reviewed by Christopher Rose

Mr. Rose finds this text to be “visually engaging and interesting.” He praises its coverage of many of the issues and problems raised by TEKS, allowing for its attempt as a “corporate textbook” to be “one-size fits all.” However, he finds two problems that definitely stem from TEKS. One is the question of “free enterprise”; the other is its “quite uneven” handling of the Arab-Israeli issue. He finds the latter point surprising in view of the text’s very different handling of the issue of Islam and terrorism that TEKS mandates for treatment, and of the Arab Spring. Beyond those two major points, he also finds some areas of disagreement, at the level of there being “a few things that the textbook could do better,” rather than at the level of outright error of misinterpretation. With that, I shall turn to the issues that TFN asked him to consider.

Religious balance: On this question Mr. Rose finds very few problems. The handling of Christianity and Islam is balanced (noting, for instance, that Christianity, like Islam, can be understood as having a history of “exclusion” of women, but also describing the text’s treatment of women in early Christianity as being “portrayed very positively.”) He notes that the text misses the chance to deal with



the same issue in the Islamic context by a treatment of Aisha bint Abi Bakr, who married the Prophet Muhammad and who holds a high place in early Islam's development. Intriguingly, Mr. Rose also notes that students in Texas, who "already understand the concept of nuance within Christian traditions," seem able to grasp the concept of nuance within Islam.

Religious influences and Western political thinkers: Mr. Rose finds that not all of the thinkers mandated by TEKS are included in the text and that aside from one vague reference to the way that "some people" believe that Judeo-Christianity is the origin of democracy," the text does not give support to that historically untenable position, looking instead to Greco-Roman tradition. Thomas Aquinas gets appropriate mention in context. John Calvin and Sir William Blackstone are not discussed.

Columbian Exchange and slavery: Mr. Rose finds that both issues are covered well. From his account, though, it does not seem that the text deals with the human dimensions of the exchange, linking it to the slave trade and to the labor conditions that were necessary to produce the New World commodities that transformed European and African diets and ways of life. Nor does the text deal adequately with the problem of the eastern hemisphere diseases that swept the Americas with catastrophic results for Native populations as the epidemics reached them.

Free enterprise/capitalism: This is one of the two topics where Mr. Rose finds major problems with the text. In his reading, the treatment completely misses the concept of institutional evolution, presenting the institutions of capitalist society as if they were fully developed by the 15th century. The text does acknowledge that the very word *capitalism* originated in the 19th century and that to speak of earlier "capitalism" runs the risk of anachronism. He criticizes the text's handling of industrialism on two counts. First, he sees industrialism as a 19th-century phenomenon, therefore separating it from the (in his reading) pre-industrial thought of Adam Smith. Second, the text seems to suggest that government "played no part in the successes of the industrial age," thereby ignoring the protection, intervention, sponsorship, and infrastructure that it provided in both Europe and the United States. The idea that there was no government involvement in American development may be current dogma, but it is not historically valid. Mr. Rose also criticizes the text for not mentioning the *Communist Manifesto* in the context of the wave of revolutions that swept Europe in 1848, for presenting the *Manifesto* rather than *Capital* as Marx's most important work, and for a misreading of *Capital* itself, not least because *Capital* shows Marx's own realization that "the called-for revolution wasn't going to materialize."

Arab-Israeli Conflict: Reaching all the way back to the text's coverage of the Neolithic era, Mr. Rose notes that ancient Jericho, whose ruins lie, according to the text, "on Israel's West Bank" are in fact are "under Palestinian, not Israeli administration" and that the West Bank is disputed territory rather than an integral part of Israel. Beyond that specific point, he provides an extended discussion of this topic. He rightly criticizes the TEKS standard ("Explain how Arab rejection of the state of Israel has led to ongoing conflict.") as presupposing an answer, which would be dismissed as a leading question in courtroom proceedings. The text uncritically treats the founding of Israel as a historically justified return to an ancient homeland (an argument that would not work with a modern Native American claim to the whole United States, or against the descendants of the English who moved into medieval Wales). In the text, Palestinian rejection of the United Nations plan on which Israel's existence rests then becomes mere unreasonability and obstinacy. The same point holds for the support given to Palestinians by neighboring Arab countries. On these and other points, Mr. Rose suggests rewriting. His argument is that in this regard Pearson has simply accepted the presuppositions inherent in the TEKS standard in an uncritical way that leads to its arguing the case for just one side in a very difficult situation, with no



indication to students that they ought to consider all the evidence rather than join in one side's cheering section.

Terrorism and radical Islam: In contrast to the text's handling of the Palestinian/Israeli matter, Mr. Rose finds its treatment of this problem acceptable. His one qualification is that the text seems to assume, in the context of the Iranian Revolution, that there is just one form of Sharia law, whereas in fact it is a complex and sometimes self-contradictory set of ideas, in which Sunni and Shiite practices differ markedly, and without noting Iran is largely Shiite.

General: Following his commentary on the points that TFN asked him to address, Mr. Rose provides 13 pages with 49 additional points. Some are mere matters of usage, but others seem to be at least telling flaws if not serious ones. He draws those points from the entire text, not just from his own area of expertise, suggesting close engagement on his part with what the text presents and how the text presents it.

World History (Social Studies School Service)

Reviewed by Christopher Rose

As already noted, the Social Studies School Service history offerings are not texts in the conventional sense, but rather a set of online and print sources from various suppliers, offering teachers a wide but not unlimited range of options. Reviewer Christopher Rose sees a discrepancy between the generally high quality "World History for All" material and "the less impressive "Power Basics World History," in which he finds significant errors, noting that the material is out of date. He also points out that the large amount of material available might present too many choices for a busy teacher who must cover required curriculum standards. He notes, for instance, that the Power Basics "unit on Islam discusses the contributions of the first four caliphs by name, but neglects to mention the Sunni/Shiite split." I would add that this is like concentrating on successive rulers of the 16th-century Holy Roman Empire and excluding the Reformation. I turn to his comments on the points that TFN asked him to consider. In addition to Mr. Rose's general comments about Social Studies School Service's product for U.S. History that I quoted above, he had these comments about its World History offerings.

