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TEACHING HISTORY AT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Stephen Kneeshaw

College of the Ozarks

Editor, *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods*

In history twenty-five years is a mere blink in time. In the journal world, twenty-five years can be an eternity. Every year fledgling journals and magazines rise and fall. Some make it to a second year, a few stay for a third, but many of them fade away quickly. Starting a new journal is scary--some might call it crazy, given the high odds favoring failure. All sorts of questions come to mind: Is there a place for us in the journal world? Can we offer anything new and different from our competition? Will there be enough good materials to fill our pages? Will readers find us? Will there be enough subscribers to generate enough money to pay the costs of copying, editing, printing, and mailing? Those of us who founded *Teaching History* in the mid 1970s asked all of these questions and more. Even knowing the challenges we faced, we decided to give our journal a go--and now in 2000 we are still at it, starting our twenty-fifth year.

Teaching History started at a caucus of historians at the Missouri Valley History Conference in Omaha in the spring of 1974. The intention was "to sound out grassroots sentiment ... on the possibility of publishing a newsletter-journal devoted to the teaching of history." Loren Pennington of Emporia State University, Philip Rulon of Northern Arizona University, and I--the founding triumvirate--stayed with the project through that year, measuring the work that a new journal would demand, and then at another meeting in Omaha in 1975 we decided to take the next steps.

In 1975-1976 we organized a management team and invited others to join us on a board of editors. One-by-one we built the membership of the editorial board until we had a total of eleven of us engaged in getting out the word and then getting out the journal. Pennington won agreement from Emporia State to house the journal and to provide publication, subscription, and mailing services; he also volunteered to become the publication director. Northern Arizona University and College of the Ozarks provided additional financial backing, which proved critical in the first couple of years when we distributed the journal without any subscription charges.

We walked a tight line in the first two or three years. But people found us--teaching historians began to send in manuscripts that I circulated among editorial readers. (Even now every manuscript gets at least four reviews.) Ron Butchart, then of SUNY at Cortland, began work as book review editor, contacting publishers and lining up reviewers. Slowly but steadily over several months, the first issue of *Teaching History* took shape, appearing in the spring of 1976 with a short introduction, an op-ed piece on the growing "crisis in the classroom," four essays, nine book reviews, and assorted notes.

We quickly began to get attention from professional organizations. The American Historical Association provided space in the *AHA Newsletter* for us to solicit

authors, reviewers, and subscribers. The Georgia Association of Historians praised *Teaching History* for opening "fresh sources for professional historians who seek to improve their 50-minute hours," and the Kentucky Association of Teachers of History told its members that "*Teaching History* should be of special interest because it offers something for teachers of history at all educational levels." We appreciated all of those kind words of encouragement and committed ourselves to keep spreading the news about good ideas for the classroom.

Over twenty-five years many things have changed for *Teaching History*, but we have stayed true to the original commitment "to tap the minds and imaginations of history educators" and to share ideas that have "proven successful in the classroom." Sometimes we have shifted that last idea around to discuss teaching methods that failed. But we always have offered good fare to our readers.

While our mission stayed constant, we have seen changes in personnel at *Teaching History*. We started our first with eleven men and women--some have moved on, some have retired, and a hardy few (five in all) have stayed with us since the beginning. Today we have twenty-one historians from secondary schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions working in management and on editorial and advisory boards. Many others serve on occasion as outside readers when we need an expert opinion. *Teaching History* could not survive, and certainly could not prosper, without them and the energy that they bring to the work of *Teaching History*.

As I look back on the past quarter century, I take great personal and professional pride in what *Teaching History* has been able to accomplish. We do make a difference for many teachers. Whenever a new issue appears, letters and e-mail notes begin to arrive at my desk with words such as "great issue [with] lots of usable information." At regional meetings and national conferences people ask for our advice or they stop us "just to talk about teaching." That is why we started *Teaching History* in the mid 1970s: We wanted "to talk about teaching."

No twenty-fifth anniversary message would be complete without a long list of thank yous. I almost hesitate to begin this kind of list for fear of missing someone. But a few people stand out for the breadth and depth of their contributions over many years.

Let me start with the four who have been with me in this work of *Teaching History* since the beginning--Philip Rulon of Northern Arizona (a founder and editorial board member); Ronald Butchart, now of the University of Georgia (our first book review editor and now editorial board member); Bullitt Lowry of the University of North Texas (long-time service on the editorial board with a short stint as book review editor); and Marsha Frey of Kansas State University (editorial board). They have watched us grow, and on many occasions they have provided me with wise counsel. I turned to them often, and they never failed me.

Perhaps the most demanding job with *Teaching History*, as I expect it is with most journals, is that of publication manager. *Teaching History* can count two of the

best in its lifetime: Loren Pennington (also a founder, now retired from teaching) and Samuel Dicks, both of Emporia State University. They tend to the business of *Teaching History*: subscriptions, records, preparing manuscripts for publication, reading and editing galley pages, printing and mailing the journal, and much more--they have done whatever needed to be done, and they have always provided me with the steadfast support and good advice that an editor needs. In the last two years, Sam took on added duties as overseer of the *Teaching History* website, getting it started and updating its links (<http://www.emporia.edu/socsci/journal/main.htm>). At their side have been many others at ESU--Liberal Arts deans from John Peterson, at the beginning, to Lendley Black, the current dean, who arranged financial support, Social Sciences secretary Jacqueline Fehr who resets the edited copy for proofing and publication, Emporia State Press staff, and others who never get listed in the credits, but help to keep us working in good order.

Standing along side me in the gathering and preparation of materials for *Teaching History* is my book review editor. Ronald Butchart charted the course for our first six years before handing off to William Muggleston, now of Floyd College in Georgia. Ron and Bill--and Bullitt Lowry for one year--have always kept the book review section under steady control. I never worried about having enough good reviews for an issue. But over these many years these three have done much more for the journal, for example giving me insightful reviews of manuscripts when I asked them to take on another task and being wonderful sources of advice and great sounding boards when we considered new ideas for the journal. On a personal note: In my travels I have often enjoyed the hospitality that Ron, Bill, and Bullitt and their spouses shared with me in their homes. They have helped make my work with *Teaching History* much easier and more memorable.

To the many other men and women who have served *Teaching History* on the Board of Editors and the Advisory Board, we say "thank you" for your good service to *Teaching History* and to the history profession. We express gratitude too, to the authors and reviewers who have contributed their work to *Teaching History*. All of our work would matter little if we did not have good materials for our readers. To our readers, subscribers, and supporters, we offer thanks for helping us grow to become a major player in history education.

We have come a long way in twenty-five years, but there always is more work to do. Over the next several years surely *Teaching History* will continue to evolve, but we pledge to stay faithful to our mission to talk about teaching and to provide good ideas for teachers to bring into their classrooms.

EVERYBODY TALKS: DISCUSSION STRATEGIES IN THE CLASSROOM

W. Gregory Monahan
Eastern Oregon University

The year is 800 CE. A group of early Muslims meets in one part of the room. Their task is at once simple and complex. They must convince a group of pagans to convert to Islam. At the opposite side of the room, a group of early Christians is also meeting, hoping to convert the same group of pagans to Christianity. In the center sit the pagans themselves, who have decided firmly that they will abandon their worship of natural deities in favor of one of the great religions of the book. They huddle together, predicting the arguments of their proselytizers and planning challenging questions. After ten minutes or so of planning strategy, the three groups are split into groups of only three individuals. Each smaller group includes one Muslim, one Christian, and one Pagan. They go to work. Christian and Muslim argue and cajole, trying to convert the pagan in the group. The pagan listens to them argue, breaking in to note errors and ask questions. Five minutes before the debate is to end, the instructor interrupts this wonderful cacophony of voices to force the pagans to indicate which way they are leaning. Some are decided, others doubtful. Seeing which way their pagans are leaning, Muslims and Christians wail at potential losses of souls or smile in triumph at their potential victory. Given five more minutes, the losers try desperately to bring their wayward sheep back to the fold. Finally, the instructor calls a halt. The former pagans must now stand in the front of the room, dividing into two groups. Those who have converted to Christianity stand on one side beneath a large cross drawn on the board while those who have become Muslims stand on the other side beneath a crescent moon, and one by one, they explain why they have converted. They are bound by the rules of the discussion to choose a new faith based *only* on the arguments they have heard and *not* on any pre-existing beliefs they might have had. The instructor especially challenges the "new" Christians to defend themselves against the charge of prior bias. Some sheepishly admit it, others do not, and a discussion ensues across the whole class about which arguments were valid and which were not. The class having ended, students leave the room, some of them still muttering that if they'd only had *three* more minutes, they would have won!

What has taken place is simply a very active form of debate. Many teachers have used debates for years in classes, structuring them in a variety of ways to engender the kind of thinking about historical issues for which we all strive. Yet a simple debate suffers generally from one weakness. It seldom involves all students actively. This is one of the chief complaints that we often hear from colleagues in many schools at many levels about whether or not to use discussions in classes. A key question for us all is how to involve *more* students in discussion and keep a few stars from dominating it. The "two-on-one game" outlined above is one of several strategies I use for involving virtually *all* students in a discussion.

The use of some type of active discussion seems hardly to need much in the way of defense. Simply put, if a question is worth asking to students in class, it is presumably worth discussing. If it is worth discussing, it is worth having students discuss it with each other. If one is to keep a few students from dominating a discussion, then one must break them into smaller groups, since quieter students *will* hide if they *can* hide, and hiding is always easier in a whole-class discussion format than it is in smaller groups. While it may be true that students gain something from passively observing an exchange of ideas between or among their more extroverted colleagues, students who take an active part in that exchange are far more likely to have thought about the issue and internalized it. Since speaking with confidence in groups is a skill that educated people ought to have, and since discussion can deepen student understanding of historical issues and problems, it seems only a matter of finding a discussion format that will work.

The Two-on-One Discussion

It is useful to begin with the two-on-one discussion format outlined above. For this method to succeed certain preconditions must be met. First, of course, students must have some basis for making their arguments. Prior to this particular discussion, for example, I have already lectured on early Christianity and early Islam. To reinforce and supplement that information, students have read brief selections on reserve in the library on both religions and must bring to class with them one-page abstracts of each reading in which they summarize each piece in their own words. To make sure they understand that discussion is an important component of the course, 20% of the course grade is assigned to it, and they receive a grade for each individual discussion: an "F" if they do not come (since it is difficult to take part in discussion when one is not there), an "F" if they come without the writing assignment proving they read the material (since it is difficult to take part in discussion if one is ignorant of the material), a "C" if they come and say absolutely nothing, and an "A" if they come and take part actively in the discussion. One "F" is forgiven at the end of the term to account for excused absences and extra credit accrues to those who do not miss one. In a format like the two-on-one, where almost everyone talks, most get "A's." "C's" are rare, and are offered as an option at the beginning of the term only to assure usually quiet students not accustomed to an active discussion format that they will get *some* credit if, as usual, they do the work but take no part in discussion. One of the great advantages of the two-on-one and the other methods I use is that it is very difficult for students *not* to take an active part in discussion.

The two-on-one begins immediately upon arrival, when students are divided into the three groups. This division can be made randomly. That is, one can simply count them off by threes and place ones, twos, and threes in various parts of the room, assigning a role to each group. Where the class is not divisible by three, obviously one

or more groups will be larger. In that case, when the time comes to split them into their smaller "argument" groups, one can have a group of four where there are two neutrals to be converted rather than one, or a group of five where there are two partisans from each partisan group trying to convert one stubborn neutral. Clever instructors will quickly begin to figure out how to organize certain students into certain groups depending on the issue to be discussed and the difficulty of a particular position. In the case of the Christian/Muslim/Pagan game, I often try to place some of the better arguers in the Muslim group, since student biases tend to discriminate against that group. I try to be subtle about this, however, since I do not want students to think I am picking "favorites." When the time comes to divide them into the groups of three, one can once again simply number them off. Let us assume there are 45 students in the room. Fifteen gather in each of the three groups. Since fifteen is rather large, I may split each into two sub-groups. Thus, there will be two sets of Christians, rather than one, who will discuss among themselves for a while, then come together into a single group to share strategies. Once we are ready for the "split," I might simply number each group off, 1 to 15. There are "1's" from each of the three groups, "2's," "3's" and so on, and the fifteen little groups of three are simply assigned to desk clusters at various parts of the room. In a smaller class, an instructor might know students well enough to personalize the smaller groups in challenging ways, placing students together so as to harness their personalities in the discussion. Once the debate begins, students generally get into it quickly. The two-on-one game has the great advantage of harnessing the natural competitiveness of students.

This particular method does have its weaknesses. In the conversion game already outlined, students sometimes get things wrong. Usually, but not always, their opponent will spot the mistake and take them to task for it. It is important for the instructor to circulate around the room listening to the arguments, so that she or he can later bring up a point of interest or error. Of course, the instructor should resist the temptation to point out errors immediately, since that can unfairly disadvantage one of the participants. Errors come in many forms. In this particular game, students sometimes insist on "selling sins." Muslims try to convert pagan males by promising the delights of polygamy, while Christians tempt them with wine. I usually make it explicit prior to the exercise that they are not to do that. If they do, then we can return to it and discuss it in the debriefing that ends the discussion. It is always important to have a few minutes at the end to bring up errors or points of interest that one heard while circulating around the room.

