

WORLD HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

A Review



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**A Report of the
American Textbook Council**

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The American Textbook Council was established in 1989 as an independent national research organization to review social studies textbooks and advance the quality of instructional materials in history. The Council endorses the production of textbooks that embody vivid narrative style, stress significant people and events, and promote better understanding of all cultures, including our own, on the principle that improved textbooks will advance the curriculum, stimulate student learning, and encourage educational achievement for children of all backgrounds. The Council acts as a clearinghouse for information about social studies textbooks and educational publishing in general. It has published numerous history textbook reviews and other curriculum studies. Consulted by educators and policymakers at all levels, it provides detailed information and textbook reviews for individuals and groups interested in improving educational materials.

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CONTENTS

Summary	4
Textbooks reviewed	
Subjects reviewed	
Research design	
Acknowledgments	
I. Introduction	8
II. Publishing Trends	10
III. Findings	14
IV. Problem Topics	23
V. Conclusions	31

WORLD HISTORY TEXTBOOKS: A Review

This world history review examines standard textbooks used between the sixth and twelfth grades in schools across the nation. These established textbooks dominate the field and set the pitch for new and forthcoming volumes. The 2002 Texas history textbook adoption and the California list have influenced what textbooks will dominate the national market during the current decade. New world history titles introduced into Texas have yet to prove their viability and continued shelf life. Of the seven textbooks originally examined, examples are selected from the four most widely adopted world cultures and world history textbooks.

What did this review find? In order to meet demands for scope, diversity and readability, world history textbooks abandon narrative and complexity. High school world history textbooks are superior to middle-grade world cultures textbooks. They emphasize "Western" subjects. Dire claims of the loss of European political history can be overdrawn. But Western antiquity, Judaism and Christianity, and the rise of modern democratic government, reviewers complain, are lost in a procession of trivia designed to satisfy competing demands for inclusion, diversity and multiple perspectives. What should be central topics and themes are compressed to make room for new topical material, some of it ideologically loaded.

In subjects ranging from Africa to terrorism, the nation's leading world history textbooks provide unreliable, often scanty information and provide poorly constructed activities. In doing so, these textbooks foster ignorance of geopolitics and deprive students of authentic global understanding. Publishers could and should be providing high school teachers and students with cheaper, smaller, more legible volumes, stripping trivia and superfluity from current volumes. Pressure from educators themselves is needed, but whether sufficient will exists to force publishers to change remains an open question. Rooted in a flawed production system and publishers' intransigence, the problems with world history textbooks go deep enough to raise questions about corporate violations of public trust.

Who should pay attention to this review and take action? Textbook purchasers, including members of state boards, department of education officials, and school textbook committees. So should elected officials, editorial writers, and policy analysts. World history textbooks undermine their hopes, standards, curriculum frameworks, and official policies.



Textbooks reviewed

World history and cultures textbooks aimed at 6th to 9th grades:

1. Ahmad, Iftikhar, Herbert Brodsky, Marylee Susan Crofts, and Elisabeth Gaynor Ellis. *World Cultures: A Global Mosaic*. Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2001.
2. Nash, Gary B., Beverly J. Armento, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Christopher L. Salter, Louis E. Wilson, and Karen K. Wixson. *To See a World: World Cultures and Geography*. Houghton Mifflin, 1994 ff.

The second textbook -- a world cultures compendium that first appeared in 1994 -- has many copyright years, as do the two volumes for sixth and seventh graders in the Houghton Mifflin K-8 social studies series from which the material for *To See a World* was selected and derived:

- 2a. *Across the Centuries*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989 ff.
- 2b. *A Message of Ancient Days*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989 ff.

World history textbooks aimed at tenth to twelfth grade, adopted by Texas in 2002 in slightly altered editions with 2003 copyrights:

3. Ellis, Elisabeth Gaynor and Anthony Esler. *World History: Connections to Today*. Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2001, 2003.
4. Beck, Roger B., Linda Black, Larry S. Krieger, Phillip C. Naylor, and Dahia Ibo Shabaka. *World History: Patterns of Interaction*. McDougal Littell/Houghton Mifflin, 2001, 2003.

During the last five years, the two mass-market high school textbooks above have gained national dominance and are used in world history classes nationwide. They have advanced in volume-sales at the expense of the two following textbooks, which are being gradually retired:

5. Farah, Mounir A. and Andrea Berens Karls. *The Human Experience*. McGraw-Hill/Glencoe, 1999.
6. Hanes, William Travis, III. *Continuity and Change*. Harcourt/Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1999.

The future of a seventh world history textbook, *World History: People and Nations*, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, seems even more uncertain than these two books. Glencoe and Holt introduced new and unauthored world history textbooks in Texas in 2002, volumes that have yet to prove themselves among textbook purchasers. In 2004, in social studies, Houghton Mifflin and Pearson have a distinct market lead over McGraw-Hill and Harcourt. A few titles dominate the world history textbook market. In world cultures courses, usually taught between the sixth and eighth grades, Houghton Mifflin's *To See a World* stands out nationwide. In the nation's high school world history courses, Prentice Hall's *Connections to Today* and McDougal Littell's *Patterns of Interaction* have large shares. Some world history textbooks revised in the 1990s and market prominent in the year 1999 are five years later faded titles. They will gradually be backlisted or go out of print. The impact of the generic Glencoe and Holt books is not yet known, but the sameness of these new products to the market leaders provides additional evidence of copy-cat practices. Social studies publishers employ the same editorial packagers, listen to the same interest and focus groups, and are influenced by the same educational organizations.

Subjects reviewed

Ancient World

- Middle East, India, and East Asia
- Greece and Rome
- Rise of Christianity
- Mongols
- Islam
- Africa before 1500

Rise of Modern Governments

- Enlightenment
- French and American Revolutions
- Rise of the Liberal Democratic State
- Totalitarianism

Global World

- Industrial Revolution
- European Imperialism
- Africa since 1945
- Asian Nationalism
- Cold War in Europe
- Genocide
- Terrorism and International Security

In February 2003, the American Textbook Council issued a related review on world history textbook coverage of Islam, *Islam and the Textbooks*, an exhibit of content distortions and deficiencies that adulterate world cultures and history courses [<http://www.historytextbooks.org/islamreport.pdf>].

Research design

The American Textbook Council selected student edition textbooks based on adoption records and databases collected since 1985. In 2001, the Council identified widely adopted world history textbooks based on adoptions in California, Indiana, North Carolina, Florida, and New York and on adoptions in metropolitan districts nationwide. During the past five years, responding to state and local demands, educational publishers have developed new world history textbooks and have revised established textbooks. Starting in 2002, the American Textbook Council undertook reviews of widely adopted world history textbooks used from sixth to twelfth grades.

In late 2002, the uniquely influential state of Texas completed textbook adoptions in sixth-grade world cultures and tenth-grade world history. As a result, a clear picture has emerged of which textbooks dominate the market and which new textbooks stand to challenge them. Council lists match those developed by other research centers that have conducted recent history textbook reviews including the New York-based Empire Foundation and the Washington D.C.-based Population Research Bureau.

Instructional activities were of concern, largely because teachers pay attention to these teaching tools and exercises. Do review questions and other end-of-chapter exercises support the material presented in the narrative? How successful are graphics and maps in clarifying geopolitics, migrations, technological change, and cross-cultural relationships? But historians, teachers and foreign policy experts who were interviewed by the Council on the reform of world history agreed that the success of any history textbook stands on appealing narrative, exacting and clear coverage of seminal events and ideas, and sound interpretation (i.e., how the past is rendered and categorized). Is the information in the textbook accurate? What subjects are emphasized? What themes and patterns emerge? How do these textbooks compare with textbooks used in history courses in the 1960s and 1970s? In the case of world history, emphasis, weighting, balance and inclusion loom very large, in part because of the subject's vast scope and

the limited number of days in the school year, in part because of conflicting schools of thought about the subject paradigm.

To what degree and in what ways has non-Western history expanded and Western history shrunk? Critics of world cultures courses charge that Euro-American political, military, diplomatic and intellectual history, Greek and Roman politics and culture, the role of the medieval church and the spirit of the Enlightenment, the political and economic revolutions in Europe and America after 1700 are challenged by curriculum trends. To what degree can these claims be documented? What content is abridged and excised? What is added? What subjects are emphasized? What themes and patterns emerge? Which world history textbooks best explain the nation's political debt to antiquity and the Enlightenment? The impact of industrialization on the non-Western world? The influence of religion on history and cultures? The conduct of foreign affairs, the premises of American global policies, and international relations since 1945?

The world history textbook review takes as a baseline standard references such as the current *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and classic reference books such as the *Columbia History of the World* and *Harper Encyclopedia of the Modern World*. It employs world history curriculum models embodied in Paul Gagnon, *Lessons of History* (1991) and his outline produced for the National Council for History Education, "Building a World History Curriculum" (1997). It uses as a content base three well-regarded state-level world history/social studies frameworks: California (1987 ff.), Virginia (1995 ff.), and Massachusetts (1997 ff.).

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I. Introduction

World history is the most rapidly growing area of the social studies. More than fifty-five percent of all secondary-level students now take the subject before high school graduation. This compares with an estimated one-third in 1990, a huge increase in students and textbook sales. These rising enrollments result from new and expanded world history requirements that large and influential states, notably California and Texas, have adopted at the sixth grade level. Many states now require the subject for high school graduation. Academically proficient high school students in particular are likely to take a world history or world cultures course. Advanced Placement programs use college textbooks, which are far superior in content and narrative to those used in most high school courses.