In particular, the reading selections are provided from two different suppliers whose quality varies considerably. At the top end is the project from the National Center for History in the Schools World History for Us All, here presented as "Big Eras in World History." Written and vetted by academic historians, the work is for the most part solid. It is also written at a higher level than materials from the other major supplier, and, in this reviewer's opinion, should comprise the bulk of the reading assignments. (The materials are open source and available free of charge on NCHS's website.) The "Big Eras in World History" units are supplemented by the less impressive Power Basics World History units. These are written at a lower level than World History for Us All. The positive side of this is that students do not necessarily have to be alienated by the materials they are assigned if the language is too complex or sophisticated. The negative side is that nearly every major inaccuracy and inconsistency that I located in the reading passages was found in the Power Basics units, particularly with the pre-modern, non-western focused units. Some are oversimplified – many to the point of inaccuracy (see especially "India Under Mogul (sic) Rule – some contain "weasel



words” that reveal the author’s bias, while others go into astonishing detail about more esoteric things and omit pertinent historical facts that are important. (For example: the unit on Islam discusses the contributions of the first four caliphs by name, but neglects to mention the Sunni/Shiite split under the fourth caliph; another mentions that the men Columbus left behind in Hispaniola were massacred by local natives but does not mention Columbus’s response to that massacre—i.e., more massacres and enslavement.)

Religious balance: Mr. Rose regards “the Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Middle Ages unit [as] very thoughtful and well done” but criticizes the Power Basics material sharply for inaccuracy, bias, and omissions. He describes the “chapter on India Under Mogul (*sic*) Rule [as] so poorly written and oversimplified as to be unusable.” Expanding on those points, there is no specific unit on the emergence of Christianity, and Power Basics presents a bizarre suggestion that Iraq’s actions in the Persian Gulf War of 1991 was a *jihad* (of all of the possible examples of *jihad* out there, this is probably one of the worst), compounded by the product’s statement that “most of the violence in the Middle East today is related to *jihad*.” Mr. Rose is a scholar of Arab and Middle Eastern history; clearly, the author of the passage he criticizes was not.

Religious influences and Western political thinkers: Mr. Rose finds this material acceptable, with no attempt to force a spurious Mosaic or Biblical influence onto the making of the Constitution. He notes that John Calvin is not mentioned as a political thinker, which is appropriate.

Columbian Exchange and slavery: Mr. Rose regards the coverage of slavery as a worldwide phenomenon as “excellent,” but he notes with some surprise that the East African and trans-Saharan slave trade is ignored. His comments on the Columbian Exchange suggest that coverage of it is minimal and, by suggesting that it is still going on half a millennium after 1492, ahistorical.

Free enterprise/capitalism: Mr. Rose’s entire comment reads as follows: “Bizarrely, while ‘free enterprise system’ is not used, ‘capitalism’ itself rarely appears in any detail. The term is certainly not used anachronistically but appears mainly within the context of discussing how Marxism and socialism were reactions to capitalism.” There is no reason, of course, to expect that the multiple and (presumably) largely non-Texan authors who are represented in the Social Studies School Service materials had any particular reason to pay attention to the TEKS standards.

Arab-Israeli relations: Mr. Rose finds the coverage of this problem balanced, but he criticizes it for leaving the impression that the conflict is religious with no attention to the issue of ownership of land. I would add to his comments that treating the conflict as nothing but (or little other than) religious could have the effect of reinforcing stereotypes about fanaticism and timelessness, and thus of removing the issue from understanding in terms of the worldly, material, political, and fundamentally historical issues that emerged from the division of the “Holy Land” into the separate entities called respectively Israel and Palestine.

Terrorism and radical Islam: I have noted above Mr. Rose’s criticism of the ahistorical and inaccurate use of the emotive and poorly understood term “*jihad*.” He adds under this heading that the term is used to describe the Persian Gulf War, as if Saddam Hussein’s secular Ba’ath regime in Iraq was, in fact, religious, and as if that war did not begin with the Iraqi takeover of oil-rich Kuwait. He goes on to note that “the fallout from colonialism, the imposition of (often supposedly secular) authoritarian



regimes, the struggle for natural resources, etc., are all apparently irrelevant [for understanding] contemporary Middle Eastern issues.” Amazingly, the section does not mention 9/11 or Al-Qaida, and it apparently ends its coverage of “Radical Islam” with an event in 1994. I would add that writers of recent history cannot possibly keep up with fast-moving news, but this material seems completely inadequate.

After his comments on these particular points, Mr. Rose presents 15 pages of specific criticisms. Many of his criticisms reflect his area of specialization; his withering description of “India under Mogul Rule,” which starts with noting that the correct spelling is “Mughal,” are so strong that he regards the entire unit as unacceptable. Not all of his comments are negative: he “quite likes” the unit on Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages. But his overall comments reveal enough mistakes, distortions, and omissions to render much of the text generally suspect to my non-specialist mind. I would not want to give the impression, however, that he deals only with what he really knows (any more than that would be the case with Mr. Heaney, from his specialist knowledge of indigenous and Latin America). His brief discussion of early European / Indigenous American contact gets what seems to me to be the dominant problem exactly right, when he notes that the unit does not seem to pay attention to Indigenous perspectives, understandings, experiences, and actions as they made sense of what Columbus began.

Based on his review, I would be very careful about adopting Social Studies School Service for Texas high school use, particularly in view of the need that conscientious teachers have to deal with the TEKS requirements in some way, as opposed to simply ignoring them. I make that point for the sake of the students.

World History-A: Early Civilizations to the Mid-1800s (WorldView Software)

Reviewed by Christopher Rose

Mr. Rose’s general comments about this offering are extremely negative. He finds it to be riddled with errors, poorly organized, inconsistent, “visually dull and unappealing,” “frequently incompetently written,” and seemingly “skillfully designed to crush the humanity out of historical periods and numb student interest in any specific topic or further research by relegating nuance to oblivion, all the while encouraging the sort of uncritical thinking by rote memorization that has long fallen out of fashion.” Other reviewers have criticized WorldView’s products sharply. This may be a fault of its organization, recruitment of writers, and understanding of the whole idea of “World History.” I do hear echoes of the infamous school officials Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. McChoakumchild in the opening pages of Charles Dickens’ bitter novel *Hard Times*.

Here are Mr. Rose’s comments on the specific issues that TFN raised.