The two-on-one can work in any class on any issue over which one can formulate two opposing points of view, that is, on any issue where a debate would be useful. I have used it in many different college classes at both the lower and upper division. In one class, I create an imaginary country whose noble landowners have decided to choose a type of government. Students read selections from John Locke and Jacques Bossuet arguing respectively for a representative parliament or an absolute

monarchy. Partisans of Locke battle partisans of Bossuet in trying to convince the nobles to choose their particular form of government. More recently, I organized a two-on-one in a Russian history course over the issue of whether to emancipate the serfs. One could easily use this method in an American history course to debate issues as wide-ranging as the split between North and South over slavery, the question of American neutrality in the 1930s, or contemporary debates over the Vietnam War.

Students both love and hate the format. They love it because they know they will have a good time, but they dread it because they know they will have to work hard, and because they know that some of them will lose. In other words, to the extent they do not like it, they do not like it for all the right reasons. One student wrote on a recent course evaluation, "By arguing a side, I understand the material better." Objective achieved!

The Group Consensus Discussion

The most obvious weakness of the two-on-one is that it only works well when there are two opposing points of view. In historical issues and problems, of course, such a dichotomous approach is not always useful. Some issues demand a different and far simpler approach. Let us suppose that students have read the United States Constitution. The instructor has several discussable questions on the document. The old method would be to stand in front of the class and ask away, hoping for a response from some brave student prepared to risk embarrassment on an answer that might be perceived as weak. With luck, a few students might respond, and there might even be some exchange of ideas. Most students in a larger class would, however, hide in the cowardice of silence. Here, we return to the argument that a question worth asking is worth discussing, and that begging or forcing a response (the old Socratic method) either will not involve many students or will not elicit a very meaningful response.

Instead of simply asking the question, write it on the board. Have students take out a sheet of paper and spend five minutes jotting down an answer to the question (or questions). Then, form them into groups, preferably no larger than five, have them share their answers and together come up with what they consider to be, say, three of the best answers to each question. Once they are done, groups can report their deliberations in many ways. I have found two methods that work well. One member of each group can walk up to a chalk board and write the group's answers on the board, or the instructor can play secretary, writing down answers from each group on the board while asking for clarifications. In either case, the instructor then takes an active role, noting similarities and differences among answers, asking groups to comment, alter, argue, or clarify. An exchange ensues that is generally far livelier and better informed than it would have been had there been no group work.

Students report that they like this method very much. They all take part, but they also have the security of knowing that there is a group to help them defend their

positions. As one student wrote in another recent course evaluation, "Even though I am a shy person, it made me talk to people I never knew before. It was helpful in a social way and a learning way." Of course, occasionally, individual students refuse to reach a consensus with others in the group. But assuming one has maintained a friendly atmosphere in the classroom, that can add to rather than detract from the discussion.

It is often useful in this type of discussion to require groups to rank their responses in some fashion and to defend their ranking. In one class, my students read Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. For the discussion, they must bring with them a position paper, in which they define and rank five separate sources of authority in that book from most to least important. Readers of this article who are familiar with the book know that it concerns a day in the life of a prisoner in one of Stalin's gulags where authority was defined in many ways. For the discussion, I divide students into groups where they must reach a consensus in their ranking of authorities, but I caution them not to confuse authorities with *tools* of authority. This leads to all kinds of interesting discussions. Is food an authority in a gulag? Or is it a tool manipulated by others? What about the cold? Is the squad leader more important as an authority than the camp commander? Forcing them to perform some kind of ranking has the benefit (like all discussions) of making them into historians, since they must make arguments based on evidence. The resulting discussion is always active, and time always seems to run out before we are ready to stop. While a prepared position paper is extremely useful for making this discussion work, it would still be possible to run it "off the cuff" as it were by using the activity outlined above where students take five minutes to jot down some thoughts before breaking into groups. The key is to make sure that students have done some thinking about a question *before* they enter a group so that the group interaction will enhance rather than detract from individual efforts. Will some students still dominate the group? Sometimes they will, but an instructor who attempts this method might be surprised to discover that the same students do not always dominate groups, especially when the groups contain different individuals from discussion to discussion.

The Cascading Answers Discussion

The concept of ranking can be expanded into yet another discussion strategy that I call "cascading answers." This is an effective method for involving many students in answering several questions about a given text. In my survey course, I assign Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. Since it is the shortest and simplest of Dickens's great social novels, I find that it makes a wonderful text to supplement a unit on the Industrial Revolution. At least one week prior to the discussion, I assign characters from the novel to individual students, who must then write a brief paper for the discussion in which they compose a biography of their character and analyze both the character's relations with other characters in the book and the reason why they think

Dickens put that character in the book. The paper ensures they have read and thought about the book. On discussion day, I divide them into groups, usually randomly. I make sure that the total number of groups is divisible by three. One could, for example, create six groups of five students each in a class of thirty, or nine groups of five in a class of forty-five. Before class, I prepare three different sheets of discussable questions about the book. Each of the three sheets has three questions, making nine questions in all (see Appendix for an example of such a sheet on *Hard Times*). Beneath each of the three questions, there is sufficient space for four separate answers to each question (numbered 1 through 4). I number the three sheets (question sheet 1, 2, and 3) and make as many copies of the sheets as I need, thus two copies of each if there are six groups, three if there are nine, and so forth.

I arrange the student groups in a grand circle so that, when each group has come up with the best answer it can to each question on a sheet, it can hand that sheet off to the next group which must then come up with an equally good, but different, answer to the same questions. For three rounds, groups see a different question sheet each time, but on the fourth round (since there are only three different sheets of questions), the same questions they had the first time come back to them. That means that often, having already answered those questions once, they must now come up with yet another answer to each, and one that is different from those of two other groups. One round generally takes about five minutes, although each subsequent round requires a little more time than the previous one. Some groups will be quicker than others, so it is important that the instructor enforce time deadlines and circulate, checking on the progress of groups and urging them to accomplish their task. Once four answers have been given, I often have the sheets passed one more time, instructing the *fifth* group to study the four answers to each question on that sheet and to circle the one they think is the best answer. I then collect all the sheets and go over them with students who not only are often miffed that *their* answer was not chosen as the best one, but are also anxious to argue the issue.

This method has the benefit of allowing a host of questions to be answered, of helping students to see that there is often more than one good answer to a question, of focusing intense attention on a text, and of encouraging a spirit of interchange of ideas and collaboration. The obvious potential weakness lies in the questions themselves. An instructor must think carefully about those questions. Questions cannot, for example, have simple or dichotomous answers. If one is running this kind of discussion in a class with ample time, as in a 75-minute class, one might have time at the end to have various student groups come up with their own questions. Indeed, having groups generate questions rather than answers can be a clever and useful discussion method.

The Role-Play Simulation

There is one more discussion format I have employed that meets the essential goal of my argument that all students rather than a few should participate actively in all discussions. Role-play simulations can involve all students. More than any other method discussed here, however, they suffer some risks. I will detail three. First, to be carried out successfully, simulations must be given ample class time. I never devote less than three fifty-minute class periods to a simulation, and I seldom take the time to run more than one simulation in a term. Since the time devoted to them is substantial, the topic with which they deal should be an especially important one for the course, one where a deeper student understanding is deemed especially useful in fulfilling course objectives. Second, simulations must be planned carefully and plotted so that students assuming roles have a fair idea both of who their character is and what she or he represents. Third and finally, all roles in the simulation must be available to students of either gender, even if the character itself would certainly have been one or the other. When the class debriefs the simulation at the end, the instructor can point to that gender issue and use it as a teaching tool.

I have run at least seven different simulations in a variety of classes. In one for a course on modern German history, the simulation uses a fictional German city called Rastenheim (inspired by the fictional town in William Sheridan Allen's brilliant book, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*) and simulates the watershed election of 1932 when the Nazis won a plurality of votes for the Reichstag and Hitler was nearly elected president of the Republic. There are generally two types of roles in this simulation as there are in most of those that I run. The first type of role consists of those characters who seek action; the second consists of those who can carry that action through. In this case, those who seek action are representatives of various political parties—Nazis, Communists, and moderate Socialists. Those who can act include a variety of faction leaders—a farm leader, a student leader, union leaders, industrialists, and merchants. Those in the second group have resources such as assigned amounts of money, available groups of thugs for street action, and voting blocks they control. Two of the faction leaders have shady pasts which are made known to various actors in the simulation at crucial points.

I distribute a simulation handout several days before it is to begin, and there are required readings upon which students write abstracts to be rendered each day of the simulation. It is vital to keep a simulation grounded in the literature of the period being simulated. Students are encouraged to choose their own roles in the simulation. Inevitably, there is some competition, but it is important that roles are chosen *before* the first day of the simulation so that students have some time to think about their roles and plot some private strategies.

Required activities for each day of the simulation serve to focus student activities and to move the simulation forward at a measured pace. Of course, improvisation is

always possible, if sometimes hazardous. The last time we "played" the 1932 German election, I improvised by suddenly promising a substantial block of votes to the group that came up with the largest number of good election posters. I arrived the following day to find the classroom plastered from one end to the other with a bewildering array of hammers, sickles, and swastikas, some of them frighteningly realistic! Fearful that colleagues and students who had no idea what we were doing might venture by and see such a sight through the window of the classroom door, I quickly papered it over, and made sure that all the posters were well and truly disposed of once the simulation was ended. (Well, all right, I did keep some of the *better* posters!)

Students who took the German history class from me three terms ago still talk fondly of that simulation, and many regard it as the best learning experience they have *ever* had. Thus, simulations are truly wonderful when they work. Alas, they do not always work that well. Last term, in a course on Latin American history, I attempted running a simulation on the independence of New Spain (Mexico) in a class of thirteen students. The simulation itself was soundly structured, but I began to realize that it was not working as well as I had hoped in such a small class. There just were not enough students for the complex role-play interactions of that simulation to maintain interest and a high level of student activity. Yet, even in a simulation that did not work as well as I had hoped, students learned a great deal. In addition, they had valuable suggestions when we took the usual twenty minutes or so at the end of the simulation and discussed it together. What had they learned? What could we do better? Most important of all, what was realistic and unrealistic about what we did? This debriefing is very important. Not only does it enable the instructor to return to points of interest or error in the simulation, but it also allows participants to make valuable suggestions about how the simulation can be made better the next time it is run.

The threads running through all of these strategies are consistent: All students should take part. The instructor should not talk much save to act as a catalyst. Discussions must be informed by reading and by some writing about that reading. The best way to involve the most students is to divide them into groups and give those groups something specific to do and a specific time period in which to do it. Some degree of competition among groups is helpful and constructive. None of these methods is without weaknesses, and none of them will work perfectly every time. Some students still might hide, though not easily, and they will generally enjoy discussions in which they all take part. They will enjoy history while they learn about it. And we will enjoy it with them.

¹For a discussion of the centrality of this reflective process in regard to in-class lecturing, see Robert Blakesly, "New Wine in Old Bottles: Reevaluating the Traditional History Lecture," *Teaching History*, 22 (Spring 1997), 4-5.

Appendix

Cascading Answers Questions on Dickens's *Hard Times*

What is the purpose of education in this society and whom does it benefit?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What is the most important problem with society in Dickens's time, according to this novel?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How would Dickens propose to solve that most important problem?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Required activities for each day of the simulation serve to focus student activities and to move the simulation forward at a measured pace. Of course, improvisation is

READING, WRITING AND WALKING: STUDENT PROJECTS LINKING PRIMARY DOCUMENTS, CLASSROOM LEARNING, AND HISTORICAL SITES

Kay Reeve
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Introduction

Virtually every instructor who teaches history survey courses has struggled with issues of time constraint at one time or another. Choices between sufficient content coverage, in-depth analysis of crucial issues, connections with broader concepts and themes, and opportunities to encourage critical thinking and analysis appear to be rivals for limited time on both the part of the student and instructor. I encountered this issue in an intensified manner in 1991 when I came to Kennesaw State University. The college recently had redesigned its general education core curriculum to include two courses in world history and two courses in United States history configured with the "typical" chronological divisions, but had reduced each course in credit hours and, concurrently, classroom contact time. I found myself having one-third less in class time with my students as well as needing to adhere to reasonable limitations on out-of-class requirements. Obviously I had to seriously restructure the form and content of the American survey classes I had been teaching to respond to these limitations. One difficult but extremely beneficial result of the restructuring was that I also had to reexamine and prioritize my goals with regard to what I most wanted students to gain by having studied U.S. history.¹

The project described in this essay is the product of that process of reflection and of my learning from the comments and papers of my students. On the surface it is simply a project in which I combined two formerly separate written assignments into a single more complex form. More significantly, I believe it is an exercise that encourages optimum learning in an efficient time frame. Perhaps most importantly, student responses also indicate that it offers a learning experience in which the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts.