World history today incorporates a number of new ambitions and responsibilities. The first is to broaden the sweep of the past beyond European history and to emphasize the record of non-Western civilizations. As the Texas state education code puts it, "World History Studies is the only course offering students an overview of the entire history of humankind. The major emphasis is on the study of significant people, events, and issues from the earliest times to the present. Traditional historical points of reference in world history are identified as students analyze important events and issues in Western civilization as well as in civilizations in other parts of the world."¹ World history includes -- to give just a few examples -- learning how irrigation and arable land, river and mountain systems act as strategic barriers, and how climate, disease and language influence human life. It requires comparative consideration of political, economic and religious systems. This is a tall order and one that world history textbooks fill with varying degrees of success.

As does no other subject in the social studies, world history explores the rise and fall of nations and empires, migrations, inventions, laws, and political institutions. When world history and geography courses are taught soundly, as historian Walter A. McDougall of the University of Pennsylvania observes, they blend into one academic discipline. "Geography is vital to the examination of economic competition, poverty, environmental degradation, ethnic conflict, health care, global warming, literature and culture, and needless to say, international relations," he states.² Geography can be defined as the study of places and how they differ from one another; what is found in different locations; and how these differences create regions and "regional conditions." It is a study facilitated through maps.

¹ Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies. §113.33, World History Studies.

² Walter A. McDougall, "You Can't Argue with Geography," Foreign Policy Research Institute. *Footnotes*. Vol 6, no. 4, September 2000.

Two competing schools of thought in theory and practice have long divided the social studies. One outlook wants to emphasize history and geography; the other wants to teach and discuss current events. In the dominant outlook, embodied in the National Council for the Social Studies, history and geography share time with or are replaced by lessons in sociology, psychology and health. The American Federation of Teachers, Bradley Commission on History, National Council on History Education, and American Textbook Council have repeatedly endorsed world history that emphasizes the story of democracy and the evolution of liberty. Most recently, in 2003, the Albert Shanker Institute issued *Educating for Democracy*, a widely endorsed restatement of this longstanding principle.

Some history-oriented organizations take another view of liberal democracy and Western history. The developer of national history standards, UCLA's Center for the Teaching of History, endorses a curriculum plan that emphasizes non-Western content. Its model concentrates on race, class, and gender, and in many instances, reconfigures the past to reflect unfavorably on Western civilization. The World History Association and Council on Islamic Education among many other organizations promote similar "new paradigms," all with a distinctly non-Western outlook. These groups seek to re-organize world history in accordance with their stated objectives. The revisionist overhaul of world history makes diversity, cross-cultural empathy, and transnationalism thematic lodestones. It radically foreshortens European history.

New perspectives on world history are not so new, of course, and they have had universal impact on the thinking of historians and the informed public. Educators can be pleased that Western civilization is no longer taught as "a treasure alone, a saga of progress, superior in all ways to the legacies of other civilizations,"³ Paul Gagnon of Boston University observes. Nor is world history's audience narrowly based. Consider the success and influence of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997), a book that brings a fresh, provocative and original approach to all of world history by subjecting Eurocentrism and conventional wisdom to critical scrutiny.

Content presents additional problems when publishers recast material in response to pressure from ideologues and academics that scorn Western civilization and seek to cast Euro-American history in an unfavorable light. A decade ago, "who are we" as a nation was an important but essentially an academic question. Of history disputes, Gordon S. Wood of Brown University said ten years ago: "What might seem to be a petty academic debate about the nature of historical writing in fact has momentous implications for the kind of nation that we Americans want to be."⁴ Increasingly, in light of the pressing claims of international affairs and internationalism, the question involves the United States' outlook toward power and its definition of an international role. When educators insist on a shameful portrait of the U.S. and Western civilization, or when their thinking about other nations and civilizations is beset with

³ Paul Gagnon, *Educating Democracy: State Standards To Ensure a Civic Core*, Albert Shanker Institute, 2003, p. 21.

⁴ Gordon S. Wood, "The Loseable Past," *The New Republic*, November 7, 1994.

fantasy and illusion, a wide section of the nation's teachers and students will fail to understand the challenges and imperatives of international affairs.

Problems in social studies publishing extend well beyond content. Format deficiencies are immense. The reorganization of educational publishing and the concentration of the school-level textbook business into four firms aggravate the declining quality of instructional materials. Florid design, the abandonment of narrative, and the loss of text – elements of what is popularly called "dumbing down" -- debase all volumes. Standard world history volumes in use in high school classrooms fifteen years ago⁵ have a logic, substance, clarity and honesty that are missing from books with a 2003 copyright.

A sound textbook is not necessarily a commercially successful textbook. In spite of its impressive map work, the contribution of the National Geographic Society, one McGraw-Hill/Glencoe high school textbook, *The Human Experience*, that American Textbook Council reviewers recommended over the competition is headed for oblivion. The same appears true for the long established textbook *People and Nations*, published by Harcourt/Holt, Rinehart and Winston, also favorably reviewed by the Council. Newer unauthored Glencoe and Holt textbooks introduced in Texas last year, combined with aggressive competition from subject leaders Pearson/Prentice Hall and Houghton Mifflin/McDougal Littell, are driving them out of the market.

Beginning with the publication of Frances FitzGerald's *America Revised* (1978), a number of distinguished historians, educational researchers, book critics, and curriculum specialists have examined technical, instructional and content deficiencies in history textbooks. In the name of readability, they agree, textbook writers and editors break down complex ideas, but the text is not necessarily improved or made more legible.

II. Publishing Trends

The underlying problem with world history and all social studies textbooks is a commercial one: a flawed production system. Four companies -- Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Reed Elsevier, and Houghton Mifflin -- offer what "elhi" textbooks in all major subjects and at all grade levels for states, districts and teachers to choose from. Elhi is the term universally used in the industry to describe the school market. The biggest sellers are reading and math books sold as lower-grade multi-volume programs. Some of the most visible and controversial textbooks are in social studies. The appeal of school publishing is its reliability. With successful textbooks, publishers have the opportunity to create high-margin revenue streams that can last for years. If a successful program or volume becomes a familiar classroom friend, it can ring up huge net earnings over time.

⁵ Examples include the antecedent to Prentice Hall's *Connections to Today*, Burton F. Beers, *World History: Patterns of Civilization* (1990) and Houghton Mifflin's Marvin Perry et al., *History of the World* (1990).

Since 1985, four big publishing companies have absorbed dozens of independent textbook companies. Several major educational publishing houses have disappeared in mergers and acquisitions. They have become brand names inside large companies. Some are recently extinct. These familiar names include Macmillan, Merrill, and Glencoe (imprints of McGraw-Hill); Prentice Hall, Silver Burdett, Ginn, Addison Wesley, Longman, and Scott Foresman (imprints of Pearson); Holt, Rinehart and Winston (imprint of Harcourt); and D.C. Heath and McDougal Littell (imprints of Houghton Mifflin).

McGraw-Hill, Reed Elsevier and Pearson are all publicly traded companies, all on the New York Stock Exchange. With a long and distinguished history in business and technical publications and databases, like its competitors, McGraw-Hill is interested in extending its global English-language franchise. New York-based McGraw-Hill comes as close as any of the four companies that produce school textbooks to being a standard U.S. Fortune 500 industrial corporation. Reed Elsevier and Pearson are U.K.-based firms that have similar ambitions.

McGraw-Hill owns elhi, testing, and college lines as well as Standard & Poor's and *Business Week*. Pearson owns elhi, testing, and college lines, Penguin/Putnam in the U.K. and U.S., plus the *Financial Times* and *The Economist*. Reed Elsevier owns Harcourt Education, which has elhi and testing assets; the remainder of the firm consists of thousands of scientific, technical, and medical journals from dozens of major imprints as well as trade publications including *Publishers Weekly* and *Variety*. Houghton Mifflin, the nation's fourth educational publisher, was sold by troubled Vivendi Universal in December 2002 to a consortium of private equity groups, Thomas H. Lee Partners, Bain Capital and the Blackstone Group, for \$1.66 billion. (It can be assumed that the intention is to bring it back public in the future.) For now Houghton Mifflin -- formerly a Fortune 500 company, like McGraw-Hill -- is a black-box private firm with next to no reporting requirements. It is almost totally free from shareholder and general public oversight, including annual reports, 10-Ks, and other windows into the company.

Why are there so few alternatives to the textbooks produced by these giants? Entry barriers to educational publishing are formidable. In every stage of production, from paper to printing, economies of scale favor mammoth enterprises. States and many local districts require publishers to post performance bonds, provide free samples, maintain textbook depositories, and field teachers' consultants. Aggressive sales forces often build tight relationships with district-level textbook purchasers that become habitual over time. Any company that plans to compete nationally in school publishing must be capital intensive and "full service," offering study guides, workbooks, and technology, along with discounts, premiums, and an array of teacher enticements. Spanish text versions, margins, texts, binders, and answer keys may determine which books are adopted.

A relatively small number of volume buyers (i.e., school districts). A few sellers. This market is efficient, profitable, and reliable -- but also deadly to quality. Not only in the social studies but across the curriculum, whatever visual trick -- or content fudge -- is necessary to sell the basic book and its ancillary ornaments, goes the contemporary line of editorial thought, so be

it. Each of these four publishing giants is intent on maximizing its revenues and is essentially nihilistic about the means of doing so. Field representatives, sales forces, market researchers, product managers, and editorial directors help determine the content of a textbook. So do state frameworks, advocates for diverse groups and causes, and numerous focus groups that round off any sharpness or edge.

Mass-market educational publishers cannot afford to have deep convictions about what their books contain, how "hard" they are, or even if they are "literary." The complex phenomenon known as the "dumbing down" of textbooks is a rational activity on the part of value-free sellers who seek to capture a larger share of a nationwide market. Textbook buyers are mainly concerned that their textbooks be able to reach all students, including the least academically capable.