Religious balance: The SBOE expressed fear that texts might give Islam “more coverage (and positive coverage) than [to] Christianity.” Mr. Rose finds that WorldView’s offering does just the opposite. Overall, Christianity appears here “presented in far more positive light than any of the other major world religions.” Coverage of Islam, specifically, “contains numerous factual inaccuracies, many of which seem to reflect Protestant Christian opinions of Islam rather than the way in which Muslims would represent themselves.” The text shows incorrect understanding of how Muslims understand Islam in relation to Judaism and Christianity and of the whole idea (and highly inflammatory subject) of Sharia (which it presents as “a single corpus rather than a nebulous field of law.”) It wrongly suggests that medieval Muslim thinkers merely transmitted knowledge derived from the ancient Greeks (which was unavailable to western Christians), as opposed to carrying on a vigorous intellectual life of their



own. It also describes “parts of the Middle East and North Africa as being “occupied” by “the Muslims” or “in Muslim hands.” Nineteenth-century imperialists did use such language. As a scholar of “early” America, I will note that European colonizers used the same language to deprive Native Americans of their land on the ground that they, too, merely “occupied” it, as opposed to owning it, administering it, and using it for their own purposes.

Religious influences and Western political thinkers: One quote from Mr. Rose’s report makes the whole point about both the TEKS requirement and WorldView’s presentation: “The Judeo-Christian origins of representative democracy are highlighted repeatedly, and in a number of questionable areas (trial by jury, for example).” It is important here to understand the point at stake. No serious scholar of the creation of the American Republic would argue with the propositions that Christianity was important in the era (and, for that matter, throughout American history). Nor would anybody maintain that the Revolution generated anything like the overt hostility to religion that appeared in Revolutionary France, during which, for a time, the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris was renamed the Temple of the Goddess of Reason. That is not the point. But to claim Jewish or Christian origins, other than in the most vague sense, for such ideas as equality before the law, innocence until proven guilty (which was specifically Roman), or jury trial (which had independent origins in ancient Greece and in Germanic Western Europe and England) is simply wrong. WorldView does a serious disservice to students by presenting as correct a position that has no historical grounding. But so does TEKS.

Columbian Exchange and slavery: Mr. Rose notes that “the Columbian Exchange gets exactly one paragraph,” which wipes out the most important aspect of the huge world-historical change that began in 1492. According to WorldView, “slavery was only practiced in ancient Rome and in Arabia prior to the African slave trade taking off in the 1400s,” which is simply wrong. The text also equates the East African slave trade, which did take place, with the Atlantic Slave Trade, which dwarfed it in numbers, as if the two were equal in their volume.

Terrorism and radical Islam: This issue is not relevant to the period covered in this WorldView volume. However, Mr. Rose notes a gratuitous statement that black Africans are still being enslaved in the Middle East. There is no question that slavery persists in the contemporary world, mostly illegally but very real. But the Middle East does not figure among the leading slave-holding regions as identified by the United Nations, which are sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia. As with so much else that this text presents, the comment about the Middle East and black slavery is factually inaccurate and ideologically loaded.

General Comments: As already noted, Mr. Rose makes a practice of offering specific comments on many points. His careful eye has spotted many issues here and in the other texts he has reviewed that a good editor should have caught. In this specific case, though, I call attention to a series of screenshots drawn from online test materials that are just plain wrong even by internal evidence. I will simply note the first of these, which presents a month-by-month table of Tokyo climate information. The table clearly shows that the humidity is lowest in November and December, but the screen shot of a multiple choice quiz identifies that answer as wrong and states that it is lowest in January and February. By itself this might be taken as trivial, but the inclusion of this screen shot and many others demonstrates both the care that Mr. Rose took *and* yet more reason why this sloppy, ill-conceived, badly executed and politically correct (in the sense that it sacrifices accurate information to political direction) should not be used in any classroom. And, as if all these points were not enough, the text refers to black Africans as belonging to the “Negro,” rather than “Negroid” race. The two terms are not



equivalent. “Negroid” is outdated, but it represents an attempt at anthropological analysis. It never turned into a term of racist derision.

World History B: Mid-1800s to the Present (WorldView)

Reviewed by Christopher Rose

If anything, Mr. Rose is even more scathing about the second part of the WorldView volume than about the first. The opening and closing paragraphs of his overview make the point more clearly and more pungently than I can, so I shall insert them:

This unit is the continuation of the WorldView World History A unit, and all of the problems that I identified with that unit apply here. Each chapter appears to have been written in isolation of the others, either by non-historians or those who do not adopt a world-historical approach, and is outlined on unknown and seemingly inconsistent criteria. This unit is not aligned to any educational standards – Texas, national, or otherwise – and this shows in many of the chapters, which seem to wander off on tangents with no real explanation as to why the material presented is relevant.

And:

Overall, WorldView’s product, in this reviewer’s opinion, is one to avoid. It does nothing to advance critical thinking skills, reinforces negative stereotypes of regions of the world that are already suffering from a negative perception in the United States and, most relevant for the Texas textbook selection process, does not address a significant number of the points that students will need to know in order to meet the TEKS for the world history course.

With those comments in mind, I proceed to TFN’s TEKS-related questions.

Religious balance: As in the first WorldView volume, Mr. Rose finds that Islam here is “negatively portrayed wherever it is discussed.” In his words, “Islamism and violence are equated, and at one point it is stated that international terrorism (all international terrorism) is an outgrowth of Islamic fundamentalism.” The text also states that Islamic fundamentalism finds support “even from secular Muslims” on the ground that it is “not an import from the West.” As I already have noted, such a statement condemns all Muslims as potential terrorists, at least by association. It denies the possibility of serious discussion with anybody in the Muslim world.

Free enterprise/capitalism: The text uncritically equates capitalism with both free enterprise and democracy. Neither equation really holds, as in its suggestions that pre-1917 Russia was a free-enterprise society. The handling of this theme seems to echo the Cold War, Mr. Rose observes. He also criticizes the text’s presentation in what he describes as “intense” detail about some places and regions with no apparent reason for giving it. In his reading there does not seem to be any serious discussion of the point that both capitalism and free enterprise are simultaneously ideas, historical developments, and systems of belief, law, and practice that structure people’s lives and that have taken shape in time.