Development of the Project

As noted, precursors to the current project included two separate written assignments. The first of these, the major writing assignment for the course, was an essay in which students were to trace a continuing theme in U.S. history, discussing an

¹For a discussion of the centrality of this reflective process in regard to in-class lecture, see Robert Blackey, "New Wine in Old Bottles: Revitalizing the Traditional History Lecture," *Teaching History*, 22 (Spring 1997), 4-5.

example of continuity and change over a period of time. The emphasis on continuity and change grew out of my clarifying priorities in my teaching of the survey. In stressing an understanding of the "big pictures", and continuing themes in history my goal was not to simplify history, but rather to lead students to an understanding that historical events are not isolated incidents separate from past or future. An increased student understanding of context and connection, continuity and change in history were chief objectives for the class.

The requirements of this paper were shaped also by a departmental commitment to introducing students to the centrality of primary materials in the study of history. In support of that goal all instructors were required to use a common set of textbooks in the core U.S. history classes, including Paul Boller and Ronald Story's *A More Perfect Union: Documents in United States History*.² In line with this departmental commitment to use primary materials, the basic sources for the students' interpretive essays needed to be documents selected from the Boller and Story reader.

A second assignment in the course was geared toward introducing students to the "variety" of sources available for interpreting history. Students were asked to visit an historic site located nearby and write a short paper evaluating what they had seen and learned. The stimulus for this paper was a firm belief that the three-dimensional, physical experience of a visit to an historical site provides students with unique learning benefits that cannot be duplicated in the classroom.³

The final step in the creation of the project was the direct result of my evaluating student papers generated by both assignments. While I was sure of the intellectual and pedagogical value of the major essay assignment, in general students detested it. In addition, only the strongest students produced papers that clearly demonstrated the ability to trace the continuity or change in an historical theme over time, and even fewer were able to utilize the primary material available in the documents with any skill at analysis. In contrast, students universally praised the historic site visit, and even marginal students regularly included little gems of insight into such things as the connection between the sites and their own experiences, or statements that reflected a sound grasp of the unique type of knowledge gained from material culture and historic

²With one exception (a reference in fn.11), all documents mentioned in this essay came from Paul F. Boller, Jr. and Ronald Story, *A More Perfect Union: Documents in U.S. History*, Vols. I and II, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996). This collection now is available in a fifth edition (2000).

³As examples, see Charles S. White and Kathleen A. Hunter, *Teaching with Historic Places: A Curriculum Framework for Professional Training and Development of Teachers, Preservationists, and Museum and Site Interpreters* (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1995); Dwight T. Pitcaithley, "Historic Sites: What Can Be Learned from Them," *The History Teacher*, 20 (February 1987), 207-219; John F. Votaw, "The Military Museum as Classroom," *Teaching History*, 19 (Fall 1994), 65-70; and, David S. Sutter, "How to Plan an Educational Visit to an Historical Site," *Teaching History*, 19 (Fall 1994), 71-76.

sites. Reflection on these outcomes resulted in a concerted effort on my part to combine the key objectives of each assignment into a single unified project. (The project as assigned to the students is attached as Appendix I.)

Description of Project

Basically divisible into a visit to an historic site⁴ and a written report, the specific requirements for the report structure the assignment to address several key objectives. These could be identified as follow:

1. Understanding of Historical Context and Significance. The site must be set into its historical context and evaluated as to its significance. Students are encouraged to use classroom notes and discussion and information in their general textbook to determine this significance. This requires students to practice some critical assessment of how the site relates directly to a specific event or time period and also to demonstrate what makes any such historical "moment" significant. Any successful effort at this requires students to display a grasp of the broader context of the site in U.S. history.

2. Written Expression of Knowledge; Application of Analytical Thinking. The summary of what the student saw is simplistic. But the requirement that students evaluate the presentation of the site by tour guides, printed information, and so forth requires that they apply what they know about the time period to assess the accuracy and validity of how the historical significance of the site is presented to the public. To do this successfully, skill in analysis of verbal, written, and visual sources of information is required.

3. Personalizing Learning and Knowledge. The required personal assessment of what students learned that they believe they could not have learned in class or from a book allows students to reflect upon the differences between traditional classroom-based modes of learning and experiential learning. Beyond broadening what the students learn about U.S. history, this also encourages each student to reflect on how he or she personally learns best.

4. Understanding of Historical Context and Developments; Critical Thinking; Use of Primary Materials; Written Expression of Knowledge. The central portion of the essay requires students to thoughtfully connect all of the basic historical concepts introduced in class to their experience at the site and their understanding of primary written records represented by the documents. Identifying a broad theme in history, relating a particular site to that theme, using primary material reflecting conditions,

⁴The metro Atlanta area as well as the surrounding counties and adjacent regions in nearby states offer students an incredibly wide array of publicly and privately operated historic sites, but a suitable list of acceptable "sites" could be generated by any instructor teaching in all but the most isolated areas. See Appendix II for examples of typical sites in Georgia.

attitudes, and values at specific times over a longer span of history, and organizing all of these elements into a meaningful essay creates a challenging assignment. The creative, discerning, and knowledgeable student often produces an essay of remarkable insight, but even less astute students do some parts of the assignment extremely well.

Student Responses

In general, an evaluation of student projects supports my contention that restructuring the project has strengthened the academic value of the paper and benefited students on both an intellectual and personal basis. Many students continue to produce poorly written papers that only minimally identify a valid theme connected to the site. Others demonstrate little creative thought, or fail to use accurately the most essential content of relevant documents. Yet even weak students consistently end their papers with statements about how much they learned or how much they enjoyed the project, and their papers reveal a heightened interest in historic parks, buildings, etc. In contrast, many students do sound jobs of demonstrating their grasp of the relationship between such sites as the Martin Luther King National Historic Site, the documents on seventeenth-century slave laws, Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Exposition Address," King's "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," and the concepts of both change and continuity in U.S. race relations.⁵ Beyond these solid projects, there are true jewels that demonstrate either substantial critical thinking and historical analysis or an understanding of the personal relevance of history. The following examples of student responses illustrate the merits of the project.

For one project a rather quiet, athletic-looking student who turned out to be an avid hiker used the Appalachian Trail as his site. As a document he used a 1921 magazine article displayed at the Trail's main visitors' center, written by a civil engineer who lobbied for the construction of the Trail.⁶ In the article the author argued that labor troubles in the United States largely stemmed from the daily drudgery of industrial work and the oppressive character of the urban setting in which workers lived. The Trail, he theorized, would provide a place where even the poorest of Americans could interact with nature and escape the stress of city life. The student directly linked this expression of the value of constructing the Trail to Jane Addams's "The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets"⁷ and the Progressives' belief in the detrimental impact of urban life for the working class immigrant. He further noted that

⁵Boller and Story, I, 24-26; II, 50-53; 245-251.

⁶Students are allowed to include additional primary material, but they must also use documents in the reader.

⁷Boller and Story, II, 128-134.

the use of logical arguments rather than emotional appeals to justify the Trail was a demonstration of the Progressives' reliance on pragmatism. He continued on to link later repair efforts on the Trail to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's recovery efforts through the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression, using Roosevelt's inaugural address as a related document.⁸ Finally, through this reasoning he linked the Appalachian Trail to the theme of social reform in U.S. history. As a final citation he included a reference to the Trail's website where I could find the log of his 40-mile hike from the visitors' center to the summit of Blood Mountain!⁹

More recently another student visited the Swan House, a 1920s-era Atlanta mansion now owned and operated as a historic home by the Atlanta History Center. After a sound description of the site and tour, she offered a rather critical, but equally sound assessment of the failure of the tour guide to set the home and the lifestyle of the residents into proper historical perspective. In particular she noted the guide's failure to comment on the continued serving of alcohol during prohibition. Far more astutely, she linked the site to three documents representing three different viewpoints on the possession of wealth. She cited Andrew Carnegie's "Wealth," the "Populist Party Platform," and Meridel Lesueur's "Women on the Breadline."¹⁰ She noted that the tour guide had pointed out that Robert Inman, the original owner, had inherited most of his wealth from his father, citing that Carnegie had identified that as one of the three ways of obtaining wealth. She went on to note, however, that her visit to the site had given her no reason to believe that Inman had followed Carnegie's famous "Gospel of Wealth" admonition to dedicate a portion of acquired wealth to benefit society. Contrasting the description of women seeking work during the Great Depression eloquently offered in "Women on the Breadlines" with the china and crystal used in the Swan House during the Depression years, she related the site to the continuing issue of class distinctions in U.S. history, and used the Populist document as an example of that conflict.

These are only two examples of students who not only competently fulfilled the assignment, but demonstrated a true understanding of how both historic sites and primary documents offer students of history an opportunity to form their own interpretation of history based on a variety of historical records. Certainly not all student papers reflect such skill in critical thinking and analysis as the two above, but I believe most students reap substantial benefits from the project. Other students gain less pervasive but still valuable insights into the relevance of history not just in general, but to them personally. For example, one young woman stopped me after class to

⁸Boller and Story, II, 167-170.

⁹The student's log is no longer available. For current logs of trail hikes see www.trailplace.com.

¹⁰Boller and Story, II, 95-98; 100-102; 161-165.

relate her experience over a Sunday dinner after she had visited the Swan house. While she was telling her family about her visit and how much she had learned, her grandmother had said, "Oh yes, it's lovely. I was a friend of Mrs. Inman and used to attend parties there." The project gave that student the opportunity to learn directly from her grandmother that the sources for understanding history surround us in our everyday lives if we seek them.

Perhaps the most personally satisfying response to the assignment I have read was from a student who asked to use a site that had no markers or tour guides to evaluate. He used an abandoned rail depot near his grandparents' home as his "site." His paper dealt with the rather narrowly defined theme of U.S. industrialization, particularly the New South philosophy. He used Tom Watson's "Populism in the South"¹¹ as an opposition view to the benefits of industrialization in the South. He successfully noted the corruption often associated with Gilded Age railroads and identified the farmers' and workers' struggles with big business. Most meaningfully to me he ended his paper with this paragraph.

In conclusion I can honestly say that I enjoyed every minute of my history excursion. From standing in half-foot deep water at Elizabeth to get a picture, to the absolute beauty of the Smokey Mountains at Etowah, I have learned that history surrounds us and if you dig deep enough it's easy to find. Most importantly I have seen history disappearing; from the demolished depots, to the elders who tell their stories of great steam engines and passenger trains. As I explored further and further into the subject it seemed the closer and closer I became to it. I now look at the railroad tracks behind my grandparents house with awe and humility. A great time has come and gone and what few connections we have to it seem to be vanishing. I am deeply bothered by this.¹²

Conclusion

As a teaching strategy the success of the project rests only in part with the students. It also demands a commitment from the instructor to teach "to" the objectives of the project. In class discussion of a specific historical event, I ask students to link the event with developments studied earlier, as either a contrast or a continuation, and to postulate on how it could affect later events in time periods yet to be examined. In

¹¹Paul F. Boller, Jr. and Ronald Story, *A More Perfect Union: Documents in U.S. History*, Vols. I and II, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), II, 50-53.

¹²Student paper.

addition to testing students on the content of the documents, during class time I devote attention to explaining how documents currently being discussed relate to previous ones, and suggest how specific documents relate to broad themes such as race relations or economic development. Our teaching must help students develop an appreciation for insight into the minds, structures, and perceptions of people and society at a particular historical time that primary documents offer. Similarly, class discussion should lead students to see the link between the primary documents they read and the broader events covered in a survey class.

On a practical level the assignment has great merit. It combines several major objectives into a single project, requiring a reasonable commitment of time on the part of both students and instructor in relation to the credit value of the class. Papers, as noted in the assignment, can be graded on the basis of correct composition as well as a demonstration of the grasp of key historical concepts, thus evaluating the student on skills and knowledge of several different kinds. The examples of student work cited above demonstrate how the requirement to link primary documents, the concept of historical themes, historic sites, and personal experience can offer the perceptive student exceptional opportunities to gain skills in composition, analysis of documents, and critical thinking. Perhaps just as importantly, reading primary materials and visiting historic sites can give almost any student a personal sense that "history" has some relevance to his or her own life experiences. As a history teacher it is that quality of the project that I consider to be of the greatest value.

Madison

Tullie Smith House, African History Center

(2) The more unique, discerning, and creative your choices are, the better.

Westville, Lumpkin (south of Columbus) through your papers.

Liberty Hall, home of Alex H. Stephens, Crawfordville

Your essay must be typed, proofread, and double-spaced. Make sure it is not longer than 3-4 pages (would seem appropriate). Your essay will be evaluated on the basis of content,

depth of analysis and thought, as well as grammar, mechanics, and clarity of expression. In other words, do your best. Make use of the Writing Lab if necessary.