Educational publishers are defensive about their products. They have constructed a powerful trade association -- the Association of American Publishers school division -- to protect their positions. AAP lobbyists in Sacramento, Austin and Tallahassee are determined to preserve this lucrative government business. To be sure, textbook publishers have long suffered from capricious and often politically inspired campaigns. For publishers, no-knowing legislators, state school board members suffering *idees fixes*, and ambitious state superintendents cloud the process. From phonics zealots in California to anti-Darwinists in Texas, highly motivated groups make pests of themselves with legislatures, school boards, and adoption committees, much to the consternation of publishers who are trying to sell to a very broad national market.

Publishers are attached to frameworks such as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Texas law mandates this scope and sequence framework as the basis of the state's curriculum and thus textbook content. If the TEKS specifically mentions South Africa's Desmond Tutu, for example, as it did in 2001, it is assured that Desmond Tutu will obtain a prominent position in new editions. If a formerly unknown figure in antiquity, Erasthenes, appears on the TEKS list, he enters textbooks with a flourish. Erasthenes was a Hellenistic astronomer who discerned that the world was round. These are not necessarily bad changes. But they are grafted on to already overburdened world history textbooks without any regard for coherence.

Publishers are responsive to crudely applied political pressure. They produce textbooks designed to pass group- and cause-related "litmus tests." Compromised content, some of it highly partisan, must meet the tests of numerous gatekeepers in the curriculum and sometimes the shadow authors of textbooks. In the case of Islam-related subject matter, a California-based Islamic council exerts censor-like force. Allowing the council to act as a textbook consultant and arbiter, social studies editors gloss over sensitive and troubling subjects such as jihad, holy law, slavery, and the status of women in the Muslim world.

Diversity-based content decisions confuse the curriculum. Pandering to ultra-sensitive representatives of Native Americans, blacks, Hispanics, feminists, Christians, Jews, and

Islamists *et alia ad infinitum* has necessarily become a number-one editorial priority. Publishers fear any organized conflict over content, pretending that gross biases in many materials are simply "balance." They know from decades of experience that these groups are zealous and quick to use history content to advance itself politically and culturally. Each of the groups above has an impressive track record in troublemaking. Academic historians who are politically engaged add to the problem.

According to the Association of American Publishers, twenty-two states hold adoptions to publish a prescribed list and make textbooks eligible for state funding. California, Texas and Florida -- all of them adoption states -- have grown more influential in educational publishing on account of a demographic shift to the west and south since 1970. The balance of states is "open territory." Defenders of state adoptions argue that state control helps ensure textbook quality. In open territory local school districts -- or schools -- select and purchase textbooks themselves, often backed by substantial state funding.

Publishers profess that state adoptions *increase* the cost of selling books. Once the state listing has been achieved, the sales force has a limited time to enter each district or county in the state and sell the textbook to the local committees -- just as they do in Xenia, Ohio. The penalty for not getting on the state list is draconian. State committees, full of political appointees, and in some cases such as Texas, elected board officials, create new specs and new demands for ancillaries and aftermarket service. As one industry luminary observes: "I do not know a single textbook publishing figure who would not be delighted to see an end to the state-adoption system."

The long-term trend, no doubt, is away from state-level adoptions and toward local choice. State adoption today is in large part a sham. Two recent history adoptions in California (1999) and Texas (2002) indicate that these two influential states are no longer selective about those textbooks adopted. While lack of choice varies from subject to subject, across the curriculum a vastly reduced number of books are available to choose from. These two large states are not any longer picky about the degree to which these adopted textbooks fulfill state standards. Nor can they be, given the handful of giants that control the national market.

Companies have shrunk their editorial and production staffs, and more significantly, their use of real authors. To reduce costs, they are moving toward a writing-for-hire production system and abandoning the royalty-based author system. Some new secondary-level history textbooks have no authors at all. Authors have been replaced by a long list of contributors, censors, and special pleaders, concerned first of all that history meets their particular goals.

Publishers claim that they are only responding to state pressure and state standards. They say the state adoption process is already an open, public process. In fact, textbooks that states adopt may conform minimally and mechanically to state standards. State and local textbook adoption procedures rarely, if ever, address matters of style and textual quality. The

main point of state review, as far as publishers can discern, is to comply with detailed guidelines for representation and to give pressure groups and potential censors a chance to vent and bully.

Wedded to these production practices, the four major educational publishers are no longer confident about how to represent the nation, its civic ideals, or the world. They are not interested in deciding how. They will leave content to standards committees and focus groups. But they are deeply interested in selling instructional materials, and after the history wars of the 1990s, they are warier than ever of content disputes. Without concern for the consequences or deluded into thinking that their revisions constitute a thematic correction and step forward, history textbook editors continue to give the nation's students a misshapen view of the global past and a false view of the global future.

New textbook editions reflect lowered sights for general education. Textbook makers are adjusting to short attention spans and non-readers. Too many children cannot or do not want to read, nor are they eager to digest concrete facts or memorize events, principles, and concepts. Among editors, phrases such as "text-heavy," "information-loaded," "fact-based," and "non-visual" are negatives. A picture, they insist, tells a thousand words. The results are high cost, unconscionable bulk, and instructional confusion. Textbooks across the curriculum are being transformed into picture and activity books instead of clear, portable, simply designed, text-centered primers. Bright photographs, broken formats, and seductive colors overwhelm the text and confuse the page. Typeface is larger and looser, resulting in many fewer words and much more white space. The text disappears or gets lost. What text remains is dense and often unintelligible.

Given persuasive research and commentary on what can be done to improve history textbooks, it is disturbing that people who call themselves educational publishers – charged as they are with the public trust – are close-minded and fatalistic about their products. Educational publishers could and should be producing cheaper books that are text-centered, simpler in design, and more honest in content. They are failing to do so, and in this they are shirking their public obligation.

III. Findings

1. Bad writing compounds the loss of narrative.

World history textbooks have abandoned narrative for a broken format of competing instructional activities. American Textbook Council reviewers repeatedly objected to anti-historical devices designed to spur the interest of students that reflect, in fact, editorial degradation of history. As author and critic Dana Mack observed of Houghton Mifflin/McDougal Littell's widely adopted high school world history textbook, *Patterns of Interaction*: "The 'edutainment' stamp is everywhere present, from the profusion of cartoon drawings to the profligate sidebars which often feature mere trivia. What results is a picture and activity book, not a history book."

In this editorial style, school publishers break radically with the kind of history textbook common in high schools a generation ago and the kind of textbook that remains the rule in college publishing. All reviewers – echoing more than a decade of complaints on the part of educational researchers and textbook analysts -- complained of what one called "collapsed narrative." "Text is overly detailed at points and superficial at others," observes Lucien Ellington, a professor of history education at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, speaking of the nation's most popular high school world history textbook, Pearson/Prentice Hall's *Connections to Today*. "There seems to be no rhyme or reason for respective amounts of coverage. Any subject is likely to be stripped down, and the degree to which complex subject matter is compressed results in ambiguities and abstractions that fail to promote student understanding," The perils of compression are obvious. As text gets cut to make room for pictures, instructional activities, and sidebars, what textbooks say is often so telegraphic and so general as to make no sense. "Text is stripped away and cut into snippets and captions, leaving teachers and students alike confused and baffled," said one reviewer. The nation's dominant high school world history textbook, *Connections to Today* "takes superficiality for granted," said Paul Gagnon, who warns of instructional overload in today's textbooks. Gagnon locates the source of the problem in textbook publishers' effort to adapt all popular teaching theories and strategies at once.

Concision turns textbooks into feeble outlines and reference sources. This is a fault that applies most acutely to sixth-grade and middle-school world cultures textbooks. Complex subjects are described so briefly as to be meaningless. In a section on Chinese history, Pearson/Prentice Hall's *Global Mosaic* reads:

The Song dynasty battled constantly to protect China's borders from invaders. During the early 1200's, Song rulers faced a powerful new threat when the Mongols burst onto the world scene.

Under their fierce leader Genghiz Khan, the Mongols conquered a vast empire. It extended from the Pacific Ocean to the Danube River in Europe. After the death of Genghiz Khan, the huge Mongol Empire was divided among his sons and grandsons.

China under foreign rule. By 1279, Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghiz Khan, had extended Mongol power over all of China. At first, the Mongols tried to reduce the role of Confucian scholars and preserve their own culture. For example, Kublai Khan appointed only Mongols and other foreigners to positions of power. (341)

This passage and the few following paragraphs is really all *Global Mosaic* does to put the Mongols in context, who are mentioned in passing and out of context elsewhere in the textbook's coverage of India and Japan. At a time when curriculum planners seek expanded coverage of the Mongols -- whose movements had vast impact over centuries not only throughout east and south Asia but on the Ottoman Empire and Europe -- compression leaves teachers and students guessing as to Mongol significance over centuries and worldwide.

Sometimes, concision actually offends the subject, which is considered in language and brevity to a degree that renders the lesson inappropriate or worse. An example on the treatment

of genocide comes from a world cultures textbook used nationally from the sixth to eighth grade, Houghton Mifflin's *To See a World*:

Understanding Genocide: Genocide is an attempt to kill all the people or members of a certain group. Why would one group of people want to completely destroy another group of people?

The Roots of Genocide: One reason a group of people commits genocide is hatred. In Nazi Germany, Jewish people were blamed for the country's problems. Hitler accused them of being evil. These false beliefs resulted in the Holocaust.

A second reason one group commits genocide is to gain land. During World War I, Turks forced Armenians to leave Turkey. About 600,000 Armenians died or were killed on this forced march. A group may also commit genocide to stay in power. In Kampuchea (Cambodia), in the 1970s, the Pol Pot regime stayed in power by killing about two million Khmer people.

