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Using Primary Sources in United States History Textbooks to Create Social Justice Connections from Past to Present

Nicole J. Birkhold

A Thesis in the Field of Government

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

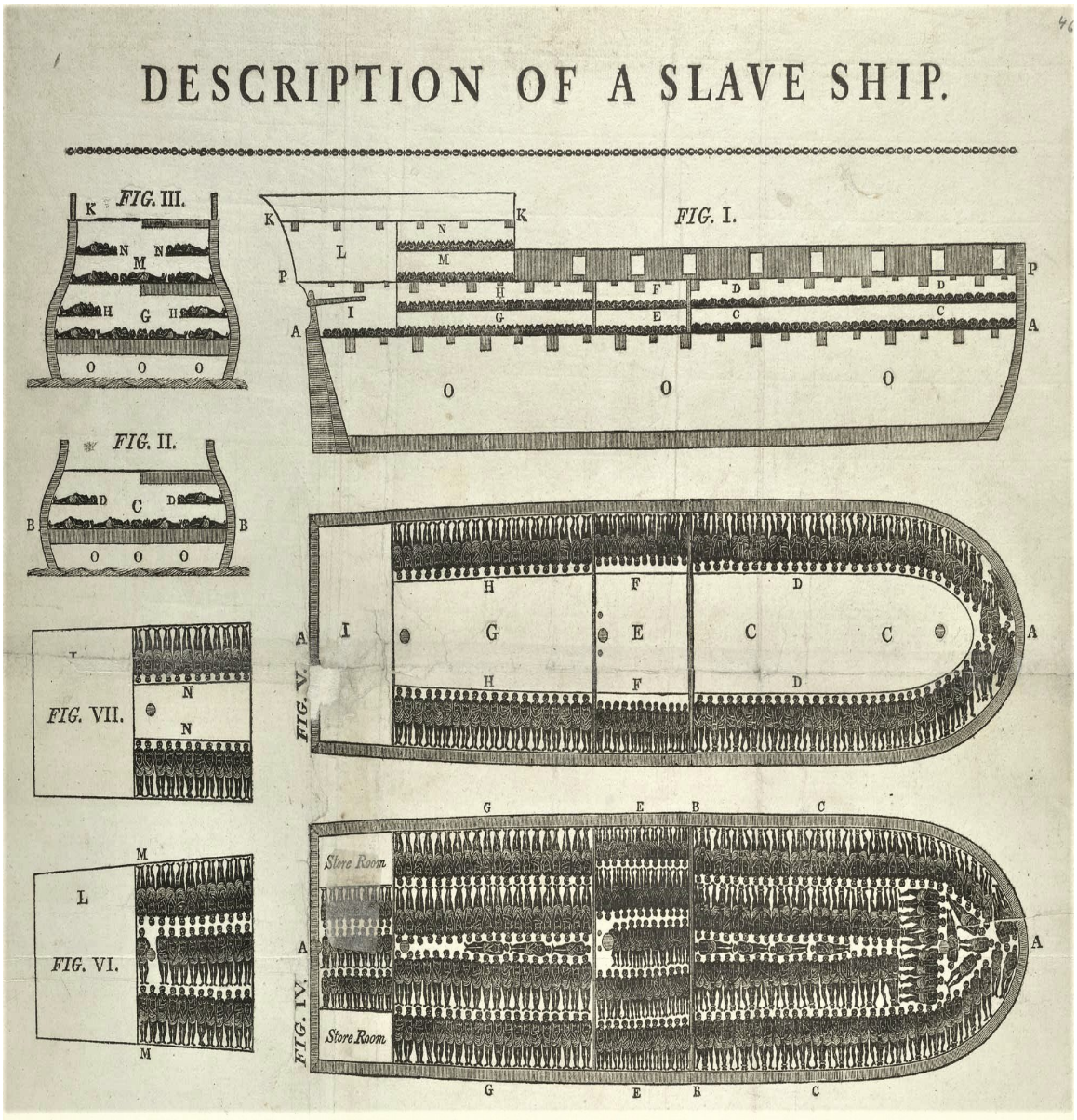
May 2022

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Abstract

Primary sources are tools that can be used in education to provide rich opportunities for helping bring history to life for students. They aid in fostering historical thinking allowing students to understand the present and its linkages to, or legacies from, the past. Primary sources are used in United States history textbooks, but my research has found they are more robustly used in instances where books are teaching historical periods that can be deemed exceptional — as when America declared its independence — and more sparingly when teaching historical periods that examine minority experiences — such as the slave trade, the cause of the South's secession from the Union and the outbreak of the Civil War, or Reconstruction. An increase in the scope and quality of primary sources ins U.S. high school history textbooks concerning African American experiences could allow for students to engage in a higher level of historical thinking preparing them to create linkages from past to present and better understand today's social justice issues, namely, systemic racism.