This is your chance to do something fun, intellectually challenging (I hope), and practice your writing skills at one of the following sites:

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park

Chickamauga National Battlefield Park

Kennesaw Civil War Museum (home of "The General")

Pickett's Mill, East Paulding County

Andersonville Prison, Sumter County

Ft. Pulaski National Monument, Savannah

APPENDIX I

Assignment for Historic Site Evaluation

Visit an historic site associated with an event or person in U.S. history since 1890. A list of nearby sites is attached. There are other sites that you can choose. After visiting the site write a report that includes:

- (1) An introduction to the site that explains its historical significance. (You might need to read ahead in the text).
- (2) A summary of what you saw there.
- (3) An evaluation of how well the information, tour guides, etc. did in imparting an understanding of the role that the site played in American history.
- (4) A personal evaluation of what you think you learned from visiting the site that you could not have understood as well by reading about the topic in secondary sources.
- (5) A discussion of how the site relates to any major theme in U.S. history, identifying at least three documents in your reader that are related to that theme, and explaining how the site and the documents relate to that theme. While extensive quotations should be avoided, you must use the content of the documents, not just their "topic." This final "linking" of site, document, and theme might be the hardest part, but most important part. If you interpret the theme broadly enough, you will find applicable documents.
- (6) The more unique, discerning, astute, and creative your choice of theme, site, and documents are, the stronger your paper.

Your essay must be typed, proofread, and corrected. There is no set length, but 3 to 4 pages would seem appropriate. Your essay will be evaluated on the basis of content, depth of analysis and thought, as well as grammatical correctness and clarity of expression. In other words, do your best. Make use of the Writing Lab if necessary. This is your chance to do something fun, intellectually challenging (I hope), and practice your writing all at once.

¹Paul F. Diller, Jr. and Ronald Story, *A More Perfect Union: Documents in U.S. History*, Vols. I and II, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), II, 50-51.

²Student paper.

APPENDIX II

Popular Historic Sites in Georgia

A. NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY

- New Echota Cherokee Capital, near Calhoun
- Etowah Indian Mounds, Cartersville
- Vann House, at Spring Place
- Chieftains Museum, Rome (Major Ridge home)
- Ocmulgee Mounds, Macon
- Kolomoki Mounds, Blakely
- Red Clay State Historical area, Cleveland, TN

B. COLONIAL AND EARLY NATIONAL GEORGIA

- Savannah (numerous sites)
- St. Simons Island, Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center
- Augusta (home of George Walton, etc.)
- Hofwyl-Broadfield Plantation, Brunswick
- Traveler's Rest, Toccoa
- Fort King George State Historic Site, Darien (Guale Indians and English Fort)

C. ANTEBELLUM ERA

- Barnsley Gardens, near Adairsville
- Bulloch Hall, Roswell
- Madison
- Tullie Smith House, Atlanta History Center
- Gold Museum, Dahlonega
- Westville, Lumpkin (south of Columbus)
- Liberty Hall, home of Alex H. Stephens, Crawfordville
- Root House, home of Marietta's first pharmacist
- Savannah Historic Railroad Shops
- Robert Toombs House, Washington

D. CIVIL WAR

- Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park
- Chickamauga National Battlefield Park
- Kennesaw Civil War Museum (home of "The General")
- Pickett's Mill, East Paulding County
- Andersonville Prison, Sumter County
- Ft. Pulaski National Mounument, Savannah

E. LATE NINETEENTH - EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

- Wren's Nest, home of Joel Chandler Harris
- Swan House, Atlanta, History Center
- Roselawn, home of Rev. Sam Jones, Cartersville
- Marietta Welcome Center, walking/driving tour
- Agrirama, Tifton
- Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center
- Alonzo Herndon Mansion, founder of Atlanta Life Insurance Co.
- Oakland Cemetery, Atlanta
- Jekyll Island, Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- Jarrell Plantation, Juliette
- Little White House, Warm Springs
- Flannery O'Connor Childhood Home
- Margaret Mitchell House, Atlanta

F. LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

- Martin Luther King Historic Site, King Center and Ebenezer Baptist Church
- Carter Library and Museum, Atlanta
- Plains, GA (home of Jimmy Carter)
- Erskine Caldwell Birth Home and Louise Grissard Museum, Moreland
- Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum

G. CITY AND COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUMS

- Atlanta History Center, W. Paces Ferry road
- Bartow Historical Museum, Cartersville
- Seven Springs Museum, Powder Springs
- Smyrna History Museum
- Marietta Museum of History, Kennesaw House

H. ADDITIONAL SITES:

- Various exhibits at the Atlanta History Center span different periods
- The Plantation Center, Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain, GA
- Numerous Sites in Alabama (ex. Selma, Tuskegee, Birmingham), or other nearby states are excellent choices
- Personal non-public sites may be approved by the Instructor

IMPROVING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN HISTORY LECTURES: SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL QUESTIONING

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For years I have worked with beginning history and social studies teachers at both the K-12 and college levels. Hundreds of observations have illustrated for me that one of the most difficult and common problems faced by novice teachers is motivating students to participate in lessons. Indeed, the beginner who does not have difficulty with student inertia or even apathy is the exception rather than the rule. Student passiveness is particularly manifest and troublesome when the teacher attempts to use the lecture/discussion technique of instruction so prevalent in history classes. There are two facets to the quandary of how to engage students. First, beginning teachers must sort out confused thinking about the responsibility of both teacher and student for learning. The second is that they must add to their meager beginner's repertoire specific tactics that stimulate student participation.

Using Questions to Transform Lecture into Discussion

For years, critics have assailed lecture as an ineffective teaching technique. They contend that lecture encourages passive learning and, thereby, inhibits mastery and retention of content.¹ Apologists rebut that lecture is a sound instructional technique especially appropriate for quickly structuring large quantities of information. In the field of history where economy of teaching is frequently required, especially in survey courses, the debate about lecture has had little impact on teacher choice of technique. Lecture has a long tradition and continues to be the primary presentation method used by history teachers at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.²

Teachers use various techniques to transform lecture from formal monologue into discussion, which moves students from passive to active learning. Perhaps the most frequently used method for engaging students is to ask questions that induce them to think and talk about the content being studied, to process information rather than just listening to it. The use of questioning is both documented and encouraged by the

¹For discussion of active versus passive learning, see Charles Bonwell and James Eison, *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1 (Washington, DC: The George Washington University School of Education and Human Development, 1991).

²For the most recent and best overview of instruction in secondary education, see John Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984). The use of lecture at the university level as well as the arguments of its advocates and opponents are detailed in John Penner, *Why Many College Teachers Cannot Lecture: How to Avoid Communication Breakdown in the Classroom* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1984).

professional literature (see resource list on the lecture method). For example, there is evidence that more effective teachers ask more questions and elicit greater and more successful participation from their students than do less effective teachers.³

Most teachers, even beginners, know to and do ask questions. The problem is that many teachers, especially beginners, are unable to use the technique successfully. This problem is examined by Maryellen Weimer, who identifies questioning as the most common, widely used, and universally accepted instructional strategy. But, she asserts, the common use of questioning is problematic because it is "too much taken for granted and too much used without insight or conscious awareness."⁴

There is abundant literature about what kinds of questions invoke the deepest learning and about how to formulate good questions. However, there is scant discussion of what teachers should do when those well formulated, important questions fall flat. It is easy to ask questions. It is not easy to ask good questions. Nor is it easy to ask questions well, and beginners have a particularly difficult time developing this expertise. But asking questions effectively is a skill that can be taught and learned. My objective here is to relieve the poverty of discussion about practical application by focusing on how to think about and plan for successful questions and then how to actually ask them in ways that successfully engage students in the lesson.

Problems Beginning Teachers Have With Successful Questioning

The snag for beginning teachers is not asking questions but getting students to answer those questions. In the typical classroom scenario, the teacher asks questions and then allows students to volunteer answers. The results of this strategy vary. A student might volunteer the correct answer, and most novices have little difficulty executing the affirmation that should follow. The volunteered answer might be partially correct, thus allowing the teacher to give the student positive feedback with some correction. However, the answer might simply be incorrect. It is at this point that novice teachers begin to fumble. It is accurate to say the answer is incorrect, but how can this negative feedback be given without making students feel implicitly chastised and too deflated to risk answering further questions? Novices intuit that further voluntary student participation hinges on the students' feeling of safety, but they do not know what steps to take to maintain a high level of scholarship as well as the students' willingness to engage.

³James Henderson, Nancy Winitzky, and Don Kauchak, "Effective Teaching in Advanced Placement Classrooms," *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 31 (Winter 1996), 29-35.

⁴Maryellen Weimer, *Improving Your Classroom Teaching* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987), 49.

A similar situation can occur with the student who answers every question. The preferred learning style of this student might be a type of personal dialogue with the teacher. But the teacher is aware that, if one student volunteers and is allowed to answer every question, other students will no longer volunteer. There comes a crucial moment when the teacher must curb one student's monopoly without intimidating other students.

The response with which novice teachers have the most difficulty is when no student volunteers. It is difficult to discern whether students are not answering because they cannot or because they will not. The teacher might then call on a student to answer, a maneuver that changes the tone of the classroom interaction. Now control of the choice of whether to participate has shifted from student to teacher. When questions are voluntary, the teacher, deliberately or unconsciously, gives that decision to students. When the teacher asks questions of a specific student, the teacher is in charge of whether and when students participate. The student has been put on the spot, and the whole class observes how the teacher deals with the respondent. As with volunteer answers, there is usually no difficulty with a correct or mostly correct answer. Again, the uncertainty occurs with an incorrect answer or refusal to answer.

Student Inertia

Consistently, beginning teachers are surprised and frustrated at the inability or unwillingness of students to become engaged with lessons. This is not what they expected. Their disillusionment is expressed in observations such as, "I expected discipline problems, and I was ready for them. But I was not prepared for this incredible apathy."

Actively engaging in a lesson requires effort before as well as during the lesson. Students prefer to be in charge of the decision about whether to expend this effort. Low performing students are particularly resistant. They might even exhibit hostility if the teacher is persistent about engaging them. They seek, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, to "teach the teacher" not to expect or demand participation with such evasions as answering every question with "I don't know." At times the answer is so immediate and emphatic that it clearly goes beyond "I don't know" to "Leave me alone." Or they might play the waiting game by just saying nothing even if the teacher tries to lead them through the question. Feeling pressed to move the lesson forward or not to embarrass the student, the teacher usually yields.

Beginning teachers usually interpret apathy or resistance as laziness. But as they gain experience in the classroom, they come to understand that sometimes what looks like laziness is really inability. Students might simply not know the answer to the question. Sometimes what looks like apathy is fear. Students might fear speaking in front of others or fear being wrong, especially if that is often the case. This phenomenon is documented by Bonwell and Eison who report that, when students are

successful at learning, they have a reduced amount of stress toward any method of teaching. But for students who have not been successful at learning, the lecture method is extremely threatening most of the time.⁵ Some students have been unsuccessful in the classroom for so long that they have developed mechanisms for survival. For these students, there is more dignity in appearing unwilling to answer than appearing unable to answer.

Who Is Responsible For Learning?

Teachers begin to realize that the problem here is more complex than just learning to ask good questions. This problem requires some serious thought about who is responsible for learning. I was once impressed with the perception of a speaker who described school as a place where students come to watch teachers work. Beginning teachers discover the real meaning of active learning through lesson preparation. Preparing for class as teachers rather than students, they master content more completely and understand it more deeply. They work harder and learn more than they ever did as students. Thus, they realize that learning is work, and that whoever is doing the work is doing the learning. Active learning goes beyond having students do non-lecture activities. Active learning means being responsible for one's own learning no matter which teaching model is used.

The function of the teacher is to manipulate the learning environment so as to increase dramatically the likelihood that learning will occur. Teachers are not encyclopedias; they are master students who design activities that guide the study of their pupils--activities that get students to do the work of learning. Students are responsible for learning, but the decision to hold them responsible is made by the teacher, often without conscious thought. Most teachers are diligent about their own preparation for class but hold students responsible for very little.

Requiring Participation

The teacher's philosophy about who is responsible for learning affects the function of asking questions in the classroom. If students are to be held responsible for learning, questions become more than a mere stimulus for class discussion to which students respond if they choose. Questions have multiple purposes. They can be used as exercises to stimulate student thinking, which means having them analyze, interpret, or manipulate information in some other way. They also can be used to review, practice, and check student mastery as teaching and learning progress. Using questions this way, teachers ask students to demonstrate what they understand rather than asking

⁵Bonwell and Eison, 4.

if they understand. The use of questions for exercises and evaluation is common, but those usually come after the teaching rather than during. That is, we use questions for summative evaluation, which occurs after instruction, rather than for formative evaluation, which occurs during instruction.

When used formatively, questions are not voluntary. Beginning teachers often realize they need to hold students responsible for answering questions but do not know how to do so without appearing, and being, harsh. If a student answers incorrectly or does not respond, the teacher might ask for volunteers or call on another student to "help out" the unsuccessful respondent. In this case, the first student was not held responsible because the teacher simply moved on to another student. Since the first student was not held accountable, the teacher's action indicated that an incorrect response or a non-response is acceptable.

Tactics for Requiring Student Participation

Holding Students Responsible for Preparation for Class

When deciding to hold students responsible, the teacher must first examine what students should know. Students should be able to answer questions about content previously covered in class, content included in outside assignments, and that currently being covered in class. Also, students must come to class prepared to participate. For example, they cannot answer questions about an outside reading if they did not read the assignment. In addition, they need to have the text with them for reference. Also, students cannot answer questions about a previous lesson if they do not have their notes or other materials from that lesson.