The UN Resolution of 1948: In 1948 the United Nations declared genocide "a crime under international law." This UN resolution tried to prevent another Holocaust from happening. (471)

2. *Instructional confusion abounds.*

World history textbooks teem with what one reviewer termed "impenetrable" lessons and exercises. For example, *Patterns of Interaction* asks students to "Interact with History." One separate box is meant to introduce law, and to do so, the lesson focuses on the significance of the Code of Hammurabi. The way that the textbook goes about trying to cover the subject, however, many or all students will lose sight of what the fundamental questions are. It is hard to discern the purpose of the exercise. Students will fail to understand legal rights as they were construed in ancient Mesopotamia or anywhere else. The Code of Hammurabi is by no means a direct antecedent of the rule of law as known to U.S. teachers and students. The significance of the code is unclear:

It has been a tough year ever since the harvest failed. Many times, you've cursed the name of Mummar, the government official responsible for overseeing the harvest. But now that you've heard about the king's punishment for Mummar, you're not sure what to think.

The law of the Babylonian Empire -- Hammurabi's Code -- holds people responsible for their actions. It usually applies retaliation as punishment. That is, if you put out the eye of another, your own eye will be put out. Mummar had hired a substitute to handle the harvest this year, and the harvest was a disaster. Because of Mummar's decision, your city has suffered through a serious food shortage. Some people may die. Therefore, the king has sentenced Mummar to die. Does the king's decision represent justice or revenge? What should be the main purpose of laws: to promote good behavior or to punish bad behavior? Do all communities need a system of laws to guide them? (26)

Students are then to hold a class debate: "Does Mummar's punishment fit the crime?" "How can a high school history teacher even such approach inane and cryptic exercises," asked one reviewer in exasperation. Two reviewers cited this particular activity as an example of what a world history textbook should not do. "It would take a quite knowledgeable and dynamic facilitator to unravel the story told," commented Dana Mack, "never mind drawing out of it meaningful discussions on the subject of the function of law in society, or the ethic of individual responsibility. Such an exercise begs the question of what can be gained by removing human

actions from their surrounding culture and historical moment and judging these actions by purely contemporary standards. [See Item 3 below.] As recreation, the exercise might lead somewhere -- at least in classrooms where students have the social skills to carry on a theoretical discussion without falling into misbehavior. But as history study, it is perverse."

For reviewers, the widespread lack of authorial voice, disappearance of narrative structure, and confusing randomness of subject were universal concerns. Reviewers observed that compression of text, broken format, and clashing instructional approaches ("something for everybody") produce a chaotic product. The intent is to capture markets by offering teachers of whatever pedagogical enthusiasm and students of whatever ability something they can embrace. Editors are hired expressly to turn the theories and strategies that gurus of the moment are pushing into exercises, activities and lesson plans. They are expected do so quickly and uncritically.

Connections to Today is divided into eight units, Paul Gagnon notes, each containing thirty-seven chapters which in turn contain 162 sections. Eight two-page items are called You Decide: Exploring Global Issues, one at the end of each unit. Thirty-seven half-pages called Parallels through Time, one in each chapter, and thirty-seven vignettes called Up Close, supposedly offer in-depth treatments of people and events. Each of the thirty-seven chapters close with two pages including Skills for Success and questions/activities under Critical Thinking; Analyzing Primary Sources; For Your Portfolio (writing assignments); Analyzing Tables; Internet Activity. *Connections to Today* contains thirty-seven Art History exercises and eight excerpts from World Literature. There are small Global Connection boxes in each chapter and similar boxes for Issues of the Day. There are 162 end-of-section reviews, each with questions that supposedly require Critical Thinking and an Activity, which by itself would take a full day of classwork.

Of *Connections to Today*, Lucien Ellington observes that teachers and students are "deluged with special features including Skills Assessments (three different subcategories), Exploring the Human Drama (three different subcategories), Virtual Field, Why Study History? Biography, Did You Know? Connections to Today, Global Connections, and Primary Sources (three different categories)." Teachers who have little reserve knowledge may try to use activities like these with awkward or disastrous results. Social studies specialists agree that world history teachers are highly dependent on textbooks, more so than in U.S. history and civics; world history standards ask instructors to convey to students subjects that are exotic, complex and unfamiliar to both of them.

Many instructional activities fail in their objectives. *Connections to Today*, for example, has activities that ask: "When should the world community intercede in local conflicts to promote peace?" "What environmental problems does the world face today?" or "Is technology a blessing or curse?" and "Does diversity strengthen or weaken a society?" "Is war ever justified?" These questions are too complex for teachers to use and too cosmic for pupils to answer. Such instructional exercises do not -- as they claim to do -- promote genuine critical thinking. They

discourage deep reading on the subject and invite facile discussion. They promote classroom sloganeering. They favor the glib student and the showboat teacher.

3. *Presentism is universal.*

Educational publishers are captives of ill-considered state mandates designed to make history relevant and meaningful. When the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) decrees that history textbooks should relate the past to the present and identify contemporary situations that parallel historic situations,⁶ textbook editors respond, rarely with subtlety or nuance. Textbook correlation with the TEKS is what all publishers emphasize in their products. Do educators want to teach "issues-oriented" courses? Do they want to harness history to the here-and now? *Connections to Today's* "Issues for Today" asks questions for which the text could provide answers but fails to, such as in the accompanying chapter on the Russian Revolution: "Why is it often difficult to establish democracy in a country without a tradition of democratic government?" Still others ask questions that could be answered only in the most abstract, wishful terms or in detailed case studies in depth: "When should the world community intercede in local conflicts to promote peace?"

Presentism can take the form of cute, anachronistic excursions into the past. Just one example is the imaginary *Phoenician Financial News* that appears in *Patterns of Interaction*. What is lost in this editorial debacle is the fact that other historical eras and societies, such as Phoenicia, were profoundly different from our own. It diminishes and cheapens the past as it misleads, pretending that there is a bridge or seamless thread between Phoenicia and today's New York Stock Market or the *Wall Street Journal*. This made-up one-page "news bulletin" is confusing and gratuitous. It detracts from rather than clarifies the perfectly adequate running text on the Phoenician alphabet and trading empire. In the 1999 edition of *Connections to Today*, the nation's other leading high school world history textbook, students are asked to link "The Hero" past and present by comparing Odysseus with Indiana Jones. "Hairstyles" in ancient Rome are compared with the 1960's Beehive. "Going Shopping" in medieval Baghdad is likened to an indoor suburban mall. The editors hope, obviously, that these "connections" will enliven history and make it "fun" for kids. Arguably they do the opposite. In their attempt to be relevant and contemporary, editors obliterate the "strangeness" and "differentness" of the past, say reviewers, the very devices that involve students in the first place.

"We want to know what is different about the place, not why -- by some stretch of the imagination -- it could be compared with the U.S.A. or life in Peoria, Illinois," editor and book critic Roger W. Smith points out. "People of all ages are fascinated by Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons, dinosaurs and strange prehistoric birds, woolly mammoths. Wherein the fascination? -- the strange, exotic, different nature of it all. Some parallel to modern life or present day conditions may be found, but the distant past is interesting in its own right. Perhaps the

⁶ "TEKS 2. *The student understands how the present relates to the past.* The student is expected to (a) identify elements in a contemporary situation that parallel a historical situation; and (b) describe variables in a contemporary situation that could result in different outcomes."

dinosaurs are related to present-day birds. Perhaps we can learn something about human evolution and our own biology from the Cro-Magnons or other species; history is the story of *the past*. Beyond anything, the sheer fascination of knowing what happened and what it was like is what compels us to be interested. Take the stories of ancient civilizations like Greece (e.g., the *Iliad*) or fascinating stories in the Bible. Each has a contemporary feel, contain issues that still concern us, and show us that people in antiquity were very much like us in some respects. Read Juvenal or the bloodthirsty doings and schemings of the Merovingians. It rings true of advanced culture and barbarism today. What was slavery like in ancient Rome? Did they really feed Christians to the lions? Were criminals regularly crucified? How were pagan religious beliefs different from ours? What crimes exactly were punished under the Code of Hammurabi?"

What is worse, and it is a favorite device of classroom ideologues, social studies presentism often applies contemporary standards of social justice to the past. As a result, it misapprehends earlier societies and civilizations. Such a view is likely to assume the worst of any aspect of the Western past that differs from the world as progressive Americans today would wish it, especially in matters of equality and social justice.

Of presentism, Dana Mack concluded, "even the distant past can be fruitfully summarized in ways that connect it to the present and make it pertinent to the resolution of contemporary issues. But contemporary applicability cannot always be found in history. Nor do assertions of it need to be forced in order to excite young people about certain areas of history."

4. *Diversity takes a toll.*

History textbook publishing attracts a full complement of organized groups that want to re-write history. For many multiculturalists, injustices and wrongs inflicted by Western civilization begin long ago and far away. Pressure groups feel slighted or underrepresented in historical scholarship. Political activists who are not historians exert great pressure to add themes and lessons to textbooks. They want favorable treatment and expanded coverage for their group or cause. Textbooks resort to obscure, inconsequential, and even fictive subject matter to satisfy countless "diversity" demands. In a politically inspired content makeover process, consequential historical events and figures are sacrificed to achieve "balance." Editors search earnestly -- or cynically -- for historical figures, trying to capture the right group rainbow and ensure no complaints from various ideologues and activists.

Who will provide role models for groups who are the gatekeepers' and activists' favorites, often portrayed as valiant warriors against one or another oppression? For editors, such questions are not incidental but structural. Subject matter must conform to demands and meet strict tests. In some sensitive areas such as in lessons about Islam and Africa, deliberate omissions and deceptive content are the rule, not the exception. What takes over content? A highly romantic, condescending -- and utterly Western -- construct of the "other." When facing ambiguous or unrecorded circumstances, world history textbooks shift away from the prevailing

neutral and telegraphic style. They adopt a lyrical tone, and in places, text surrenders to hyperbolic nonsense:

Religion Shapes Views of Life

Another practice early Americans shared was religion. Nearly all native North Americans believed that the world around them was filled with nature spirits. Most Native Americans recognized a number of sacred spirits. Some groups held up one supreme being, or Great Spirit, above all others. North American peoples believed that the spirits gave them rituals and customs to guide them in their lives and to satisfy their basic needs. If people practiced these rituals, they would live in peace and harmony.