Arab-Israeli relations: Despite its many grammatical errors, Mr. Rose describes the material as “relatively balanced” on this topic, although he notes one sample essay that simply presents a list of “Palestinian terror, which is presented as a laundry list of actions with no explanation as to motivation or goals.”

Terrorism and radical Islam: The text presents Muslims as people in generalized terms (as if all Muslims are Arabs, all Arabs are terrorists, and all Muslims live in the Middle East), and it characterizes Islam as a thoroughly negative force. It shows no differences among Muslim nations and suggests that radical Islam overwhelms all other ways of understanding the world (such as secularism).

As on his other reports, Mr. Rose notes specific points where the text errs, sometimes in a minor way, sometimes egregiously. Almost at random, I will note a few. The people of what became Belgium spoke “a language similar to French.” Parisian derision for Belgians’ accent aside, they did and do speak French. “Napoleon III [of France] was humiliated by the Maximilian affair” in Mexico, without any explanation of who Maximilian was, how he got to Mexico, or his connection to the French ruler. Beyond such small errors and quibbles, European imperialism is portrayed as positive for the people on whom the Europeans imposed it, citing as one example the construction of India’s railway system without any mention of its being built entirely for the sake of the export economy to Britain, rather than to serve Indian needs, and in addition, without more than slight reference to the disruptions and destruction that British rule brought to Indian society. On this basis no student would be able to understand the movement that led to the end of the Raj after World War II, or the partition of what had been British India into modern India and Pakistan. In another instance a Turkish woman appears wearing jewelry, “something that would not be allowed in many Arab Muslim countries,” except, Mr. Rose notes dryly, for “Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, and some of the Gulf states.”

There is no need to multiply examples beyond these. They continue to abound, on specific topics and on such large ones as the two World Wars and the Cold War era. But it is worth noting that in addition to its other deficiencies, this WorldView volume simply does not provide the information that a Texas student needs to deal with the TEKS requirements. Mr. Rose’s judgment is that this, like the first part of the WorldView World History product, should be avoided.



Conclusion: Good, Bad, Ugly, and the Politics of Textbooks

Anybody selecting a textbook must choose among varying attempts to compromise. Part of the point of a text is to convey basic information. Part of the point is to make advanced knowledge that specialists have generated accessible to a larger readership. Part of the point should be to introduce students to how to think, whether about mathematics, the hard and life sciences, literature, art, or, in the cases considered here, history. But all too often, what goes into textbooks becomes the subject of political debate that has nothing to do with the real questions at stake. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute suggests that the ideologically mandated celebration of free enterprise in the TEKS standards presents an “inverted echo” of “Soviet schools harping on the glories of state socialism.” The educational consequences can be disastrous. A friend who grew up in Moscow late in the Soviet era has described to me how he simply did not take their history lessons seriously. He knew the difference between preaching pre-determined “truths” and teaching about real issues.

Even well-established scientific knowledge and understanding can become problematic when politics enters textbook selection, as the case of biology and specifically evolution demonstrates. There is absolutely nothing wrong with public interest in how subjects are taught in the public schools. But as in any field of study, everything is wrong when statements that cannot be supported by evidence, or that good evidence directly contradicts, are inserted into a curriculum as dogma. That is very much the case with TEKS.

This is not a matter of political orientation. Repeatedly in this report, my associates and I have drawn on the serious, sober commentary about the Texas curriculum standards (as well as those of the other 49 states) by the conservative Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Good history can be written from any political position (just as good science does not depend on how a given scientist votes). History is a humane study, and human beings are complicated. They always are capable of surprise, and that is just as true of people in the past as of people who are alive now. A person of conservative bent might well ask different questions about human behavior from somebody who identifies as liberal or progressive. But the same is true of any human quality; women’s history emerged as a serious field when women started asking serious questions about it; black scholars kept African-American history alive for many decades before it became an integral part of the “mainstream.”

The real test is not politics; it is whether the questions that somebody asks aid in addressing the complexity of the human past, in terms of evidence. Behind any textbook there lie discussion, research, thought, and writing in which many voices can be heard. Part of the text’s job is to make the best sense of the knowledge that has become available. As an example, in their different ways most of the texts that my associates have studied do pay serious attention to African-American history. That would not have been the case in the early and mid-20th century. Part of the reason for the change is that African-Americans refused to take any longer what was forced upon them after slavery, making significant history in that refusal. Part of it is that non-black historians finally took seriously what African-American historians had been studying all along.

The textbooks that my associates have read range enormously in coverage and in quality. It is clear that some of them are simply awful and that no textbook selectors ought to give them serious attention. This is not because of their politics; it is because they simply do a bad job of what they set out to do. There is no point here in making a list of the texts in order of quality, but the WorldView products



seem to be among the egregious examples. (Another follows in the Appendix, which includes a review of a U.S. history product now withdrawn from consideration by its publisher, Sunburst Digital.) In such cases the TEKS requirements do not seem to be part of the problem; by any professional judgment, these texts are simply bad.

But the real point of the long, hard exercise that my associates and I have carried out does deal with the TEKS requirements. At the time of their adoption, it was clear that they were the product of a process that had no coherence. The Fordham Institute's criticism that the TEKS standards have combined the worst of what one might call "right-wing history" (meaning, in the American history case, an uncritical, triumphalist celebration), an attempt to jam in questions and subjects that are false to the past they purport to explain, and the worst of what one might call "left-wing history," meaning inclusiveness for its own sake, seems entirely justified. Intellectually and educationally, the combination is toxic.

That said, these texts are a very mixed bunch. Some publishers seem simply to have bowed to the constraints of TEKS. This seems to be the case most of all with Pearson's offerings. But one reviewer notes that despite the closeness of the pre-1877 U.S. History Pearson textbook to what TEKS mandates, compliance with the standards does not necessarily mean endorsement of ideological positions. The publisher that gets the best overall notices, Edmentum, does not seem to have made any great effort to conform to the TEKS requirements as laid out. But as the reviewer observes, Edmentum's product does allow teachers to lead students to the material they must know for the sake of the TEKS examination. This, of course, would be a classic example of "teaching to the test," but it is possible with the Edmentum product. (Edmentum has withdrawn its World History product from consideration by the State Board of Education. Our review of that product follows in the Appendix.)