Frontispiece



The slave ship *Brookes*.

A British slave ship launched in 1781. The diagram was created in 1787.

Dedication

To everyone looking to understand, acknowledge, and fight for social justice, this thesis is for you. I believe each of us can find tangible ways to address inequities in this country and around the world. This is how change is made.

To my husband, Greggory Heil, thank you for your tireless support in myriad ways throughout this process. You are my sounding board, my confidante, and my greatest champion. I love you and I thank you.

To my parents and greater family—aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, grandmother—you raised me to be curious, passionate, and to always stand up for what I believe in. It is thanks to you that I am who I am and have had the courage to pursue this project. Your love and support are felt in so many ways. Thank you.

To my son, Gavin, may you always know what is right in this world and stand up for it. Let your heart lead you when all else fails. You inspire me every day to be someone you can look up to and someone in whom you can find your support. Thank you.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor Shai Dromi for serving as my thesis director. Your encouragement and enthusiasm for this project propelled my writing and research, and above all, my process. Your guidance was paramount to the success of this project.

I would also like to thank Dr. Doug Bond, my research advisor. I will be forever grateful for your willingness to pick up the phone and talk me through decisions when embarking on this process.

To the other professors, TFs, and peers who have inspired and encouraged me along the way, my biggest thanks.

To friends and family who have yet to read a word of this project but sent encouraging texts, cheering emails, and groceries (with wine) when I needed them most, I love you all.

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Chapter I

Introduction

"History does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do."
—James Baldwin (1924–1987)

"Telling the truth about the past helps cause justice in the present. Achieving justice in the present helps us tell the truth about the past."
—James Loewen (1942–2021)

While every country prioritizes its social services differently, almost all agree that education of their youth is of utmost importance. Historians, psychologists, sociologists, scientists, and educators concur. In the United States, Horace Mann developed a plan for public education that would be universal, non-sectarian, and create equal opportunities for citizens.[1]

The teaching of history is included in this public education for important reasons. When we know our past, it can help us understand our present and shape our future. It shows us how society can develop, change, and evolve and it shows us what past events have influenced subsequent ones. It helps us understand that events and experiences of the present are not happening in a vacuum but have grown out of past legacies. It also helps show us the responsibility we have for building on those legacies for future generations.

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[1] Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States: A Study and Interpretation of American Educational History* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1919), 167.

One of the most important areas where history education can be utilized to shape—for the better—the present and the future is race relations in the United States. The history of race in the U.S. is fraught, and disagreements on how to teach what happened in the past and how it is shaping the future have come under great scrutiny, particularly recently. But what has also come to be recognized more recently is the depth of systemic racism—longstanding inequalities that are embedded in the structures and institutions of the country involving government, health, economics, and other facets of society in the United States. In order for systemic racism to be unwound, current, but more importantly future, generations need to understand its depth, breadth, and how it came to be: its history.

But history is not static. Marty Sleeper, an expert in the field of teaching and curriculum development, says, "Interpreting what happened in the past is a process that continually undergoes change and revision." He goes on to say that this is an important part of teaching, and he encourages students to "find meaningful connections between a time in history and their present worlds."[2] As the world changes and grows, our understanding of history, of legacies and linkages, and the broad and varied perspectives of those who experienced that history, are encompassed to greater degrees. Our acknowledgement of voices that have traditionally been silenced increases. These long-muted voices often belong to those who have historically been marginalized in Western societies: Black people and people of color, indigenous peoples, women, the LGBTQ community, and others. This increased acknowledgement and inclusion does not happen