Native American religious beliefs also included great respect for the land as the source of life. Native Americans used the land but tried to alter it as little as possible. The land was sacred, not something that could be bought and sold. Later, when Europeans arrived in North America, the issue of ownership of land became a problem. A Native American expressed his view of this dilemma:

A Voice From the Past: "Some of our chiefs make the claim that the land belongs to us. It is not what the Great Spirit told me. He told me that the land belongs to Him, that no people own the land, and that I was not to forget to tell this to the white people." (Kannekuk, Kickapoo prophet)

Harmony with nature was an important part of Native American life, and so was harmony in relationships with people. (393-394)

Most of these claims about Native American religion are open to question and demand clarification. Who can know what "Harmony with nature was an important part of Native American life" means? As for "harmony in relationships with people," constantly warring Indian tribes fought viciously with one another, and as historian Francis Parkman, Jr., and others have pointed out, the Iroquois took particular pleasure in the slow torture of captives and enemies, such as the Hurons, to death. The same lesson continues into a suspicious sidebar presenting Iroquois women as central holders of political power.

A world cultures textbook used nationally from the sixth to eighth grade, Houghton Mifflin's *To See a World* makes little effort to disguise its interests. Thus the 700-page world cultures book aimed at junior high school classrooms wraps up Europe in the period from the Columbian Exchange to the Industrial Revolution in six pages. Ancient Rome, Greece, and Early Christianity together merit a mere thirty pages. Twentieth-century Europe, including Russia and the Soviet Union to the end of the Cold War, is given a total of twenty pages. In *To See a World* the Enlightenment is missing entirely. An educator might argue, sixth and seventh graders might not be ready for Voltaire or Rousseau. But there is no mention of the French Revolution, the United States Constitution, or the liberal tradition of the nineteenth century either.

The United States is reinvented as a "land of diversity" and "a nation of many peoples." What remains solely of America's civic being is the immigrant experience, and in keeping with its view of the American past, the book stresses hardships late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century migrants faced in a hard-hearted land. In *To See a World's* round-up chapter on North America, entitled "For the Good of All," the American vision is vested in the African-American

"freedom struggles" that "helped open the door for all minorities and women." It includes a special section on identifying gender stereotypes -- ridiculous or evil, you decide -- and education's value, presumably, in breaking these stereotypes.

In *To See a World* students meet Isabella D'Este and Christine de Pizan, who together merit roughly the same space as Nicolaus Copernicus, the Polish astronomer. The history of science in general does not fare well in the world cultures makeover of the past. Galileo, for example, is absent from the book. What is left, the residue of the Renaissance, is converted into a feminist riff:

One male writer [Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, 1528] gave Renaissance women this advice: "It does not befit [suit] women to handle weapons, to ride, to play tennis, to wrestle, and to do many other things that befit men. . ." Some Renaissance women ignored this advice. Some became writers or artists. Others became skilled workers or shop owners. A few held political power. (427)

This is bogus history and propaganda. In a few words, the passage reveals the textbook's willingness to harness the Renaissance to fabrication and victim default. Accordingly, teachers and students might assume that quattrocento shopkeepers were typically women, as they might believe that Christine de Pizan is a figure of genuine historical importance and might conclude that the subordinate status of women is more significant in European history than the invention of printing. Notice of important historical figures from Theodora to Joan of Arc to Madame Curie does occur in *To See a World*. But editors are embarking on a grander project and not only in the case of gender. Historical non-entities beloved and pitched by activists -- all claiming neglect and victim status -- take up inordinate space and textbook attention. If they are indeed significant figures, they are recast as emblems instead of individuals.

In the world history textbooks examined, women's contributions to history run dogmatically and formulaically through the texts as thematic strands. Textbooks repeatedly make vague assertions of women's significance and importance in public life in all cultures and all epochs. But rarely is any item documented -- or even convincing. Passages on women's history often conclude with a disclaiming variation on the line of "although women's role in the Church was limited, they made valuable contributions to their faith." From the cult of Mary to the rise of convents and orders, these "limited" roles might be worth specifying. But noting that women made "valuable contributions" to the church is off-kilter when the instances where they did would be far outnumbered by valuable contributions to the faith by men such as Benedict, Bernard, Francis, and Loyola, observes Roger W. Smith. "This throwaway remark -- with which such texts are littered -- is intended to fulfill the obligation that a point be made, but not really providing any substance, only saying that something was true by asserting it."

Alternatively, world history textbooks create new stock characters to fill the bill, as in the case of the formerly obscure German mystic Hildegard of Bingen, whose visions and prophecies are of interest to medieval specialists, church historians, and more recently, new age feminists. But Hildegard probably does not belong in high school world history textbooks. Or if she does,

she should not appear as she does in *Connections to Today's* passage: "Although women could not become priests, many did enter convents. There, capable, strong-minded women could escape the limits of society. In the 1100s, Abbess Hildegard of Bingen composed religious music and wrote books on many subjects. Because of her mystical visions, popes and rulers sought her advice. She spoke her mind freely. 'Take care that the Highest King does not strike you down because of the blindness that prevents you from governing justly,' she warned one ruler." Similarly, *Patterns of Interaction* makes an effort to explain the Enlightenment, but to do so, it features Mary Wollstonecraft more prominently than Voltaire, whose treatment in the book is incoherent. (The book briefly profiles Adam Smith but fails to mention Edmund Burke or Samuel Johnson.)

Bernard Lewis of Princeton University commented years ago: "We live in a time when great efforts are being made to falsify the record of the past and to make history a tool of propaganda; when governments, religious movements, political parties, and sectional groups of every kind are busy rewriting history as they would wish it to have been."⁷ Content watchdogs want to appropriate history to serve their own interests in public schools. They count lines and fret about image. They snap at publishers, editors and sales forces. If they are vocal and powerful enough, they can be assured of obtaining expanded and favorable coverage for their single interest or cause.

5. *A disturbing view of the future prevails.*

As do other world history textbooks, *Patterns of Interaction* looks forward to the future, adhering to a "blending cultures" orthodoxy. Such an angle of multiculturalism provides the overarching theme for its final chapter, "Cultures Blend in a Global Age." A subhead, "The Sharing of Cultures Accelerates," emphasizes music, sports, movies, fashion, and "leisure activities." Elvis Presley, Mick Jagger, and Little Leaguers are identified as cross-cultural symbols. As cross-culturalism goes, this is editorial shallowness incarnate.

The subordinate head, "Non-Western Influences Travel to the West," seems unconvincing and evasive: "The non-Western mindset of placing value on meditation and contemplation has found a home in the West. The world's fastest growing religion -- Islam -- comes from non-Western roots. Cultural blending opens communications channels for the exchange of ideas throughout the globe." These few sentences resort to platitudes and stereotypes, make a gross error as to the roots of Islam, and propose a shaky premise about "blendability." The chapter fails to emphasize or explain fault lines and inherent conflicts among civilizations, religions, and political systems. These omissions are serious and not accidental. They render world history textbooks incomplete and the view of the world they are promoting misleading. Textbooks ignore the implications of Latin American immigration into the southwestern U.S. and Muslim immigration into western Europe, including Great Britain, France and Germany.

⁷ Bernard Lewis, "Other People's History," *Islam and the West*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 130.

In its Epilogue, *Patterns of Interaction* looks at issues of the future. Women figure prominently. But instead of revealing the harrowing condition of women in much of the Middle East, Asia and Africa (i.e., the non-Western world), the textbook showcases a 1995 United Nations conference for women and Hillary Rodham Clinton in language that is at once empty and pointless.

THEME: Cultural Interaction (Borderless Issues): ... Women from around the world attended this conference. Issues they examined included the role of women, population growth, poverty, education, and health. Both problems and solutions were discussed.

The 2003 teacher's annotated edition adds in a margin:

More about...Cultural Interaction: Hillary Clinton in China: Among those attending the fourth World Conference on Women sponsored by the United Nations in Beijing was the First Lady, Hillary Clinton from the United States. The theme of this conference was "Action for Equality, Development, and Peace." It was held from September 4 through September 15, 1995. (968)

The Epilogue likewise makes the fatuous and dangerous claim that "empires of the future may well be based upon information." (They may also be based on weapons of mass destruction.)

Commendably, the most recent *Patterns of Interaction* edition (2003) makes an effort to address contemporary terrorism. It finishes with a section on world terrorism and the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States. By comparison, the 2003 edition of *Connections to Today* does not include anything about the subject, finishing instead with a trite lesson on homeless street children in Brazil.

IV. Problem Topics

As did American Textbook Council reviewers, teachers and university historians consulted for this review complained that superfluous, non-essential lessons, activities and "postholes" made it impossible for students to discern what is indispensable and essential. Twentieth-Century Political History, Islam, Africa, Industrial Revolution, the Cold War, and Terrorism and International Security were all declared problem areas. The most grievous casualty, reviewers agreed, was student insight into the origins and status of liberal democracy and geopolitics today.

1. Twentieth-Century Political History

When covering non-democratic political systems, which are today located mainly in the non-Western world, world cultures and history textbooks offer an apology or free pass.⁸ Oppressive governments, economic failure, and human rights violations are repeatedly blurred, ostensibly in the name of cross-cultural sensitivity and editorial "compassion" for the

⁸ Diane Ravitch reiterates this point in "Leaving Out Reality," *American Educator*, Fall 2003, pp. 32 ff. The magazine volume also contains several valuable contributions on democracy and civic education from Paul Gagnon, Arch Puddington, and Philip Gourevitch.