The Social Studies Schools Service Active Classroom products probably do the best job of incorporating serious historical knowledge and thought. Their non-text format very likely points toward future modes of instruction, as instruction's goal shifts from transferring a body of knowledge from a supposedly omniscient teacher and a supposedly inclusive text into the minds of presumably ignorant students (to be memorized and then forgotten) to showing students how to make use of the vast array of knowledge (and opinion) that is available to them. The S in TEKS stands for skills, and learning how to make sense of that vast array (or any such vast array) is perhaps the most important skill that a school, college, or graduate training can give. Yet in practical terms my associates find real problems with that source.

At present the 2010 TEKS standards are in force. But their combination of incoherence, poor construction, and attempted indoctrination is clear. The enormous variations that my associates have found in what the textbook publishers have on offer seem in good part to be due to what the TEKS standards require. Eventually those standards will be left behind. One can only hope that in the next round of drafting good historical sense rather than ideology will prevail. As with the teaching of science in a way that shows what scientists actually do rather than what non-scientists believe, the subject is far too important for ideology to trump all else. In the meantime, perhaps the best that can be said about the debacle of the TEKS revision in 2010 may be that it shows the messy, conflicted, raucous qualities of American life that serious observers, such as Alexis de Tocqueville, always have noted, appreciated and even applauded, qualities that the standards themselves seem bent on obscuring.



The same point holds for World History, as the two associates who have looked at the world history textbooks have shown. Whatever else comes of studying history in the schools, it ought to bring students to a realization that Texas, the United States, and the world, always have been complex, tangled places that simplistic fairy tales, good guys and bad guys, and pre-determined ideology simply do not explain. Ultimately, history is about people dealing with the conditions of their lives, for better or worse, and passing on the consequences of whatever they do. The students who learn history at the school level are going to be makers of history as they shape their own futures. They will not find ready-made lessons in the past. What has been can never be again, quite the same way. But for them to understand that people who were both like themselves, in their fundamental humanity, and unlike themselves in practically every other way suggests that understanding history offers good hope that whatever history current and future students produce as the world becomes theirs will be for better rather than for worse. Left alone, applied rigorously, the current TEKS standards are unlikely to produce that kind of awareness. But good texts, such as some of those that have been reviewed here, and good teachers, including the many I have met, still can make the necessary difference between pseudo-historical indoctrination and genuine historical learning.



APPENDIX

Our team of reviewers also examined products from Sunburst Digital/Ignite! for U.S. History to 1877 and for Texas History and from Edmentum for World History. However, those publishers have withdrawn those three submissions from consideration by the State Board of Education. We are including the summary reviews of those products in this appendix.

Early American History (Sunburst Digital/Ignite!)

Reviewed by Deirdre Lannon

Ms. Lannon’s review of this product is so scathing that I also reviewed this text (actually an interactive website). I found even more errors, and I concur entirely with her judgment. In my opinion this site is the poster child for how not to teach history to eighth-graders, or to anybody else.

This is an interactive website without a print edition. It consists of 15 units, each incorporating approximately 10 specific topics. There is no extended text to provide continuity, explanation, linkage, and commentary. The site does not provide more than glimpses of actual historic images or primary sources. Each “topic” opens up to reveal three or four specific points. The first is always a “warm-up,” presenting bare information about the topic followed by quiz questions. Following that come varied mixtures of original (to the site, not historical) songs, a “learning cube” with faces that can be followed click-by-click, videos, still graphics, and a repeating cartoon character called “Mr. Bighead,” who debates with himself in a number of the lessons wearing different hats to signify different roles. The stories, graphics, commentary, music, and videos are proprietary.

The lineup of folders is roughly chronological, but within each folder there is hardly any chronological or conceptual sense. In the first two units, on Exploration and Colonization, the site acknowledges Native Americans with a lesson on “Cortez and the Aztecs,” some mention of the Powhatan people, a simplistic graphic on Pocahontas, and a brief mention of the Iroquois confederacy. In my own perusal of these first two units, I found errors that suggest that the site’s creators did not know what they were doing. One is to describe John Winthrop, first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, as being on his way in 1629 (a year earlier than his actual journey) to take up the governorship of Plymouth, which was an entirely different enterprise and which remained separate from Massachusetts. Another is to describe the English takeover of New Netherlands in 1664 as peaceful, whereas it was an act of war that the Dutch settlers were too weak to resist. Ms. Lannon’s long and detailed comments bring out the site’s overwhelming deficiencies. As with the reviews that follow, I will summarize her points according to the headings that TFN requested.

Religious/Biblical influences, church and state issues: Ms. Lannon did not find problems under this heading.

Slavery and the Civil War: Throughout the sections that deal with the early Republic, the TEKS standards are worded in a way that presupposes the relative unimportance of the slavery issue relative to abstract questions of “states’ rights” and to economic issues such as tariff policy. However, the central Confederate sources, including but not limited to the Ordinances of Secession, demonstrate clearly slavery’s centrality for Confederate decision-makers. Modern historians of the subject agree, whether the writer is southern, northern, black, white, American, foreign, female, or male. Ms. Lannon



finds the Sunburst/Ignite! site wholly deficient in this regard. Throughout its discussion of the issues, the site downplays the issue of slavery in relation to abstract sectionalism and abstract states' rights. Students will get no sense at all of how the slavery issue haunted American public life from the Constitutional Convention (where James Madison regarded it as the most divisive issue) to the Republic's breakup 1861, or how the slavery problem became intertwined with virtually every problem of the era, including constitutional interpretation, westward expansion, internal improvements, religion, political partisanship, and the presidency. They will get no sense of how the defining question in 1861 came to be framed around slavery's expansion from the states where it was legal into national territory. The video for the lesson on 1860 informs students "that secession was in response to a fear that Lincoln would suppress [southerners'] constitutional rights" without any mention that holding slaves was the primary "right" that they feared losing.

Comparing the speeches of Davis and Lincoln: The appropriate lesson quotes Lincoln, but not Davis, including Lincoln's statement that he did not intend to intervene where slavery existed. But without context, the quotation is meaningless. It gives no sense of Lincoln's longstanding and well-known hostility to slavery or of southerners' full understanding that he and his fellow Republicans intended to start slavery towards final destruction. Nor does it give any sense that as the country was breaking up, Lincoln needed all the border-state and northern support he could get.