Holding students responsible for answering questions in class begins before class. Teachers learn that the preparation students do for class predetermines their ability and willingness to participate in class. How can they be active learners and answer questions, much less engage in meaningful dialogue, if they know nothing about the subject under discussion? Teachers then begin to manipulate the learning environment by designing activities so that students actually will do them. For example, history teachers typically require students to prepare for class by reading. But students do very little of that reading because it is not tested consistently. Students discern very quickly what counts and what does not (in other words, what they are responsible for) by observing what is tested.

Making Questions Mandatory

Now the teacher can determine whether students are not answering because they cannot or because they will not. The student should know the answer. If she does not, the teacher needs to know immediately, in time for the problem to be corrected. The final exam is a poor time to discover that students did not understand or master the content because the time for further explanation or reteaching is past. At this point,

questions are not voluntary. They are used constantly to ascertain the understanding and mastery of all students. They are like "mini-exams" used to gauge progress, and they are no more voluntary than exams are.

In fairness to students, required participation is unusual. Their reaction is often surprise and discomfort, which is genuine and understandable. Much of what goes on in school encourages, if it does not require them, to be passive. For example, teachers discourage students from giving serious consideration to questions. The amount of time a teacher pauses after asking a question is called "wait time." Extensive research on effective teaching reveals that the average wait time allowed by teachers after questions is five seconds.⁶ Five seconds is certainly not long enough to formulate the meaningful answers we expect from our students. So, if the student cannot think of an answer quickly, the assumption is that they do not know. Intentionally or not, teachers train their students to fire back either the answer or "I do not know." The insinuation, however unintentional, is that speed is more important than accuracy. Therefore, students are confused and uneasy with the concept of thinking before answering and of being held responsible for knowing.

The best way to minimize students' feeling of intimidation is to set the precedent for student responsibility early in the course. Before asking the first question, the teacher can explain the procedure. All students will be asked questions, and they are responsible for the answers. Since the classroom is not a quiz show, students will be allowed to look up in notes, text, etc. what they cannot recall. Therefore, they must bring these materials to class. The questions are review and practice of content previously or currently under study, so they can recall or find the answers. "I don't know" is an incorrect and unacceptable answer. The student will be given time to think because serious consideration is more important than speed. It really is okay to be wrong, and we honestly do learn by mistakes. But eventually we must get the information right. While the student prepares the answer to the question, the teacher will change the focus to another point. This strategy mollifies the pressure on the student and circumvents the "waiting game." The student will acknowledge when the answer is ready.

A couple of suggestions will help teachers think about how to use this technique without leaving some students behind. First, several students can be asked different questions about previously studied information at the same time. This sort of mini-test is used often to review at the beginning or end of a topic or lesson. The answers can be taken as students find them. Any student who cannot find the answer by the end of this exercise clearly will have the same problem finding that information to study for the test. If this student still cannot find the information after instruction about where

⁶Weimer, 50. Also, Kenneth Tobin, "Role of Wait Time in Higher Cognitive Level Learning," *Review of Educational Research*, 57 (Spring 1987), 69-95.

it should be located, it is time for reteaching. All students should be instructed to look in this location and amend notes as the teacher explains the concept again. The concept might be unclear to other students too. But even if it is not, this strategy relieves the pressure on the single student who was asked the question, and thereby on his classmates. There is no value judgment, just faulty information that needs to be corrected. Finally, the original student should be asked to restate the concept so the teacher can make sure it was explained clearly. In the end, the student was held responsible for getting the information right. Another technique is to ask all students to consider the same question with the stipulation that they will have a certain amount of time to find the answer. Then one person will be called on to answer. Because every student must consider the answer, no one is left behind. From that point, the technique proceeds as in the former example.

Setting the Precedent For Successful Answers

It is important to arrange for student success in the beginning, to set the precedent for students to answer rather than to avoid answering. To increase the likelihood of successful answers, the teacher must design questions with care. Grigar outlines a hierarchy of questions that require students to think at graduated levels of difficulty.⁷ The hierarchy ranges from lower-level questions that require recall of information to higher-level questions that require analysis. The research on questioning recommends that teachers ask higher-level questions because they increase student retention. However, the lowest level of questioning should not be underestimated because, for several reasons, it is a powerful teaching tool. Recall is the foundation of more sophisticated learning. Students must master some basic facts about the American Revolution before they can analyze its causes. Also, as discussed above, recall questions allow the teacher continually to monitor the progress of learning. Finally, these questions pertain to information previously covered so students can be required to answer. Mandatory questions give students practice that develops the habit of attending and focusing, which improves both comprehension and retention.

Using questions at this basic level, teachers can manipulate the environment to let students experience responsible and successful participation. Student aversion to required participation soon is followed by the satisfaction of knowing, not only that they can survive it, but that they can be successful. As soon as the tone is set for all students participating at random and upon command, teachers can begin to incorporate the more complex questions that students need to learn to manage. These more sophisticated questions prompt them to analyze, speculate, extrapolate, interpret, or

⁷Louis Grigar, "Questioning Strategies in Social Studies," *Think About It (Vol. III, Pt. I): A Collection of Articles on Higher Order Thinking Skills*, REACH: Realistic Educational Achievement Can Happen (Austin, TX: Texas Educational Agency, 1988), ERIC, ED 298 141: 84-89.

manipulate the content in some other way that is informed and supportable in light of what they are currently studying.

Conclusion

Lecture as an instructional technique makes heavy demands on an audience for which most students are ill prepared. Many "class discussions" end up as "lectures" because teachers are focused on and prepared to deal with the teaching but not with the learning. Asking questions is a good way, though not the only one, to engage students actively in lecture. But asking questions is tough, or rather asking effective questions is tough. Again, according to Weimer, they are "too much taken for granted and too much used without insight or conscious awareness."⁸ Using them effectively requires that we understand the different types of questions, their purpose, and when and how to use them. But, more fundamentally, it requires us to examine our philosophy about holding students responsible for preparing and participating in class.

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⁸Weimer, 49.

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REVIEWS

Percoco, James A. *A Passion for the Past: Creative Teaching of U.S. History*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. Pp. xxiv, 149. Paper, \$17.50; ISBN 0-325-00061-1.

One of the problems facing history/social studies methods instructors is the difficulty in finding a relevant text for use in their courses. While there are numerous methods texts available, few if any are written by and/or from the perspective of the classroom teacher. Those methods teachers who have encountered this same situation will find James A. Percoco's book to be a great substitute for the clinical secondary social studies textbooks currently on the market. Secondary history teachers will also find *A Passion for the Past* to be an invaluable resource for learning more authentic teaching strategies to incorporate into their classroom.

One of the reasons this book is able to provide such an accurate picture of the secondary history classroom is that its author, James A. Percoco, is a veteran classroom teacher. He currently teaches U.S. and Applied History at West Springfield High School in Springfield, Virginia. His innovative and engaging manner of teaching has resulted in his appointment as educational consultant to the National Archives, the National Gallery of Art, and the National Park Service. Percoco's efforts have even been recognized nationally, being named Outstanding Social Studies Teacher of the Year at the 1993 Walt Disney Company American Teacher Awards. This is the caliber of teacher who devised these teaching strategies and penned this book, not a college professor long removed from the high school classroom.

The organization of the book is a reflection of Percoco's logical, common-sense approach to teaching. After a brief definition and introduction to his style of teaching, which he terms *applied history*, he introduces readers to a collection of pedagogical strategies. These classroom teaching strategies are examined in separate chapters of moderate length, typically twenty pages. Activities outlined by Percoco include both the traditional, such as guest speakers and field trips, and *avant-garde*, such as "historical heads" and sculpture analysis. Other activities examined by the author include academic bumper stickers, photo essays, music analysis, journal writing, film critiques, portfolios, and internships.

In every case, these strategies emphasize higher order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. While these teaching strategies build upon a strong conceptual and knowledge foundation, they do not end there. For example, the author's "public history project" calls on students to conduct primary source research documented in extensive bibliographies. Next, students design and construct multimedia, three-dimensional, information exhibits. The project also requires them to examine cultural, social, economic, and political implications in both their exhibits and culminating oral presentations.

Another strength of *A Passion for the Past* is the manner in which each activity is introduced. Percoco discusses how and why he developed the activity and how to

implement it in the classroom, and provides student examples when possible. This approach is one that classroom teachers will appreciate and methods instructors will find easily adaptable to their current curriculum. Percoco's *applied history* teaching strategy can be implemented into a methods class curriculum as either one instructional strategy with each activity comprising its syntax, or one can integrate each as activities for use in a variety of instructional strategies such as cooperative learning, mastery learning, concept attainment, and jurisprudential inquiry.

Even after nine years of teaching high school American history and one year as a methods instructor, I was impressed with the variety of critical thinking activities used by Percoco in his U.S. history classroom. While secondary history teachers will find the book a valuable personal resource for adding to their repertoire of classroom teaching strategies, I believe college methods instructors will find it either a great substitute or supplement for existing social studies methods texts.

Ball State University

D. Antonio Cantu

Antony Alcock. *A Short History of Europe: From the Greeks and Romans to Present Day.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Pp. x, 304. Cloth, \$59.95; ISBN 0-312-21003-5. Paper, \$18.95; ISBN 0-312-21036-1.

Antony Alcock has managed to narrate the history of Europe, east and west, during the past 4,000 years in a scant 270 pages. An inherent instinct to charity inclines me to compliment him on this achievement, but having persevered through all of these pages I find charity elusive. Almost from the start I found myself out of sympathy with the author's predominant approach to history as past politics. Granted, one needs a central organizing principle in order to integrate such a vast array of information, and implicitly Alcock tries to find one in the idea of European integration, but Sir John Seeley's late Victorian conception of history is too outdated to speak arrestingly to most of today's undergraduates. Let me be fair: although politics--in the form of impersonal social and economic forces--dominates the book, the author is quite adept at explicating the intricacies of religious disputes such as Petrine doctrine and the Monophysite controversy (though I would have sacrificed here for later mention of Queen Victoria or Freud or Margaret Thatcher) or presenting the (comparatively) exhaustive history of tribal and ethnic groups migrating across or settling down in the Eurasian plain. But for all its lecture room sweep, this book remains a history devoid of humanity. While individuals do get mentioned--a half sentence is the norm--only two--Luther and Hitler!--are presented with any detail. One comes away with the sense that this is history written not for humanists but for--and there is a foreword that calls attention to this--the bureaucrats and technocrats at Brussels. Indeed the book's final chapter on Europe since 1945 treats little of the history of the period and instead

offers an extended essay on the politics of European union, leaving the reader swimming in a sea of acronyms: EMU, EFTA, CAP, QMV, SEA, EMS, CFP, ECSC, EEC, EURATOM, OPEC, EDC

In 1962 Stringfellow Barr wrote *The Pilgrimage of Western Man*, a brief history of western civilization organized around the idea of European unity. The usual politics was there, leagues and battles, but so too were the artists and philosophers so that one came away from the book with a feeling for what it meant to be European, an appreciation of the ideals, aspirations, norms, styles, sensibilities, and values that gave a specific texture to population migration, trade expansion, law, politics, and war in that particular region of the world. This is really what is lacking in Alcock's book: a comprehensive well-rounded, and up-to-date synthesis of the kind presented in many of the European history survey texts on the market today. This book's fourteen chapters will get one's students literally from Plato to NATO in the course of a fourteen-week semester, but of the genius of Plato and his relation to the classical inheritance they will have learned little; and the same can be said of NATO and the Cold War. Moreover, the interpretive structure framing individual chapters is sometimes outdated; the Pirenne thesis is no longer one of the key explanatory models for what was once called the "Dark Ages;" few now see the fall of Constantinople in 1453 as responsible for the introduction of Greek learning in Italy and the subsequent emergence of the Renaissance; and for over twenty-five years historians have spoken of a Catholic Reformation antedating Luther rather than simply a counter-reformation in response to him. As for an awareness of European women's history--well, thirteen queens do get mentioned in the course of the book.

The text is readable and the author's grasp of political history is impressive. But I cannot recommend it as appropriate reading for an undergraduate survey course. Most undergraduates would be overwhelmed by the unending flow of information. And with very little in the text to help them construct a hierarchy of significance, they would, I am afraid, put down the book convinced that history is nothing more than a laundry list of names, dates, and events, a view history teachers and scholars in this country have been combating for the past half-century.

Pace University

Michael Rosenfeld

William Woodruff. *A Concise History of the Modern World: 1500 to the Present.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Second edition. Pp. xii, 401. Paper, \$18.95; ISBN 0-312-21332-8.

It would be difficult to imagine how anyone could write a better overview of the last five hundred years of world history. William Woodruff's book is filled with relevant facts, appropriate questions, interesting anecdotes, and insightful

interpretations. Regrettably, the book contains no illustrations, but there are twenty-five useful maps.

The major theme in the work is "the struggle for power" among sovereign states. Emphasizing power as the "master key" to understanding world affairs, Woodruff finds that it is impossible to make a clear separation between "the power of the sword" and "the power of the purse." While many nations have at times concentrated on conquering territory, other nations have been more concerned with economic gain. Although tending to minimize abstract principles, Woodruff nevertheless recognizes that at times "intangible power—intellectual, philosophical, spiritual and religious—has swayed world events." Thus, his book has a great deal to say about the power of ideas associated with individuals such as Christ, Mohammed, Luther, Voltaire, Marx, Hitler, and Gandhi.