"underdog." On the part of multicultural pressure groups, animus toward Western expansionism and imperialism is cardinal and recurrent. In places *Connections to Today* makes an earnest effort to explain the benefits of European imperialism, for example, in the development of banking systems. But such balance is tepid, failing to explain benefits from public health to transportation. Explaining the non-Western world's problems as a function of Euro-American iniquities trumps an older -- still widely held -- view that democratic capitalism as now practiced in the English-speaking world, western Europe, and Japan has been a civilizing force.

Both leading high school world history textbooks, *Connections to Today* and *Patterns of Interaction*, devote substantial units to the Russian Revolution and the rise of Lenin and Stalin within the Soviet system. They cover Hitler, Nazi Germany, and the Jewish Holocaust. Point by point, each textbook covers significant events with clarity and extreme restraint. Neither textbook conceives the modern totalitarian challenge to democracy that involves World War II, the Cold War, and the fate of regions worldwide from the 1930s to the present. Textbooks miss the "big picture." The Soviet Union and Germany get lost as textbooks jump from east Asia, to India and then to Fascism in Italy. If ghastly events or unthinkable civil bloodbaths reflect poorly on non-democracies, neutral and colorless language cleanses these dire situations of consequence, meaning or impact. In the name of "balance," textbooks point out the positive in unfree societies, losing sight of what is at stake in human terms.

In *Connections to Today*, Soviet achievements in economic growth, increased military power, education and filmmaking are featured. Students read little of forced labor camps or the fate of the kulaks. But at least these horrors are mentioned. For example, in a feeble passage on the Cold War, the middle-school world cultures textbook, *To See a World*, says, under the heading of "Life Behind the Iron Curtain," only the following:

The Iron Curtain cut off contact between the people of Eastern and Western Europe. Barbed wire lined the borders. Communist governments in Eastern Europe granted their people few freedoms. Workers were told where to work. Newspapers were told what to print, teachers what to teach.

In some ways these Communist governments did take care of their citizens. Food prices were low. Health care was free. Ethnic conflicts, especially in the Balkans and the Soviet Union, were reduced. (473)

World history textbooks miss the essence of totalitarian repression. They may mention the autocracy and cruelty of the commissars, the famines of the Ukraine, and the Siberian concentration camps. But the enormity of totalitarian state control escapes. Soviet aggression and expansionism in eastern Europe and Asia are described, but in neutral and abstract language. This approach fails to explain how Soviet imperialism and global ambition undergird the twentieth century's political history on all continents. Mao Zedong's Long March is recounted in glowing terms as a liberation movement. The Chinese Communists are portrayed as heroic freedom fighters, never mind the consequences for Chinese democracy and for millions of anti-Communist citizens, including many of China's most educated and forward-looking elites.

Connections to Today praises Fidel Castro's communist dictatorship in Cuba for its universal health care, promotion of equality for women, and increased literacy rate, noting also that critics of the regime "were jailed or silenced, and hundreds of thousands fled to the United States." What is missing or at least very hard to discern? That Fidel Castro is dictator who has crushed his people for forty years. He has aided and abetted U.S. enemies in the hemisphere by stirring up unrest. He promotes drug trafficking in cocaine. As such, he menaces the U.S. and preys on its underclass. Why is the U.S. doing nothing to free Cuba while it is making efforts to build democracy in the Middle East? Textbooks are silent on this and other timely geopolitical subjects.

World history textbook delicacy toward brutal anti-democratic regimes makes it impossible for students to understand contemporary conflict in the Middle East, east Asia or Africa. Teachers and students fail to digest what unfree and totalitarian societies are, i.e., the condition of the individual when educational systems, media and religion are overhauled in service of the state. Lulled by the chimera of world peace, they fail to discern the contempt for liberty and individuality that exists among much of the world's elites.

2. *Islam*

Textbooks airbrush a different kind of totalitarianism, militant Islam in the contemporary world. The coverage of Islam in leading world history textbooks provides striking evidence of the inability of world history textbooks to tell the truth. Publishers allow aggressive and secretive domestic Muslim advocacy and pressure groups the power to censor and craft what students read about Islamic history and geopolitics. Textbooks at all levels elide Islamic holy war (jihad), holy law (sharia), the history of Arabic and Ottoman slavery, the status of women in the Islamic world, and Islamic terrorism.⁹

3. *Africa*

In all world history textbooks coverage of Africa falls short. As textbooks describe African social and cultural achievements, they discard the neutral, "balanced," telegraphic style that is standard textbook voice. They adopt a lyrical approach to the subject. Lessons appear to "spin" the past. Textbooks steer clear of any suggestion of historical primitivity or contemporary chaos on the continent. In describing African "social structures" and "stateless societies," the effort to augment and inflate overwhelms what might be compelling insights. What after all is a stateless society? Long passages on African rule and family are unclear as to meaning and even purpose:

Social Structure. A respected older male, such as a father, uncle, or father-in-law, typically serves as a group leader. Although members of the group listen to and value this man's opinion, he does not give orders or act as chief. Each family within the band makes its own decisions and is free to come and go. Group members settle arguments through long discussions. If conflicts cannot be

⁹ See <http://www.historytextbooks.org/islamreport.pdf>

settled by talking, a group member may decide to move to a different hunting band. Daily life for the Efe is not governed by formal, written laws. However, they do have logical guidelines that determine how members share food and possessions.

Stateless Societies

As in other parts of the world, family organization is central to African society. In many African societies, families are organized in groups called lineages. The members of a lineage (LIHN-ee-ihj) believe they are descendants of a common ancestor. Besides its living members, a lineage includes past generations (spirits of ancestors) and future generations (children not yet born). Within a lineage, members feel strong loyalties to one another.

South of the Sahara, many African groups developed systems of governing based on lineages. In some African societies, lineage groups took the place of rulers. These societies, known as stateless societies, did not have a centralized system of power. Instead, authority in a stateless society was balanced among lineages of equal power so that no one family had too much control. Most often, members of a stateless society worked through their differences to cooperate and share power. (*Patterns of Intervention*, 367-368)

What is being said here? Very little. What purports to be anthropology is not, and what results appears varnished and evasive. The textbook seems to go out of its way to avoid the world *tribe*. Where does the concept "stateless societies" come from? In this model students do not learn that government as they know it had not evolved.

In African history, content is often speculative and sometimes fictive. Nebulous and almost undocumented African history before the nineteenth century expands to improbable heights. Great medieval trading empires and rulers of fabulous wealth appear, despite the near absence of hard documentary or archeological evidence. Based on very thin records, nonetheless, dominant tribes that flourished a thousand or more years ago are recast as cultures and civilizations equal to Europe and China. Axum, Ghana, Mali, Hausa, Nok, Kongo, Benin, Great Zimbabwe, Songhai and other groups get expansive treatments. Textbooks feature putative achievements of Mansa Musa, king of Mali, who, thanks to the efforts of multicultural ideologues, has assumed a stature in world history once reserved for Charlemagne. *To See a World* claims, in the first part of a 20-page section on Mali over the centuries:

Mali's Golden Age. Under Mansa Musa's rule the West African kingdom of Mali grew to its largest extent. For about 160 years, from 1240 to 1400, much of what is Mali today was ruled by powerful kings. They brought great wealth to their empires by controlling a lively trade in gold. They held political power in the region through strong armies and a network of ambassadors. These representatives from the king were sent to Egypt, Morocco, and to rival kingdoms.

Mali's first king, Sundiata, was Mansa Musa's great uncle. An epic poem tells how Sundiata united many young Malinke men under his rule.

The Roots of Mighty Empires. Sundiata conquered many new lands. Mali gained control over the trading centers of Gao and Djenne. In these cities traders from north and south of Mali met to exchange salt, gold, and other products.

Traders from North Africa brought salt from mines that lay in the Sahara to the north of Mali. Gold traders brought gold mined in locations south of the empire. The kings of Mali became wealthy by taxing the goods traded there. (249)

The textbook does not specify what it means by "other products," but an important point is missing: That Mali was an outpost of Islam. Mali's role in the vast Islamic slave trade in Africa and the movement of enslaved chattel to the east before European colonization. In fact, textbooks cloud the entire relationship between Islam and slavery.

Patterns of Interaction begins its coverage of ancient African civilizations by stating that "Africans developed unique cultures and societies -- including the great civilizations of Egypt, Carthage, and Kush." This claim demands careful qualification, which is not forthcoming, and elsewhere the book characterizes Carthage as a Phoenician colony. Kush, Mali and several other medieval African "civilizations" were Islamic societies, extended from the Arabian peninsula and not exactly "African." *Patterns of Interaction* repeatedly resorts to empty hyperbole unsupported by detail: "The early inhabitants of West Africa were developing cities, cultures, and technologies that would write their name on the pages of history," and "the kingdom of Aksum reached tremendous heights and left a lasting legacy in its religion, architecture, and agriculture."

European colonialism, according to world history textbook orthodoxy, is the source of all African woes. *Patterns of Interaction* states, for example: "The main reason for Africa's difficulties was the negative impact of colonial rule. European powers did little to prepare their African colonies for independence. In fact, the lingering effects of colonialism undermined efforts to build stable, democratic states." Blasted African economies, ethnic warfare, genocide, and developmental barriers including disease, climate, lack of arable land and navigable rivers may be mentioned in a brief and cryptic way; these conditions are neither explained nor cast in dire language.