Reconstruction: In four pages of very detailed notes, Ms. Lannon demonstrates that the site's entire treatment of Reconstruction misses the centrality of the formerly enslaved people to the era that followed hostilities. I quote three of her comments in their entirety:

The African American Leaders Cube is a series of one-sentence sketches regarding six African American "leaders." The title slide proclaims: "Following the Civil War and the end of slavery, a number of African Americans led the way to better economic, educational, and political opportunities for minorities." First of all, using the word "minorities" again deflects from the fact that population in question had gone from enslavement to pseudo-freedom, with no formal structure in place to aid their transition. Next, this imparts a positive slant on the economic, educational, and political situation of the freedmen, which, despite some minor gains, was on the whole extremely poor.

Sharecropping – the video begins with lighthearted carnival music, and a negotiation between two people regarding their snacks. This is a shockingly (just when I thought this publication couldn't shock me further) insensitive tone to take with a system that was essentially quasi-slavery. The narration frames sharecropping as a "win-win" situation before launching into a snarky, sarcastic role-playing dialogue that attempts to illuminate the inequities of the system.

The Black Codes video is a horrifying justification of [black codes that state governments created immediately following the war]. It begins by noting some "silly" laws such as a Louisiana statute outlawing tying an alligator to a fire hydrant, the French law forbidding naming a pig "Napoleon," and noting that these laws don't normally have a great impact on humans. [It] then goes on to explain that some "equally foolish" laws did have an impact, like the Black Codes, which "denied African Americans their constitutional rights." Evasively, the narration leaps forward to



mention that “fortunately, Republican state governments repealed the black codes,” omitting the necessary discussion of the philosophies and hate that could not be repealed. The narration acknowledges that injustice did persist, in the vaguest terms, and says, in a smiling, jokey tone, that although some might think Oklahoma’s law forbidding people from making a face at a dog silly, that “other laws, like the black codes, can and have had an alarming effect on people’s lives.” This is, perhaps, the understatement of the millennium.

Free enterprise/capitalism: Ms. Lannon cites two examples of gross oversimplification. One is a video extolling the supposed power of a late-colonial merchant; the other is a video suggesting that the reason for the Boston Tea Party was colonists’ telling the British to “keep your smelly, expensive tea, we want free trade.” This appears to be a bow to the Texas requirement that free trade be extolled at all costs, with no regard at all for the real issues involved.

American Exceptionalism: Ms. Lannon’s comment is simply: “The whole publication is skewed away from the complexities of troubling historical facts.”

Other issues: After her discussion of the specific issues that she was asked to consider, Ms. Lannon provided 15 single-spaced pages of instances of the site’s complete unsuitability, each derived from a specific lesson within one of the site’s units. Puritan settlers would bring “paradise” to supposedly empty Massachusetts “wilderness,” a notion that they would have regarded as blasphemous (Exploration, Topic 4); Bacon’s Rebellion in Virginia [1676] precedes the founding of Jamestown [1607] (Exploration, Topics 6 and 7); smallpox first appears as a threat to the white colonial population, with no previous mention of the devastating epidemics that swept through the Native American world after 1492 (Exploration, Topic 12); Mr. Big Head, in a conversation with himself, offensively caricatures the French and Spanish colonial ventures (Colonialism, topic 6); a “rap” manages to insult both Benjamin Franklin and the Iroquois (Colonialism, topic 9); discussion of change during the Revolution wipes out the fact that slavery persisted and grew in the South (Revolution, Topic 7); a song about compromise in the Federal Convention completely ignores the enormous and ultimately self-defeating compromise on the future of slavery (Birth of the Constitution, topic 6); discussion of the Revolutionary era leadership of Washington and Alexander Hamilton segues anachronistically to 20th-century African-American icons Jackie Robinson and Langston Hughes, ignoring the possibility of the discussing the notable black leaders who emerged during the revolutionary era (Revolution, topic 11) ; a list of people who “defined their role” in the young republic features Washington, Chief Justice John Marshall, and turn-of-the-*twentieth* century labor leader John Mitchell (Revolution, topic 11); woodland Native people dealing with the young republic are denied recognition as agriculturalists who often adapted to white American ways (including, in the South, owning slaves on plantations); because [white] farmers wanted Indians’ land, the Indians “would have to go,” it presents the farmers as turning “to the government for help” without reference to the Federal government’s refusal to honor its treaties with Indians, though these had the force of law (Age of Jackson, all in topics 4 and 5). This is a random list. Examples could be multiplied almost endlessly.

One additional point that bears strongly on the credibility of this site needs to be noted. In the final topic of the unit on exploration there is a short clip of the eminent Early America historian Gary B. Nash of the University of California, Los Angeles, discussing the effects of the “discovery” of America on people’s diets worldwide. The clip is unexceptionable, but it seemed to me unlikely that Professor Nash would have associated himself with a project like this. I raised the question to him. He replied that the



clip appears to be lifted from interviews that he did for an entirely different project and that it was done without his ever being notified that this site was going to use it. It may be that Ignite! acquired rights to the clip from its copyright owner and that no legal issues are involved. I will note that every time a third party has acquired such rights to my own work, I have been notified and, if the party is commercial rather than fair use, paid; it is basic professional courtesy. I would surmise that whether or not Sunburst/Ignite! acquired legal rights to the clip, including it represents an attempt to clothe this extremely shoddy project with Professor Nash's visibility, prestige, credibility especially on the matter of his long-term interest in the teaching of history in the schools. His response after looking at the site is that "this is poison that takes us back 100 years." (Personal communication between the Professor Nash and the author)

It should be clear just from this summary of Ms. Lannon's detailed, close reading of this site that both in design and content it suffers heavily from its attempted conformity to the TEKS requirements and from many flaws in its own design and execution. Under no circumstances should it be used in any classroom, even the fourth-grade classes for which, from its simplistic style, it apparently was originally intended.

Texas History (Sunburst Digital/Ignite!)