In organizing his account, Woodruff uses a combination of chronology, major topics, and regional geography. Beginning with the "Asian-dominated world" of five hundred years ago, he then tells the story of how Western nations emerged into leadership roles in both power and ideas, followed by a "resurgence of Asia" during the last half of the twentieth century. The book contains excellent chapters on topics such as the scientific revolution and the enlightenment, the rise and fall of European imperialism, the rise and fall of Marxist-Leninist systems, the impact of the two world wars, and the continuing problems of poverty and ethnic conflicts in much of the contemporary world.

Woodruff has some very stimulating things to say about the value and limitations of historical knowledge. "Only by using the past to cast light on the present," he observes, "can we hope to know how the world has come to be what it is and where it might be headed." He recognizes, on the other hand, that historical data do not provide for any easy predictions of the future. He correctly observes that it is not possible to make a neat distinction between historical facts and interpretations, and that there is an inherent element of subjectivity to the latter. While recognizing how different perspectives lead to different interpretations, nevertheless, Woodruff goes too far when he writes that there exists "no objective reality independent of the writer." By way of analogy, different photographers capture different aspects of reality. Yet, if they view reality from different points of view, they nevertheless take photographs of a material reality that exists independently of their cameras.

Woodruff's audience is probably somewhat limited. Since the book includes so many short references to events, individual people, and political organizations, a reader without some background in global history would feel overwhelmed by all the details. Most serious students of history, on the other hand, would probably tend to look to more specialized works. The most appreciative readers will be those individuals—possessing some historical background—who wish to refresh their memories with a concise synthesis filled with informed and stimulating observations.

Norwich, Hildegard von Bingen, and Margery Kempe. Heonetta Leyer's work,

As a possible textbook for history courses, Woodruff's book has some limitations. It would be too advanced for most high school students, and it is not comprehensive enough to serve as a single text in a college-level course. For teachers who like to use a combination of original sources, films, and readings devoted to special topics, however, Woodruff's work could be very useful in providing the general historical background that students need.

Mount Senario College

Thomas T. Lewis

Lester K. Little & Barbara H. Rosenwein, eds. *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*. Williston, VT: Blackwell Publishers, 1998. Pp. xi, 396. Cloth, \$64.95; ISBN 1-57718-007-0.

This excellent book would be very useful for students in upper-division as well as graduate courses in medieval history. Graduate students preparing for comprehensive examinations will find in this volume an indispensable guide to the latest historiography. Unfortunately, the price places this book beyond the budget of most students. Each university library, however, should have multiple copies for the use of students. The editors, two distinguished medievalists, begin by stating that "the Middle Ages aren't what they used to be." They then trace the development of the term "Middle Ages" in their brief, but informative introduction. Many changes have taken place in medieval historiography over the past thirty years. Rather than offer a brief sampling of each new trend, the editors wisely decided to explore in depth four areas that have been marked by intense investigation and discussion. The book is thus divided into four parts, each with a succinct introduction: the fate of Rome's western provinces, feudalism and its alternative, gender, and religion and society. A number of sources have been translated for the first time from German, French, and Italian.

In Part I (chapters 1-6), the editors look at four areas of debate concerning Rome's western provinces that have emerged in the recent work of historians: ethnogenesis of the new peoples, accommodation between Rome and the new peoples, archaeology and history, and conversion of the new peoples. Walter Pohl synthesizes the main findings of scholars on ethnogenesis and notes that ethnic definitions were especially fluid in times of migration. The debate between Walter Goffart and Chris Wickham regarding Roman/barbarian relations covers two chapters. Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse examine the archaeological evidence in the light of the Pirenne thesis. Part I concludes with a section on the conversion of the new peoples to Christianity. Ian N. Wood deals with Gregory of Tours as a reliable source in relation to Clovis, while Alexander Murray explores examples of the mutual borrowing of Christianity and pre-Christian magic.

Part II (chapters 7-12) introduces students to the lively debate regarding feudalism. Pierre Bonnassie conducts a regional study in Catalonia that in many ways confirms the findings of Georges Duby for Macconnais. By 1980 there tended to be a consensus about feudalism among many historians that the feudal world created in the decades around the year 1000 was powerfully touched by the relations of dependency and lordship implicit in the term. A decade later, Dominique Barthelemy challenged the prevailing view and emphasized the essential continuity for the period from the ninth to the early twelfth centuries. Another debate challenged the very use of the term, and Elizabeth A.R. Brown fired the first shot. Frederic Cheyette has shown that one way to avoid the debate is to talk instead about medieval institutions and cultural forms. Other new studies (Monique Bourin and Robert Durand, plus Gerd Althoff) have found a sense of community on the local level.

Part III (chapters 13-17) on gender begins with an article by Janet Nelson on two early medieval queens as exemplars of Merovingian women. Pauline Stafford implies that historians would be better off not trying to find female golden ages or their opposites. Some historians like Christine Klapisch-Zuber stress outside forces shaping women. Other feminist historians such as Caroline Walker Bynum and Susan Mosher Stuard argue that a full history must include the ways women have been constructive of their society across gender.

Part IV dealing with religion and society concludes this excellent volume. The great French historian of theology, Marie-Dominique Chenu, examines the evangelical awakening in the twelfth century. In discussing saints, Sofia Boesch Gajano rejects the historiographical negation of the miracle, involving as that does its "elite theological ghettoization." Another major area of research is the monastic cult of the dead, and Dominique Iogna-Prat says that for the Cluniacs the cult of the dead was the keystone of their theology. R.I. Moore looks at literacy and the making of heresy, and Jean-Claude Schmitt covers the final topic on liturgy and doctrine, noting that the religion of the Middle Ages was above all participation in rituals and "even more generally participation in an entire social organization."

Ball State University

John E. Weakland

Henrietta Leyser. *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. Pp. vii, 337. Paper, \$17.95; ISBN 0-312-21279-8.

In the past decade, works investigating the contribution and place of women during the medieval period have exploded in number. Particularly important to this development has been the prominence of several individuals, such as Julian of Norwich, Hildegard von Bingen, and Margery Kempe. Henrietta Leyser's work,

Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500, combines analysis of such women with discussion of their more numerous, yet unnamed, contemporaries. The text is divided into four sections: Part One. The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Evidence; Part Two. The Eleventh Century; Part Three. The High and Later Middle Ages: Family Roles; and Part Four. Culture and Spirituality.

Part One deals with the pre-Norman period, looking at archaeology, hagiography, law codes, and vernacular literature. This section, particularly the initial chapter on archaeology, is compelling. It looks mainly at burial practices among women of different classes and is a wonderful way to grab students' interest at the outset. The mark of an outstanding text is that once it grabs your attention it does not let go—this work is certainly up to that task.

Part Two looks at the Norman invasion and its impact on the women of the eleventh century. Describing the necessary marital practice of joining Norman knights and Anglo-Saxon women as a means of healing the political rift, *Medieval Women* presents an in-depth picture of life for women of many classes. This section contains much information on the family trees of royal England before and after the invasion. It is a beautifully detailed description, but the wealth of names that are unfamiliar (and frankly confusing) to the undergraduate make this book a better choice for the graduate student, or perhaps senior-level undergrads.

Part Three will probably hold the most charm for the student. This section addresses sex, marriage, family, and the work environment—incredibly useful data to anyone researching medieval women. Everyday tasks, dilemmas, and choices lay before the reader. Leyser is a master at utilizing primary material to illustrate her points, and it is included on almost every page. It is, however, frustrating when a situation is laid out, and the reader is then informed that we do not know the outcome. But this type of problem is common for medievalists and does not lessen the impact of the book.

The final section looks at spirituality, including female monasticism (including hermetic monasticism) and lay piety. Some myths are dispelled here (such as the nature of the anchoress) and some perhaps unsettling information is provided (such as the intensity and sensuality of the “bride of Christ” concept).

Medieval Women proved hard to put down. It is skillfully written and extensively researched, a perfect tool for a graduate or upper-level class on the medieval period. There is so much telling material here that it should not be restricted to use in a course about women. Any course that deals with the Middle Ages would be greatly enhanced by its use, likely providing for enhanced discussion that would otherwise never have come to the fore. The final fifty pages are excerpts from primary works discussed in the book. It is unusual for an author to go to such lengths, but Leyser's rationale is “to give the reader some idea of the range of primary material used” and “to whet his or her appetite for further reading of the sources.” It is a stroke

of brilliance. She includes roughly one excerpt per chapter, from a source that has been central to that chapter. It is a perfect way to further engage students in the topic.

The only distraction is the liberal reference to misogyny. As in many books on women, particularly medieval women, this term seems overused. Most readers will not have to be told that medieval society was misogynist—it is evident. This terminology seems to be a calling card or rallying point for some, but it is a small criticism. The work does not feel biased, and the revelations about women that emerge should actually provide tools to break down any lasting barriers associated with studying women's history. Leyser has written a fascinating account that students and teachers alike will love.

Floyd College

Laura Gilstrap Musselwhite

Michael Broers. *Europe Under Napoleon, 1799-1815.* London and New York: Arnold, 1996. Pp. xii, 291. Cloth, \$49.95; ISBN 0-340-66265-4. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 0-340-66264-6.

Do we need yet another book on Napoleon? Michael Broers answers, not exactly. According to Broers, what we need, and indeed what he has given us, is a sophisticated historical analysis of the impact of Napoleonic rule on conquered Europe from the point of view of the ruled. So, if you are looking for a book primarily on Napoleon the man and ruler, or one on France under Napoleon, you will need to look elsewhere.

Drawing his inspiration from his now deceased mentor Richard Cobb, Broers examines the Napoleonic era from the perspective of those who endured it: soldiers, peasants, local officials, collaborators, and resisters. Unlike Cobb, however, who tended to eschew generalizations, Broers uses his chronological development of Napoleonic rule in Europe to advance several generalizations about Napoleonic rule and its effects.

Most importantly, Broers insists that Napoleon was rooted in the secular, rational world of the Enlightenment and Revolution. The last of the Enlightened Despots, Napoleon sought to extend and apply Enlightenment values to the areas he conquered. He imposed modern, rational bureaucratic practices and, in the Concordat with the Pope, limited papal influence and dissolved the popular religious orders. Enlightenment and Revolutionary influences can also be seen in Napoleon's attempts to abolish seigneurialism and to export the Napoleonic Civil Code.

Unfortunately for France, most of the local populations despised and resisted Napoleon's conquest and administration. While French administrators frequently saw the people in the regions they conquered, including much of the west and south of France, as savages or "bumpkins" and religious fanatics, the local populations viewed

the French as godless murderers. Whatever support the French might have gained from elite sympathizers of the Enlightenment or peasants wanting land was forfeited by cultural arrogance, the often violent imposition of conscription, the economic effects of the Continental Blockade, the dissolution of religious orders to which many were attached, and the attempts to eliminate local traditions.

Broers emphasizes, however, that Napoleonic rule did not directly or inadvertently promote nationalism. Napoleon sought a European order that was rational, uniform, and dependent on France, not a Europe of revolutionary nationalisms. Nor did opposition to his bureaucratic and military agents encourage nationalism. Rather, with the exceptions of Poland and Ireland, conquered Europeans agreed only on preserving their particularist, traditional rights.

Broers's evaluation of Napoleon's legacy is mixed. He acknowledges Napoleon the butcher, tyrant, and warmonger, but also insists on Napoleon's military and administrative genius. Napoleon's legacy also endured. For better or worse, leaders of new and old European states would not return to pre-1799 Europe, and they retained many of Napoleon's legal and administrative reforms in order to compete in the modern world.

Broers organizes his book into several dense chronological chapters, and within those chapters examines the impact of Napoleonic rule on the different geographical and social sectors of Europe. This is not a book for students, or faculty, beginning their study of Napoleon or Napoleonic Europe. Although Broers does briefly discuss the most important events and individuals affecting Europe, he focuses more on interpretation and on rather specific internal developments within European countries that assume some prior knowledge. The book would be very useful to graduate students and even to advanced undergraduate students who will find, in addition to the text, bibliography and footnotes invaluable for writing a term paper. Instructors will also find interesting arguments and examples for more than one lecture.

State University of New York at Cortland

Sanford Gutman

Michael Burns. *France and the Dreyfus Affair: A Documentary History.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. Pp. xiv, 210. Cloth, \$39.95; ISBN 0-312-21813-3.

One driven to bed by a chronic illness endures both pain and the prolongation of time; one who suffers injustice might wait long years for a remedy. So it was in 1894 with Captain Alfred Dreyfus, an Alsatian Jew in the French army whom fellow officers targeted. His arrest resulted from the acquisition of a military memorandum (*bordereau*) imputed to him on tenuous grounds as the basis for a charge of treason. Arrested, accused of high treason, tried, and convicted, he went to prison.