Patterns of Interaction does not look at tyrannies in the Congo (Zaire) or Zimbabwe, instead squandering two pages on arcane internal politics of Nigeria. *Patterns of Interaction* covers Rwanda solely in a 120-word box accompanying a unit on the 1946 Nuremberg Trials. It does not mention AIDS at all. *Connections to Today* mentions AIDS but gives no context or reason for the epidemic. Neither textbook explains the scourge of African disease from cholera to sleeping sickness. In *Connections to Today*, the Rwanda genocide is ignored but for a specious photograph caption evidently designed to please those who want textbooks to feature women's achievements: "Although civil wars caused great hardship, people throughout Africa were determined to create better lives. Here, women build new homes after war in Rwanda forced them to abandon their villages."

In both textbooks, genocide, dictatorial military rule, and grossly dysfunctional governments receive a whitewash. ("Some military rulers, like Idi Amin [sole mention in text], who murdered thousands of citizens in Uganda, were brutal tyrants. Others sought to end abuses and improve conditions.") Zaire's "greedy and corrupt" Mobutu is balanced by a paean to Tanzania's Julius Nyerere and his "experiment in socialism." ("Unlike that of many African nations, [Tanzania's] food output did not decline.") Of Zimbabwe, inexplicably labeled "Zimbabwe's Road to Majority Rule," students learn, "international sanctions" damaged the

economy. "In 2000, tensions over land ownership led to renewed violence." Nothing more. *Connections to Today* seems to suggest that Africa's role in the international community is to focus world attention on racism, imperialism, and unequal distribution of wealth:

After independence, African nations joined the United Nations. They contributed to and benefited from the UN and its many agencies. Africans served in UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

African countries and other developing nations focused world attention on issues including health care, literacy, and economic development. They called for an end to racism and imperialism. They also pressed nations of the global North to deal with the unequal distribution of wealth. (913)

4. *Industrial Revolution*

Textbooks approach the emergence of modern industrial capitalism in a critical vein, exhibiting an attitude different from the one taken toward non-Western societies. They thus lose sight of the most extraordinary underlying force in modern civilization.

The nexus of new energy, applied science, transportation, urbanization, and mass production escapes the student, as does the phenomenal rise in European and American living standards. In *Patterns of Interaction's* brief and barren description of the Industrial Revolution, coal is not mentioned. The steam engine appears as if by magic. James Watt's life appears in dull shorthand, solely on account of his specific "mention" in the Texas Essential Skills and Knowledge (TEKS) mandate. *Patterns of Interaction* mentions iron only in the context of medieval Africa. Creating an "Interact with History" activity, the textbook conducts a highly ahistorical Dickensian morality play for students, entitled "What would you do to change your situation?" wherein the textbook constructs false situations and impossible options. The exercise grossly misunderstands the social and economic arrangements of the era. It leads students into a curious and tendentious activity.

You are a 15-year-old living in England where the Industrial Revolution has spurred the growth of thousands of factories. Cheap labor is in great demand. Like millions of other teenagers, you do not go to school. Instead you work in a factory six days a week, 14 hours a day. The small pay you receive is needed to help support your family. You trudge to work before dawn every day and work until after sundown. The dangerous machines injure your fellow workers. Minding the machines is exhausting, dirty, and dangerous. Inside the factory the air is foul, and it is so dark it is hard to see. [A maudlin illustration features noble waifs with sad and determined faces carrying heavy loads featuring a glowering adult overseer. The captions say:] Adult overseers sometimes whipped exhausted children in order to keep them awake during their long, 14-hour days. Children had to work around dangerous machinery in which a small hand could easily be caught and injured. Children were expected to carry heavy loads as part of their job in the factory.

Examining the Issues: What factory conditions concern you the most? Would you attempt to change conditions in the factory? Would you join a union, go to school, or run away?

In small groups, discuss these questions; then share your conclusions with your class. In your discussions, think about how children live in pre-industrial and industrial societies all over the world. As you read about the changes caused by industrialization, note how reform movements eventually improve conditions for all laborers, including children. (632)

Is this angle of vision the result of historical naivete or neglect? Children could not "change conditions in the factory." School was not an option for industrial labor. Unions did not exist. The earnest reformism of the exercise belies the textbook's inability to come to terms with the actual past.

5. *Cold War*

Compare the treatments of the subject in two world history textbooks. *A Global Mosaic* states:

Weakened by the war, Britain and France had few resources with which to resist Soviet expansion. As a result, the United States emerged as leader of the "free world," the democratic nations of the West. On the other side were the Soviet Union and its "satellites," the communist nations of Eastern Europe. The 45-year struggle between the free world and the communist bloc became known as the Cold War.

Crisis over Berlin. During the Cold War, Berlin was the center of several crises. In 1948, Stalin set up a blockade in an attempt to stop the western Allies from uniting their portions of the city. He closed all roads and railroad lines leading to West Berlin. The United States responded to the Soviet move by launching a massive airlift. American planes carried tons of food and fuel into West Berlin. The Berlin airlift lasted for 11 months until the Soviets finally ended the blockade.

In 1961, a new crisis arose. Thousands of East Germans were fleeing to freedom in West Berlin. To stop these flights, the East German government built a huge concrete wall to seal off East Berlin. The United States then put its military forces on alert. The crisis finally eased, but the Berlin Wall remained for 28 years--a symbol of a divided Germany and a divided Europe.

Cold War Policies

The United States launched several policies to counter Soviet influence in Europe. One of these policies, containment, was a pledge to stop Soviet expansion. In 1947, President Harry Truman issued the Truman Doctrine, using the civil war between communists and democrats in Greece as an example of the dangers the free world faced. In it, he pledged that the United States would provide economic and military aid to any free nation threatened "by armed minorities or outside pressures." The United States sent millions of dollars to Greece, Turkey, and other nations that were threatened by a communist takeover.

The Marshall Plan. In 1947, the United States announced the Marshall Plan to help European nations rebuild their economies. Under the plan, the United States pumped \$13 billion into the European recovery program. It offered aid to Eastern Europe as well, but the Soviet Union would not allow its satellites to accept help. By restoring economic prosperity in Western Europe, the Marshall Plan helped the free world build stable democratic societies.

Military alliances. The United States, Canada, and eight Western European nations, as well as Turkey and Greece, formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. Members of NATO pledged to protect one another from a communist attack. In response, the Soviet Union and its satellites formed the Warsaw Pact in 1955 to defend themselves from invasion.

The two rival alliances soon developed huge arsenals of tanks, airplanes, missiles, and nuclear weapons. Throughout the Cold War, NATO and Warsaw Pact forces were put on a state of alert during several crises. They also routinely conducted massive military exercises in preparation for war. (686-688)

To its credit, this extract is a lucid and sustained passage. While brief, it includes major points that explain the geopolitics at hand. It gives context that makes the subject intelligible. A second textbook, *To See a World* gives a more puzzling summary:

For centuries western Europe had controlled much of the world. However, after World War II, two new superpowers emerged: the United States and the Soviet Union. A superpower is a military, political and economic giant. For the next 45 years, the United States and the Soviet Union would dominate world affairs.

The peace treaties ending World War II divided Europe almost in half. In fact, Germany was split in two, as you can see from the map on page 473. Notice, too, how Germany's capital, Berlin, was also divided. This division was made even more dramatic in 1961. That year, East Germany built a wall separating East and West Berlin.

An iron curtain fell upon Europe. Iron Curtain was the term used to describe how Eastern Europe was isolated from the West. Many democratic countries of Western Europe aligned with the United States. However, most countries in Eastern Europe became part of the Soviet bloc. Soviet troops had freed them from the Nazis. After the war, the Soviet government turned them into Communist states and controlled their governments.

Once more Europe was divided by fear and distrust. This tension, called the Cold War, lasted from the late 1940s through the 1980s.

Nuclear Standoff

When the United States and the Soviet Union began to build thousands of nuclear bombs, people began to fear a nuclear war.

Soon after World War II, one of the first disputes of the Cold War occurred. As you can see from the map on this page, West Berlin was surrounded by Communist East Germany. At the end of World War II, Allied troops controlled West Berlin, angering Stalin.

In 1948 Stalin ordered Russian troops to prevent supplies from getting to West Berlin by rail or truck. U.S. President Harry S. Truman responded by sending in supplies by airplane. After 277,264 flights, Stalin gave in and let West Berlin exist as a democratic "island" in East Germany. (472-473)

It would have been useful to explain the origins of the term, Iron Curtain, first uttered by Winston Churchill at a U.S. college. The treatment does not convey why a "Cold War" overshadowed European and global politics for forty years. As to airbrushing Soviet expansionism, the passage, "However, most countries in Eastern Europe became part of the Soviet bloc. Soviet troops had freed them from the Nazis," while true, omits such crucial historical facts as to seem inaccurate. This passage is followed by "Life Behind the Iron Curtain" (quoted on p. 21 of this review).

6. *Terrorism and International Security*

With the notable exception of *Patterns of Intervention*, textbooks fail to give broad outlines -- much less details -- on terrorism and challenges to international security that result. *Connections to Today* covers the entire subject in the following paragraphs, a "balanced" passage that dances around the pressing subject of militant Islam worldwide:

Since the 1960s, incidents of terrorism have increased around the world. Terrorism is the deliberate use of violence, especially against civilians, to achieve political goals. Through bombings, kidnappings, airplane hijackings, and shootings, terrorists focus attention on their causes and try to force governments to give in to their demands.

Extremists on both sides of the conflict in Northern Ireland have murdered civilians. A terrorist group killed Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympic games to push its demands for a Palestinian state. Separate terrorist groups assassinated India's Rajiv Gandhi and bombed United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. To combat terrorism, governments have passed tough laws and increased watchfulness.