Reviewed by Nicholas Roland

Secession: Mr. Roland finds that coverage is adequate, that slavery is identified as the primary cause of secession, that – in accord with the TEKS requirement – states' rights and tariffs are included, but that the product does not suggest that they counted more than, or even as much as slavery. He is critical of the narrow view that the product takes in the sense that it deals with Texas only, without any attention to the larger context in which the Civil War came about and how Texas decided to join the Southern cause. He also is critical of the product's online format. Having looked closely at another Ignite! product, I suspect I would thoroughly agree, perhaps in stronger terms.

Civil Rights: In Mr. Roland's words "all in all, the product seems to skim over the civil rights movement without providing enough detail or context." He finds the coverage unacceptable. Again, in the light of the close engagement I had with another Ignite! product, I have no trouble agreeing with Mr. Roland's assessment. If anything, I suspect that he is holding back. In any case, his review only increases my own belief that the Ignite! products are unacceptable for middle school social studies classes.

World History (Split into two packages: Before 1815 and After 1815) (Edmentum)

Reviewed by Christopher Heaney

Mr. Heaney praises this product as "mostly excellent, imparting a strong material and political take on the rise and fall and transformation of societies from prehistory to the present." He praises its sewing "together different regions' history with comparisons that prove insightful even for an expert. In terms of economics, colonial expansion during the 19th and 20th centuries, and global conflict in the 20th, it is excellent." He notes both that it does not seem to have been rewritten with the TEKS requirements in mind but that it nonetheless handles a large number of them. But he also points out inaccuracies of fact and generalizations, and omissions, most importantly "very large swaths" of Latin American history.



Beyond those generalizations, he notes that this entirely web-based source is “regrettably bland in presentation, only lightly incorporating imagery, and not approaching visual sources with any of the sort of depth plumbed by the other texts.” This is particularly unfortunate in view of his general assessment that this is the text he “appreciated most.”

Here is a summary of his comments on the specific focus questions that TFN asked the reviewers to consider:

Religious balance: This issue appears repeatedly in the TEKS requirements, both in the sense of long-term relations between the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds, non-Islamic people under Islamic rule, and in terms of contemporary concerns. Mr. Heaney treats the questions that TFN raised as a group. Between the explosive growth of the Islamic world during the early Middle Ages and its European crest with the failed Ottoman (not “Muslim” or “Arab” or “Islamic”) siege of Vienna in 1683, lay nearly a thousand years of relations between it and “Christendom.” Those relations included war and conquest, from both directions, but they also included diplomacy, trade, and mutual toleration, most notably, the long-term *convivencia* among Muslims, Christians, and Jews during part of the period of Islamic domination in medieval Spain, prior to the completion of the Christian *Reconquista* in 1492. Mr. Heaney describes the text’s treatment of Islamic-Christian relations as being at some points “violent and exclusionary” in both directions but also as arguing “that these more violent and exclusionary ends were not *because* of the religion, but vehicles for larger political and economic ambitions.” He draws particular attention to the incendiary language used by Pope Urban II when he called on western Christians to wage aggressive war in order to wrest the Holy Land from “an accursed race” in his proclamation of the First Crusade.

Segueing to recent and present-day issues, Mr. Heaney’s comment is worth quoting in full:

The strength of [the text’s] approach ... comes through once Edmentum’s offering gets to the 20th century. While acknowledging that conflict in the Middle East might easily be framed as Judeo-Christian v. Islam, it painstakingly makes clear the blurry political motivations that guide the many – not two – sides, distinguishing between Jews, Israelis, Zionists (some American), and Israel’s paramilitary organizations, Arab and Islamic states, Shiite and Sunni movements, U.S.-backed dictators and guerilla groups, and terrorist and non-state actors. It is perhaps for this reason that the text does not claim to show that the Arab rejection of the state of Israel leads to ongoing conflict: while showing Arab rejection of Israel very clearly, it nonetheless also shows that ongoing conflict has also been produced by the actions of Israeli paramilitary groups and extremists, U.S. and other European economic interests, and domestic politics; it also shows moments in which Arabs have not rejected Israel.

Religious influences and Western political thinkers: During the debates on TEKS, the SBOE initially dropped a requirement that students understand the relationship between Enlightenment thinkers, including Thomas Jefferson, and “the development of modern governments.” It later restored Jefferson to the standard but also include a list of thinkers such as the 18th-century English lawyer Sir William Blackstone and as well as both Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. It also “adopted requirements regarding Judeo-Christian and biblical influences on the development of democratic-republican government and legal systems – particularly in the United States.” In Mr. Heaney’s reading, the



Edmentum text does provide information on most of the thinkers on the TEKS list, but it does not “fall into the trap” of attempting to link all of them to the creation of republican governments.

Mr. Heaney finds that there is no evidence of direct Mosaic or Biblical influence on the founders of the American Republic, a point on which all serious scholars agree. I will note a few specific instances. The first is jury trial, which had several independent points of origin. One of those is ancient Athens, where juries consisted of some 500 members. It is worth noting that such a jury condemned Socrates to death for his supposed blasphemy. Romans practiced jury trial as well. But there is no evidence of either Greek or Roman influence on eventual American practice, which finds its roots in medieval Germanic Europe and in England, on terms very different from ancient practice. I would add that the website from an explicitly Christian source states explicitly that “The right of a trial by jury is a U.S. constitutional right. It is not an expressly Biblical mandated right” (Tozer 2013).

The other thinker I will mention is John Calvin. Indubitably, he had a dark view of human nature, akin to the dark view held by James Madison, who proposed to build the American Republic on a recognition of human faults and flaws, not on a hope that human virtues would triumph. But Madison was no Calvinist. He owed his pessimism to the Scottish Enlightenment thinker David Hume and, behind Hume, to a line of “Atlantic Republican Thought” that had its fount in the pessimistic musings of Niccolò Machiavelli as he pondered the fates of both ancient republican Rome and his own republican Florence. Calvin’s thought, which was deeply theological, had nothing to do with Madison’s thought, which was secular and historical. Moreover, to force a world-historical account of the American founding into an explanation in terms of the supposed influence of a list of figures, some of whom had no influence at all, is to miss entirely the intellectual creativity of the revolutionary period, particularly if Madison, the most thoughtful and original of the Founders, is left off the list (as is the case). Given the insistence of TEKS that the study of history should emphasize what is special about the United States even in the context of world history, the insistence on looking at outside figures rather than at Madison and his ilk is deeply ironic.