Michael Burns's documentary history of the Dreyfus affair provokes rumination about the anti-Jewish crusade that ill fits a modern, republican state, yet typified the human capacity for evil and self-delusion. In its irrationality and potential ferocity, it recalled the downside of the French Revolution only a century before. Church-state conservatism, army reactionism, and anti-Semitism worked mischief. There are key documents such as Maurice Barrès's revealing election campaign speech in 1898, several years after Dreyfus's trial and imprisonment. As a "professional anti-Semite," Barrès made the Jewish question key to the French national soul. Edouard Drumont's *La Libre Parole* spewed tirades and fictions against Jewish army officers as a dominant class that subverted French national values.

Dreyfus's trial and imprisonments, finally as the sole prisoner on Devil's Island, and the Dreyfusards' investigations and appeals make intriguing reading. The events and details unfold in arousing fashion. The indications of collusion among anti-Dreyfusards stand clear. The general staff's case dossier shows their resolve to destroy Dreyfus, but George Picquart, the new chief of the Statistical Section, discovered that Commandant Ferdinand Walsin-Esterhazy had forged the incriminating *bordereau*. For his pursuit of justice, Picquart, himself a Jew-hater, was imprisoned and dismissed from the army, whose command went far to suppress his findings.

The book provides a useful List of Principal Characters, a selected bibliography, and a complete index. Burns's extensive commentary gives continuity and a concise but thorough accounting of related developments. The footnotes provide sound direction for deeper analysis.

The book works on several levels. First, the document collection offers students a chance to use primary and secondary sources in a handy volume. Second, the documents and editor's comments reveal balanced historical judgment without sensationalism; even with the account of Mathieu Dreyfus's seances with a clairvoyant who revealed the false dossier, the documents speak for themselves. Third, the volume exposes modern anti-Semitism in focused, personal contexts: Dreyfus himself, his family and supporters, the military officers behind the scandal, and the anti-Dreyfusard champions, among them the suicidal hero Commandant Hubert-Joseph Henry. Fourth, the volume shows how disruptive and dangerous was the extreme politicization borne of French ultra-nationalism and anti-Semitism. Fifth, the documentary history clarifies the influences of journalists and other publicists in *l'affaire Dreyfus*, including Emile Zola, whose *J'Accuse* revealed the affair as a malicious farce. A century later, students will recognize the power of the modern media, then as now, to shape public and official sentiments. I recommend this book for upper-level undergraduates and graduate students.

Barry Reay. *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750*. London & New York: Longman, 1998. Pp. ix, 235. Paper, \$18.95; ISBN 0-582-48954-7.

Gordon Marsden, ed. *Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Society*. London & New York: Longman, 1998. Second edition. Pp. xi, 292. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 0-582-29289-1.

If you can tell a book by its cover, then the covers of these two books reveal the differences in their eras and their approaches. Barry Reay's *Popular Cultures* features a detail from William Hogarth's *March of the Guards to Finchley* (1750) which captures a typically busy Hogarthian moment of boisterous pursuits. Local girls flirt with soldiers, a curious couple smoke pipes, and two prize-fighters square off in a lively crowd. Gordon Marsden's *Victorian Values* offers an entirely different slice of English life: a detail from John Ritchie's *A Summers Day in Hyde Park* (1858). Ritchie's English men and women enjoy a more genteel and controlled scene, featuring a family resting on a bench under a great tree. Hogarth and Ritchie are only a century apart, but their captured moments are worlds apart—as are *Popular Culture* and *Victorian Values*.

Reay is Professor of History at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. His *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750* is published in the Longman "Themes in British Social History" series. Reay is eminently suited to his task, having published widely in the area of Early Modern English cultural history, including articles in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (1985/88), which he edited. This survey focuses on seven topics, each with its own chapter: "Sexualities," "Orality, Literacy, and Print," "Religions," "Witchcraft," "Festive Drama and Ritual," "Riots and the Law," and "Popular Cultures." Drawing primarily on secondary sources, Reay provides detailed footnotes, a four-page bibliography with recommendations for each chapter, and a six-and-a-half page index. There are no illustrations.

"Popular cultures," Reay notes, is a difficult term to define. Here is his fullest attempt: "The term popular cultures is not intended to imply some firm, exclusive division between popular and elite, high and low, great and little, or learned and unlearned. Nor is it to be taken to indicate cultural homogeneity among the subordinate: the 's' in cultures represents the subcultural splinterings (or segmentation) of locality, age, gender, religion, and class. The keywords for this history are: ambiguous, complex, contradictory, divided, dynamic, fluid, fractured, gendered, hybrid, interacting, multiple, multivalent, overlapping, plural, resistant, and shared." You should be able to gauge the usefulness of this text for your own class by Reay's struggle to define his term.

The chapters are uneven, with the most successful ones ("Festive Drama and Ritual" and "Riots and the Law") the most concrete. The least successful is his first ("Sexualities"), which spends much of its space on defining itself theoretically. Reay's materials range from the early sixteenth century into the mid-nineteenth. For example,

the sixth chapter ("Riots and the Law") begins with riots in 1740 and wanders into the post-1750 era, "the real age of rioting." Overall, this volume is best suited for a graduate-level course in Early Modern English cultural studies. Here students will find the major scholars, themes, and evidence.

Marsden's *Victorian Values* was first published in 1990 as a collection of sixteen articles from *History Today*. This new edition adds four articles. Asa Briggs, whose classic studies on Victorian England inspired the series, provides a brief forward and one of the essays ("Samuel Smiles: The Gospel of Self-Help"). The remaining articles are "'Kindness and Reason': William Lovett and Education" (Brian Harrison), "'Cultivated Capital': Patronage and Art in 19th-Century Manchester and Leeds" (Janet Wolff and Carline Arscott), "Dickens and His Readers" (Philip Collins), "Pugin and the Medieval Dream" (Nigel Yates), "New Men? The Bourgeois Cult of Home" (John Tosh), "Titus Salt: Enlightened Entrepreneur" (Ian Campbell Bradley), "Building Bridges: George Godwin and Architectural Journalism" (Robert Thorney), "Gladstonian Finance" (H.C.G. Matthew), "Ministering Angels: Victorian Ladies and Nursing Reform" (Anne Summers), "Josephine Butler: Feminism's Neglected Pioneer" (Trevor Fisher), "Joseph Chamberlain and the Municipal Ideal" (Derek Fraser), "Herbert Spencer and 'Inevitable' Progress" (Robert M. Young), "Stewart Headlam and the Christian Socialists" (Edward Norman), "William Morris: Art and Idealism" (Charles Harvey and Jon Press), "Mary Kingsley and West Africa" (Dea Birkett), "Attic Attitudes: Leighton and Aesthetic Philosophy" (Stephen Jones), "'Commanding the Heart': Edward Carpenter and Friends" (Sheila Rowbotham), "The Quest for Englishness" (Paul Rich), and "Diamonds are Forever? Kipling's Imperialism" (Denis Judd). The new essays for this second edition are by Butler, Harvey and Press, Judd, and Tosh.

Each essay is well-written and illustrated with one or two images. Each contains a brief bibliography for further reading. There are no end- or footnotes, as in the original *History Today* publication. *Victorian Values* is a nice collection for an advanced undergraduate course on Victorian England. The topics and figures offer a wide range of the conflicting values that characterized the Imperial Age. However, one might recommend that students read Marsden's rambling, personal, historiographical introduction after visiting the other essays. Marsden struggles to perform the dual function of introducing the new edition, summing up current scholarly thinking on Victorian England, and making Victorian England relevant to today. Look for reflections on Prince Charles and his late wife Diana.

Reay and Marsden share a sense that their chosen chronological eras are marked by paradoxes, which Marsden claims "is the predominant characteristic observed the more one peers into the workings of the Victorian world." Both books attempt to

recapture a sense of the British past. However, their emphases differ sharply, with Reay most comfortable with the world of Hogarth and Marsden with Ritchie.

Catawba College

Charlie McAllister

R.W. Davies. *Soviet Economic Development from Lenin to Khrushchev.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. 82. Cloth, \$39.95; ISBN 0-521-62260-3. Paper, \$11.95; ISBN 0-521-62742-7.

Raymond Pearson. *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Pp. 138. Cloth, \$55.00; ISBN 0-312-17405-5. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 0-312-17407-1.

Each of these books is part of a series written to provide succinct and readable overviews of specialized topics "for students and their teachers." Between them, they provide a comprehensive picture of some very important elements of Soviet policy.

The process of industrialization in Russia, Davies tells us, was in some ways not so very different from that of Western Europe and the United States. Peculiarities were introduced by the fact that Russia had a huge peasant population well into the twentieth century, that wars and revolution distorted economic change, and that it suffered huge population losses during the world wars, the revolution, and collectivization. A large role for government in the industrialization process was introduced to overcome such disadvantages, even under the Tsars. The Soviet Union's ability to negotiate the first stages of industrialization despite worldwide depression, and to engineer its own continued growth and expansion through 1965, provided a politically important demonstration of successful economic transformation to the less developed world. The conclusion argues that this success also influenced western economic thought in important ways. In the first half of the book, the author succinctly discusses the characteristics of three different economic systems that followed one another in Russia, each with its own significant role for the state: the late Tsarist economy, War Communism (1918-1920), and the New Economic Policy (1921-1929). The text is in some ways quite basic; little prior knowledge of Russian history or of economics is assumed, and the policies of War Communism, for example, are compactly explained. On the other hand, the text provides a sophisticated summary of extant research, introducing the reader to the major historical debates. Telling and thought-provoking examples help to place economic issues clearly in their political and social context. The second half of the book is dedicated to an examination of the "administrative economy" until 1965. The high rates of Soviet economic growth are carefully examined for their impact on living standards and for developing structural problems. As the Soviet economy matured, and new social and political conditions developed, high defense expenditure, insufficient growth in agriculture, and the need for greater

internal technological innovation led to greater economic and political strain. The text thoughtfully provides maps, basic charts, a glossary, and chronology.

Raymond Pearson's *Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire* is a consideration of the relationship between domestic Soviet politics and the countries of Eastern Europe from 1945-1991. The strict focus on the East European part of the Empire allows for quite a full treatment. Cuba forms no part of the overview, for example, except for a page and a half about the Missile Crisis. Even the inner Soviet Empire of the republics is a relatively unimportant element in the discussion until the 1991 disintegration of the USSR. The defining moments in the imperial relationship described here are, therefore, in Belgrade, Budapest, Prague, Gdansk, and Berlin. The narrative provides a clear and readable summary, with historical context clearly explained. The apposite comparison is a particular strength of the text. There is relatively little emphasis on the many historical debates that surround this controversial material.

The narrative emphasizes the anachronistic nature of the Empire, which was forming just as most European Empires were dissolving. The East European Empire, Pearson makes clear, was not only a successor to the smaller Soviet Empire of the pre-war period, but in a very real sense also the product of the Nazi *NeuOrdnung* that preceded it. The changing conditions of its existence (embodied in such events as the Hungarian uprising of 1956) required serious rethinking of the policy and institutional connections between Moscow and Eastern Europe approximately every dozen years. The persistence of the Empire is attributed not only to military power, but to the general improvement of economic conditions, flexible Soviet policies, and Western interventions, such as financial subvention in the 1970s. Eventual collapse came about not only because of internal economic decline but also because the USSR failed to realize the power of nationalist sentiments in Eastern Europe or in its own republics. The final chapter, entitled "The Last Empire?", is a useful reflection on the nature of empires as well as the fate of the USSR; it is careful to emphasize the benefits as well as the tribulations experienced by the subjects of the Soviet imperium.

Each of these books forms an excellent reading for classroom discussion. The Davies book is shorter and somewhat more challenging, given most students' preparation in economics. Nevertheless, it provides a brief and sophisticated summary of a difficult but very necessary subject that is directed specifically at a student audience. Pearson's overview is more in the nature of an interpretive survey of the English-language bibliography. It will be, however, an exceedingly useful classroom tool.

Colgate University

Carol B. Stevens

Elliott J. Gorn, ed. *The McGuffey Readers: Selections from the 1879 Edition*. Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998. Pp. xv, 202. Cloth, \$35.00; ISBN 0-312-1766-6. Paper, \$7.50; ISBN 0-312-13398-7.

This compact and, in its paperback version, very affordable volume deserves serious consideration by college teachers and those teaching advanced high school history courses. It is part of Bedford/St. Martin's intriguing new Series in History and Culture, an effort to make available important documents in United States history, with introductory, interpretive essays by the books' editors.

McGuffey's Readers are highly significant in the cultural history of the United States. For most of the nineteenth century, no other volume, save the King James Bible, had greater readership. Between fifty and one hundred million were published--no one knows the exact number--and each volume passed through scores of hands to be memorized and recited cover to cover. The readers reflected, legitimated, and to some extent probably reproduced particular aspects of contemporary life while silencing or marginalizing alternatives. They offer our students a powerful glimpse into American culture and its construction.

Gorn's introduction is brilliant. In just over thirty pages of lucid prose, he sketches the life of William Holmes McGuffey and his readers, explores the social context in which the readers flourished, and cogently critiques their message and their pedagogy. His brief bibliography and the endnotes to his introduction reveal broad, current reading in relevant literature.