Some governments have been accused of "state-sponsored terrorism." That is, the government trains and arms extremists to carry out attacks abroad. Human-rights groups have argued that governments even engaged in terrorism at home when they used torture, murder, and illegal arrests against their own citizens. (811)

It can only be hoped that editors are correcting lapses and doing so in language that clearly explains why contemporary terrorism is of significance to the U.S. and its citizens. Editors should provide details about the origins, aims, and centers of danger involved, not pretending that deep conflicts inhibit world peace and security, especially when terrorism involves weapons of mass destruction and religious zealotry.

V. Conclusions

- *History textbook improvement is in the hands of four corporations whose commercial interests collide with quality.*

Four companies -- Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Harcourt and Houghton Mifflin -- control domestic educational publishing. The diminished number of educational publishers leads to lack of choice, monotony of product, and a lower educational pitch. In history and social studies, none of these four companies shows the least interest in innovation, making changes and reforms, or offering textbooks with a range of views. Unlike in the college textbook market, where teachers and scholars of distinction in their field write their own books and market shares for each textbook are generally small, high school authors have minimal control over their product. Authorship is doubtful. In order to cut costs, publishers are shrinking their editorial and production staffs, moving toward a writing-for-hire production system, and abandoning the royalty-based author system. High school world history textbooks introduced in Texas by McGraw-Hill and Harcourt, for example, have no authors whatsoever. Even when textbooks have nominal authors, a long list of contributors, reviewers and content censors accompanies the title. This market composition and these practices exact a price on product quality.

- *Why, some ask, is the quality of world history textbooks important for the broad public when a small elite conducts foreign policy?*

World history assumes great importance in an age when regions and civilizations compete for power and resources, and the limitless horizon of the global past seems succeeded by Spaceship Earth. As the nation's students set out to learn about how civilizations have evolved –

and what they are today -- world history textbooks will be their principal source of information. How citizens think about themselves, their country, and the U.S. relationship to the world depends on both knowledge and civic feeling. If students grow up ignorant of the nation's Anglo-European roots and the evolution of modern liberal democracy, as citizens they will fail to appreciate their political fortune. If students learn to consider their nation unworthy or malign, or if they embrace globalist fantasies and illusions, the ability of citizens to construct robust foreign policy will be hindered or checked. In this respect, the curriculum becomes a national security issue.

• *Sustaining liberal democratic values requires clear general public insight as to American political principles and public values.*

An enlarged world history program that covers non-Western and Western history, historians agree, is conducive to insight and prudence in world affairs, foreign policy, and international relations. But this insight requires, as Paul Gagnon has recently observed, broad understanding of democracy's historical and contemporary struggles. The political freedoms, economic affluence and cultural diversity that mark the advanced industrial democracies, students must learn, are by no means universal or inevitable. This imperative centers the curriculum on political ideas, and where in schools or society if not in social studies? "The case for relative stress on Western history is that America's democratic ideas and practices are rooted in the Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman, and Anglo-European past," Gagnon states.¹⁰ The study of Western thought, ethics and politics is essential to understanding liberty, the separation of church and state, representative government, the rule of law, individuality, and human rights.

Adding content to an already overstuffed course of study requires pruning. What has been excised, radically in the case of leading sixth-grade and middle school world cultures courses? The political, constitutional, intellectual, military and diplomatic history of the West, i.e., the origins of the American nation and modern world. To make all cultures equally significant and consequential, new topics, heretofore unknown golden ages, unnoticed epochal events, and pressing identity themes have not only become dominant in world history; they are becoming the *only* world history. If *To See a World* chooses, for example, to emphasize Caribbean and African history and excise the Enlightenment, it makes a poor choice. The multicultural imagination has not resulted in better history. Instead, the changes give often students a selective, puzzling, implausible and false view of the U.S. and the world.

Misinformation and skewed content -- the result of compression, special interests, and geopolitical bias on the part of editors and their consultants -- are acute in sixth-grade and middle school world cultures textbooks. For all the deficiencies in high school world history textbooks, there are redeeming sections. *Connections to Today* and *Patterns of Interaction* -- the two dominant high school textbooks -- each contains a substantial number of well-turned passages, according to American Textbook Council reviewers. Both *Connections to Today* and *Patterns of*

¹⁰ Gagnon, op.cit.

Interaction reflect prevailing U.S. progressive impulses in curriculum and political philosophy, they pointed out. They favor democracy, secularization, and human rights, if sometimes anemically. They describe Communism as an idea and the rise of the Soviet Union; German militarism and the Holocaust are duly condemned. Students are likely to find brief explanations of the development of Western constitutional law, the nature of totalitarianism, and the challenges of global energy demand in the present and future. Editors can point to these passages and assure concerned educators that coverage is strong and European history is not shorted so much as lost in a subject free-for-all.

Patterns of Interaction is organized more clearly than *Connections to Today*, and it is, overall, in the opinion of several reviewers, the better textbook. It is at best a sober, encyclopedic compendium of relatively up-to-date, conventional historical wisdom. The prose is relatively simple. The narrative is usually straightforward and the organization is logical. As with *Connections to Today*, approximately two-thirds is devoted to the development of Western societies, and the recounting of diplomatic, political, economic and cultural milestones of world history as they have influenced Americans' perceptions of themselves and America's role in the world. But multiple instructional aims, trivializing subject and a deferential attitude toward non-Western cultures and polities act to flatten what should be core subjects. Teachers and students fail to concentrate on what counts. Textbooks feature topics that seem to have no constructive purpose except to promote a political premise or to fill space, as seen in passages on Native American societies, Hildegard of Bingen, or Nigerian politics.

• *A double standard applies to social relationships, ethnic conflicts, and barbarism in the non-Western world, notably the Middle East, Africa, and parts of Asia, one different from the standard applied to European history.*

Several reviewers complained about a double standard in world history textbook coverage of the non-Western world. They noticed that much acute thinking about international affairs is omitted and ignored. The political scientist James Kurth of Swarthmore College, for example, has observed that virtually no country in Africa, the Middle East, or southeast Asia has the historical experience or social conditions that enable the easy construction of a liberal or democratic political system. In *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, David S. Landes, an economic historian at Harvard University, emphasizes the influence of geographic distinctions, climate, arable land, technology, disease and public health, religion and cultural mindset on nations, continents and civilizations. Textbooks contain nothing of Kurth's and Landes's lines of thought, even though such points seem central to global understanding. Textbooks often ignore or downplay the role of geography, Walter McDougall posits, in part because distinctions among regions invite "unflattering comparisons and hierarchy among nations and cultures."¹¹

¹¹ James Kurth, "Domestic Security and Muslim Immigrants," *Journal of the Historical Society*, Summer/Fall, 2002, 409 ff; David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (W.W. Norton, 1998); McDougall, op. cit.

World history textbooks avoid subjects of tyranny and anarchy, of economic failure, and of cultural repression when they reflect badly on contemporary non-Western nations, or they blame Western imperialism for these conditions. They explain lapses in non-Western civilizations by pointing the finger at European predation, industrial power, and colonial rule. Islamic terrorist designs, "two decades of civil war" in Uganda, perennial unrest in Haiti, or the prevailing Chinese view of human rights -- these aspects of the contemporary world, even when they are mentioned, are not explained.

- *In these lapses, at worst, textbook publishers turn into agents of geopolitical misinformation.*

Erroneous political history is not the only problem. European economic history since 1700 is foreshortened and stripped of its revolutionary nature, a revolution, as the late economic historian Carlo Cipolla never tired of pointing out, equaled in magnitude only by the agricultural (or Neolithic) revolution millennia earlier. Students will fail to grasp the role of coal, petroleum and electrical energy in doing work and replacing manpower; the technology of the machines that do work, from the steam engine to the locomotive; the impact of broadened transportation by rail, sea, highway and air; the advent of mass-produced clothing and food; the rise of big industrial cities; and the future of energy. These subjects receive such cursory treatment that they blend into the "global mosaic." The most important single concept about the modern world is lost in trivia.

Textbooks should not shrink from facts and findings that reflect unfavorably on the Third World. Instead, they should address stark differences within the contemporary world with realism, insight and honesty. The study of Western ideas, ethics and politics is essential to understanding liberty, the separation of church and state, representative government, the rule of law, individuality, and human rights. Students should have basic knowledge of nineteenth century political history, notably the origins and nature of modern democracy, socialism, communism, imperialism, nationalism, and capitalism. The political freedoms, economic affluence, and cultural tolerance that mark the advanced industrial democracies, American children must learn and learn again, are by no means universal.

But this is not enough. U.S. students must be alert to challenges to international security and the nature of terrorism. They should understand why the U.S. and its allies fought the Cold War, and why China and Cuba today differ entirely from this nation. In re religion, students should be able, for example, to make basic distinctions between Islamic and Western traditions. They should understand why modern technology gives dictators and rogue states unprecedented opportunities for domestic oppression and global mischief. They cannot do so if they are taught to "imagine" world peace, to abhor -- or take for granted -- American power, and to vest political virtue in the "other," however romantic the construct. In classrooms and elsewhere, to be sure, assumptions about American power vary, and when world history moves from history to current affairs, some subjects may be incendiary and perhaps unteachable.

- *What can be done?*

Rooted in a flawed production system and publishers' indifference, the problems with world history textbooks raise questions about corporate violations of public trust. Educational publishers not only resist change and ignore criticism, but they are likely to retain their iron grip on the national market. What can be done? When it is feasible, high school teachers can turn to college-level textbooks, some of which are not too challenging for able tenth graders. Since some high school textbooks in print or recently out of print coming from established publishers contain sound lessons, could not these sections be isolated and unpacked from the subject and instructional chaos surrounding them? Could not textbooks of merit be stripped of trivia and nonsense that bulk them up? An artfully abridged edition of existing textbooks could provide the foundation for a clear, brief, cheap and honest world history textbook. Pressure from purchasers, elected officials, editorial writers, and above all, educators is needed, but whether sufficient pressure exists to force publishers to change remains an open question.