Columbian Exchange and slavery: In Mr. Heaney’s view is that Edmentum’s handling of the Columbian Exchange is problematic, primarily because of what he sees as its thoroughly inadequate treatment of pre-Columbian western-hemisphere civilizations. He writes here as a scholar of indigenous and Latin American history. He regards this treatment as the text’s main drawback, and I shall turn to his problems with it below. He finds that the more general handling of slavery is a “mixed bag.” The text has the merit of appreciating the complexity of Africa and the merit as well of noting that the East African slave trade from sub-Saharan Africa to the Islamic world was of a considerably smaller scale (though significant) than the trans-Atlantic trade that began to emerge in the Columbian period. He also finds that the origin of the Atlantic slave trade “is treated in a way that would raise the eyebrows of actual historians of slavery, pinning it almost entirely on the pre-existing Arab trade and Arab prior enslavement of Europeans,” and ignoring longstanding European enslavement practices. The text does demonstrate “the effect of slavery upon the lives of individuals and the specific African groups left behind, that then shaped the course of colonialism and the landscape of Africa in the 19th century.” It also demonstrates the importance for slavery’s western-hemisphere development of the enslavement of Native Americans and the distinctive quality of western-hemisphere plantation slavery, as opposed to ways that slavery was practiced elsewhere in the world. However, it handles early post-Columbian Spanish debates on slavery badly, making serious mistakes about the important Dominican Friar Bartolomé de las Casas.



Free enterprise/capitalism: As put in TEKS, discussion of this subject is supposed to be oriented toward both endorsement of free-market practices and values and projection of those practices and values deep into historical time. Mr. Heaney's long comment deals with how the Edmentum text deals with global economic history, in terms that go far beyond endorsement, condemnation, or ahistorical simplicity. His commentary is very full; I will note just a few of his many major points. One deals with the text's handling of Adam Smith's thought. People who have not read Smith may take him as an absolute apologist for an absolutely uncontrolled market. The text shows a point that people who have read Smith understand. He was no apologist, or simple cheerleader, for the free market. Clearly, he favored free trade (or freer trade) as opposed to the mercantilism of his time, but Smith was not at all anti-government, recognizing the need to use public power in order to prevent fraud, protect contracts and intellectual property, and build both the intellectual and material infrastructure within which market relations could develop. Beyond Smith's thinking, Mr. Heaney shows that the text deals with how markets have operated in different situations, from ancient Greece through medieval Europe to the Cold War era to the present day, and that they have varied enormously. He shows how the text demonstrates the relationship between early modern capitalist and industrial development in what we now would call the "First World" and the massive colonial-world slave labor that produced such western-hemisphere commodities as sugar, which was fundamental to early modern Atlantic commerce, and cotton, which underpinned industrialization in the American northeast and in Britain. The text shows how socialist thinking developed, how free markets and capitalism are not equivalent terms, and how modern-day global economics has taken shape.

Arab-Israeli relations: Mr. Heaney finds that in the spirit of the text's earlier discussion of medieval and early-modern Islamic-Christian issues, the Edmentum text refuses either to over-simplify or to cast the parties in good/bad, heroic/villainous terms. It explores specific issues, developments, and problems among all the people concerned and between Arabs, as a group, and Israelis, as a group. It demonstrates how both of the modern "sides" emerged from deep issues well prior to the horrors of the Holocaust, how both sides pivoted and jockeyed for position in the post-war Middle Eastern situation, how both sides engaged in irregular violence, and how each side has had its extremists, most notably the Arab assassins of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and the Israeli assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in each instance for attempting to make peace. It explores the emergence of both Arab nationalism and radical Islamic thought and practice (reaching well beyond Arab people and not limited to Al Qaida). The text does not take sides or essentialize; it deals with how the seemingly intractable situation of our time has come about.

Terrorism and radical Islam: It should not be surprising by this point that Mr. Heaney finds complex roots for a complex and tragic situation under this heading. This is the most contemporary of the topics that TFN asked him to consider, and its story is by no means written at this point. However, a student exposed to this text's account will realize that either to reduce the issue to a conflict of two mutually hostile faiths or to regard the present situation as just the most recent manifestation of an unchanging problem that reaches back to the time of Muhammad is completely false. The text shows that the issue is an aspect of the modern world, growing out of such diverse elements as conflict over oil involving western companies and governments, the Cold War (particularly as fought out in Afghanistan between Soviet troops and Afghan and other resistance fighters), the Iranian Revolution, and the Iraq war. That does not mean that the issues do not have deep roots; the perpetrators of the Madrid bombings did conjure up images of restoring Islamic rule in what they call *Al-Andalus*, though Mr. Heaney criticizes this part of the argument as skirting on an ahistorical "essentialism."



General: Clearly, Mr. Heaney is very positively impressed with Edmentum's offering. Not surprisingly, given the thoroughness with which he explored the issues that TFN asked him to consider, he also provides a very long list of specific points where he has found problems, including many that bear on Chinese and East Asian civilization and history. I shall pick up on just one that, perhaps ironically, is not East Asia but rather the Western Hemisphere. As I noted earlier, he is a scholar of indigenous America and of Latin America. He finds that the text's reduction of pre-Columbian American life comes down to the Aztecs (more properly known as the Mexica), the Maya, and the Incas. That listing is just not enough, even dealing with just political organization (throughout the hemisphere, including Cahokia in the Mississippi Valley and the unique and very effective political organization of the Iroquois/Haudenosaunee/Rotinnoshonni in the Lake Ontario and upper St. Lawrence region). That subject is rapidly expanding in knowledge and sophisticated understanding, as is the subject of how different Native people interacted with the Europeans and Africans whose arrival transformed the whole hemisphere. How Edmentum deals with these issues, Mr. Heaney finds, is its major failing, which needs to be corrected. From the extent and depth of what he has done here, I anticipate that he might have a major share in the corrections.



REFERENCES

There is no attempt here to provide scholarly references for every quotation or statement of fact. The primary evidence in this document comes from the reports that the co-authors made, in which they provide full page and document references. What follows consists merely of the sources I have used that bear on the TEKS controversy. For additional sources I refer the reader to the websites of historian Keith Erikson, who has studied the Texas curriculum standards closely:

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