The selections are drawn from the *First* through the *Sixth McGuffey's Eclectic Reader*, the third edition of the series originally published in the 1830s. Rather than presenting the selections in the random order that McGuffey favored, Gorn has arranged the selections according to twelve themes that emerge from the volumes: childhood, family, virtues, vices, character, education, men and women, religion, work ethic, citizenship, history, and literature. The themes clearly increase in sophistication from the first to the last, and reflect the increasing difficulty and sophistication of the readers themselves from the first to the sixth reader. The *First Reader* appears here only once; the other readers are represented between a dozen and nearly two dozen times, with the *Sixth Reader* carrying the greatest burden.

To capture the fullness of the cultural vision constructed by the readers, students need to consider more than those twelve themes, for the silences the readers enforce are as important as the images they provide. Social class, ethnicity, and race, for example, do not exist in the world that McGuffey created. Though flourishing in an era of vast conflicts--Reconstruction, labor warfare, industrialism, socialism, feminism, monopoly capitalism, immigration, urbanization, and other processes, ideas, and movements--the only conflicts that emerge here are personal, not social, moral conflicts, whose resolutions are never thorny or ambiguous. Meanwhile, the uniformity of the images McGuffey offers misleadingly imply a cultural conformity

that never existed in the nineteenth century. The pedagogy embedded in the readers discouraged inquiring into alternative ideas.

All social history, popular culture, or history of childhood courses might profit from this volume. It provides highly accessible insights into images and ideas that millions of children consumed. Through its introduction, it also provides insights into the silences and omissions that helped shape their consciousness. Gorn is on the mark when he describes the Readers as "Educating America."

University of Georgia

Ronald E. Butchart

Robert D. Schulzinger. *U.S. Diplomacy Since 1900.* New York, NY & Oxford, UK, 1998. Fourth edition. Pp. ix, 437. Cloth, \$21.95; ISBN 0-19-510631-8.

Robert Schulzinger has done it again. In this, the fourth edition of his survey of United States diplomacy in the twentieth century, he has provided a text remarkable in its combination of breadth and readability. In this book's tightly packed sixteen chapters, Schulzinger manages to provide a classic account of United States foreign relations since the turn of the century.

Schulzinger begins his book with a look at "The Setting of American Foreign Policy." In addition to an examination of makers of foreign policy and the influence of "outsiders" on national policy, this chapter provides a retrospective look at the century. This is one of the most important contributions of the book. Benefiting from hindsight possible only at the end of the century, Schulzinger is able to assess one hundred years of American foreign relations. It has been, as he points out, an "Age of Interdependence and Imperialism."

The twin themes of imperialism and interdependence serve as connective tissue drawing the whole work together. Schulzinger takes a balanced look at the policy with which the United States pursued its imperial interests, both political and economic, in the rest of the world. Through this pursuit, he notes, the United States created a sense of interdependence between this country and those with which we have dealt.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this book is its readability and balance. Schulzinger manages to analyze complex issues in accessible prose, which he packs with anecdotes certain to enliven the most torpid reader. The balanced nature of the work is clear in that he examines various perspectives of controversial issues. He considers numerous influences in foreign relations, from revisionism to domestic politics and public opinion. Finally, he provides frequent historiographical analyses of issues that foster comparison between his assessments of particular topics and those of other historians.

This latest edition of Schulzinger's book benefits from an illustrious pedigree. His earlier editions of the text have been long recognized as among the most

comprehensive and accessible classroom texts on U.S. foreign relations. The fourth edition reflects similar attributes, yet includes coverage of the last years of this century, making the current edition still more useful in the classroom than its predecessors. Unfortunately, the editorial effort in the book, particularly in the later chapters, seems to have waned, as evidenced by typographical errors. These shortcomings, however, are not Schulzinger's own. His work is first rate.

This book would be particularly appropriate as a text for diplomatic history or twentieth century American politics courses. Its breadth and readability make it useful for students in advanced secondary or undergraduate college or university courses. Perhaps the most advantageous element of this book for a teacher is that it introduces a plethora of topics that could be expanded through classroom lectures, discussions, or research projects. It will continue to serve, as have previous editions, as a standard work in the history of the foreign relations of the United States.

Montana State University-Billings

Matthew A. Redinger

Robert H. Abzug. *America Views the Holocaust, 1933-1945: A Brief Documentary History.* Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1999. Pp. xv, 236. Cloth, \$39.95; ISBN 0-312-21819-2.

Renata Polt, trans. and ed. *A Thousand Kisses: A Grandmother's Holocaust Letters.* Tuscaloosa & London: University of Alabama Press, 1999. Pp. xvii, 210. Cloth, \$29.95; ISBN 0-8173-0930-6.

The contemporaries of the Holocaust are often divided into three categories: victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. While each category is problematic, this nonetheless is a useful approach for teachers working with students just beginning to study the Holocaust. Each category can be studied through primary sources, although, as Raul Hilberg has pointed out, each raises its own particular problems. (See Hilberg's essay in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham Peck, eds., *The Holocaust and History*, Indiana University Press, 1998, for a discussion of "Sources and Their Uses.") The two books under consideration here present primary source documents related to the experiences of victims and bystanders.

A Thousand Kisses presents the letters of Henriette Pollatschek, who was born in Bohemia in 1870. Although she was not a practicing Jew, and indeed converted to Catholicism in 1939, Henriette--known to her family as Mamina--was classified as a Jew by the Nazi conquerors of Czechoslovakia. She suffered from the increasing legal and social discrimination against Czech Jews before being transported to Treblinka in October 1942.

The story of Henriette Pollatschek illuminates two relatively neglected areas of the Holocaust experience: the fate of the elderly and obstacles to emigration. The two

are clearly related: the decision to leave one's homeland was obviously more difficult for older Jews. Mamina's letters are filled with the problems faced by elderly would-be immigrants. What should she take and what should she leave behind out of a lifetime's possessions? Could she master a new language? How could the details of her estate be managed? Most poignant are her fears of becoming a burden to younger family members. The complex bureaucratic obstacles to emigration are also illustrated in Mamina's dealings with tax officials, Gestapo officers, and foreign consulates.

While *A Thousand Kisses* is an important addition to Holocaust literature, there are a few problems with the book's possible use as a supplementary text. As in any volume of letters, there are numerous obscure family details that must be explained by the editor, Renata Polt, Pollatschek's granddaughter. Other references also demand extensive explanation, to the point that editorial comments at times nearly overwhelm the letters. Students will be tempted to skip the letters entirely and read only Polt's interpolations. *A Thousand Kisses* lacks both the narrative continuity of memoirs and the daily details and personal insights of diaries.

Robert Abzug, editor of *America Views the Holocaust*, is professor of history and American studies at the University of Texas and author of *Inside the Vicious Heart* (1985), an acclaimed study of American reactions to reports of the Nazi concentration camps in 1945. In *America Views the Holocaust* Abzug has assembled over fifty documents on American responses to Nazi persecution and genocide against the Jews. These include newspaper and magazine articles, letters, official documents, and cartoons. Each source is accompanied by Abzug's brief, informative introductions and comments. The book also includes a chronology, bibliography, and list of "Questions for Consideration."

Abzug's selection of documents is excellent, and student readers will be surprised and at times shocked. The anti-Semitism of such figures as Father Charles Coughlin, while contemptible, is at least understandable at some level. But students will find more difficulty in coming to terms with such writers as Robert E. Asher, a self-described "German-American Jew," who seems at times in his 1933 article to blame the Jews themselves for their suffering. The cool indifference reflected in the minutes of the Bermuda Conference (1943) should also occasion discussion and reflection.

America Views the Holocaust ends with a brief essay by Abzug on historical interpretations of the American response. If a second edition of the book is called for, Professor Abzug might consider including brief excerpts from such works as David Wyman's *The Abandonment of the Jews* (1984) and William Robinstein's *The Myth of Rescue* (1997). This would give student readers the chance to see how historians can come to radically different conclusions and to compare those conclusions with a selection of primary sources.

Both *A Thousand Kisses* and *America Views the Holocaust* belong on reading lists for courses on the Holocaust. Abzug's book would also be of interest for courses

in twentieth-century American history. Either book could serve as a supplementary textbook in Holocaust courses, although *A Thousand Kisses* probably would not be a first choice for most instructors.

Broome Community College

Lorenz J. Firsching

S.J. Ball. *The Cold War: An International History 1947-1991.* London & New York: Arnold, 1998. Pp. xii, 260. Cloth, \$49.95; ISBN 0-340-64546-6. Paper, \$18.95; ISBN 0-340-59168-4.

Now that the Cold War is "history," a spate of works are appearing that take advantage of newly available documents and memoirs. Teachers of twentieth-century diplomatic history and post-1945 U.S. history need, in particular, a solid text that lays out the basics of the Cold War as well as indicates the scope of scholars' opinions.

S.J. Ball, who teaches at the University of Glasgow, essays to fill this need for a usable text and bring a European perspective to what too often is seen in bipolar fashion. Unlike Ronald Powaski who begins his treatment of the Cold War in 1917 in *The Cold War* (1997), Ball starts in 1947 when a cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union became a component of the system of international relations. After an all too brief nod to the historiography of the Cold War in the introduction, Ball treats the Cold War in five chronological chapters. His approach is essentially a factual one that eschews the various debates that would have swirled about interpretations of the Cold War. Although the focus is on the two superpowers, he devotes more attention to the role of the major European powers and the Peoples' Republic of China than is common in many works. Each chapter has extensive endnotes and the book concludes with a brief list of suggested readings.

Ball's work follows a conventional approach to chronology, starting with what he calls the search for preponderance from 1947 to 1952, proceeding through stages: theories of victory (1953-1962), the balance of power (1963-1972), the period of stress on the international system brought on by developments in the third world and strategic weapons from 1973 to 1984, to an end game lasting from 1985 to 1991. Each chapter describes the American and Soviet world views of the period as well as particular problems and areas of stress. A constant found in each chapter is Germany. Ball is able to make use of recent work dealing with the development of nuclear weapons in both the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in examining the political impact of these weapons. The Korean conflict as well as the Vietnam war are brought into the picture as they influenced and were influenced by superpower diplomacy. Ball's observation that after 1965 American Cold War policy became inverted as it became a means to victory in Vietnam rather than the Vietnam war providing a means for pursuing global objectives might not set well with all scholars, but it is an important point nonetheless.

Ball's *Cold War* does not have the authoritative sweep of John Lewis Gaddis's *We Now Know*, nor does it justify a particular position in Cold War historiography as does Gaddis, but it provides a solid factual introduction to the Cold War for upper-division undergraduates. Although a valuable text, Ball's work cannot carry a course devoted to the Cold War; other more specific works are needed. In particular a fuller treatment of the historiography of the Cold War than is provided in the introduction would be helpful because of the diversity of scholarly interpretations.

Converse College

John M. Theilmann

We are always looking for good people to help us with the work of *Teaching History*. If you might be interested in joining us as a book reviewer, a reader of manuscripts (as an outside referee), or as a member of the editorial and advisory boards (openings expected in the next year or so), please contact Stephen Kneeshaw, the editor of *Teaching History*. Contact by e-mail <kneeshaw@cofo.edu> or telephone (417-334-6411, #4264), or send a vitae and cover letter to Kneeshaw at Department of History, College of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, MO 65716-0017.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Fall 1999 issue of *Teaching History* (pp. 103-104) included Kelly A. Woestman's review of *Four Dead in Ohio: Was There a Conspiracy at Kent State?* by William A. Gordon. In the following letter, Gordon offers his counterpoint to the Woestman review.

Woestman chose not to deliver a response to Gordon's criticisms.

December 9, 1999

Editor:

Kelly A. Woestman's review of my book, *Four Dead in Ohio: Was There A Conspiracy at Kent State?*, is riddled with sloppy errors. For example, she writes that I claimed "that no history professor at Kent State would even discuss the tragedy with him." To set the record straight, I interviewed plenty of Kent State professors. What I actually wrote is that a sociology professor who brags that he is Kent State's leading expert on the tragedy was so threatened by my book that in his desperation to find something wrong with it, told me: "I could not put it down," followed by his inane comment: "I like dry, analytical stuff." In other words, the professor complained that my book read too well!

And Woesterman's [sic] claim that I "only pursued avenues that would support (my) belief of a conspiracy" floored me. The book clearly argues that there was no conspiracy among the individual Ohio National Guardsmen, although there was some tantalizing testimony suggesting that a sergeant may have given a localized last-minute order to fire, and that the soldiers may have lied about this after the fact.

Woesterman [sic] also misrepresents my journalistic credentials and never caught on that the book is partly satirical. The book ridicules scholars who cannot find the debate, some of the so-called experts, the sworn trial testimony, and ultimately myself.

Professors looking for more sophisticated reviews can find them at <http://members.aol.com/nrbooks/newinfo.htm>.

Sincerely,

William A. Gordon, Author
Four Dead in Ohio

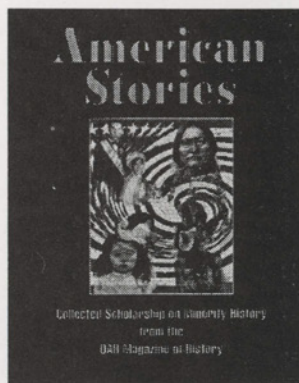
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