[2] Marty Sleeper, "What I Got Wrong When I Taught Reconstruction," Facing Today: A Facing History Blog (Facing History and Ourselves, May 14, 2015). https://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/what-i-got-wrong-when-i-taught-reconstruction

by accident, however. It is an active process that takes work, dedication, and a willingness to confront less-than-comfortable events, ideologies, and institutions. It requires adherence not just to Friedrich Nietzsche's first two approaches to history—the monumental and the antiquarian (history that is "celebratory and nostalgic")—but also to a third: the critical, which "judges and condemns."[3]

Updating History

In the Netherlands—a country instrumental in the trans-Atlantic slave trade—one institution is taking a deep look at how to address the country's role in the perpetuation of slavery. At the famed Rijksmuseum, a temporary exhibit focuses on 10 real-life stories of people involved in slavery—enslaved persons, slave owners, those who resisted, and others. The museum also displays additional placards next to 77 items from its permanent collection. The new placards accompany the existing ones that have for years told the traditional story of the people, places, and items they depict. Many of the works on permanent display have connections to the country's past relationship with slavery, but those connections had not been told. As the museum says:

> It's a relationship you probably won't notice at first glance, and one you won't read about on the [original] museum label next to the object: from the nutmeg harvested by enslaved people, to an enslaved woman shipped off to the Netherlands; from the image of a dance party on a Surinamese plantation that hides critical messages about the slaveholder, to the pulpit from which an 18th-centruy legal philosopher made the case for abolishing slavery.[4]

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[3] Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), xiv.

[4] "Rijks Museum and Slavery," Exhibit at Rijks Museum, Netherlands, November 2021. https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/rijksmuseum-and-slavery

Together, these new and old placards present a more complete picture of the Netherland's past and illumines the voices of those who were neither white nor in positions of power—the subjects of much of Western history. These primary sources on display—paintings, artworks, and images—help create linkages between the experiences of enslaved people and minority populations, and the history that is traditionally taught. These linkages then help highlight the connections between Dutch involvement in the slave trade and the country's economy, technology, society, and ideologies in today's society.

A national museum that tackles these ideas and creates linkages from past to present with new perspectives is a good step and one that informs the public. But education is another realm where tackling these ideas is important as well. Eric Foner, historian and professor at Columbia University writes: "Historians view the constant search for new perspectives as the lifeblood of historical understanding. Outside the academy, however, the act of reinterpretation is often viewed with suspicion, and 'revisionist' is invoked as a term of abuse."[5] This, then, is the beginning of the problem. If there is a gap between good history—the understanding that historical truth is fluid and ever-changing, and that including more perspectives of the same historical period is necessary, and the general public's belief that history is factually fixed and permanent—how does history education that bridges the academy and the broader public react? What might be left out as compromises are struck when trying to bridge that gap?

It is my belief, and that of many academics, that textbooks—the main tool at the disposal of high school history teachers—do not adequately provide historical linkages when it comes to the experiences of minorities in the United States, specifically African

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[5] Foner, *Who Owns History,* xiv.

Americans and descendants of enslaved people. As the Rijksmuseum exhibit shows, primary sources, and the fresh perspectives on how they are described, might possibly provide a roadmap for how to better history pedagogy.

Perhaps including more primary sources *within* textbooks could help create linkages of minority experiences in this country that could better help explain—and help students understand—modern-day systemic racism as a legacy of slavery. Textbooks are the most ubiquitous tool in history education, and they are hard to get removed while standards for history education remain in place. I argue that rather than tossing them out, they can be made better. Textbooks have improved over the decades to include African Americans and, in places, their experiences in the United States. But linkages are still not obvious as to how enslaved and newly freed people were treated in the U.S. compared to how Black people are treated today. Textbooks treat slavery as a disease that has been overcome and as such, the lingering symptoms are ignored. Rather than understand that slavery and racism were intertwined from the beginning and that eliminating one did not eliminate the other, textbooks must address the vacuum of racism that was left when emancipation occurred.

American Exceptionalism

A hurdle needs to be addressed before textbooks can progress. To highlight the historical linkages in minority experiences, textbook authors are faced with an American legacy that is not deemed exceptional historically. American Exceptionalism is a theme that runs through U.S. history textbooks, and when historical events and ideas surface that refute this theme, they are often ignored or treated as something that America has overcome. Godfrey Hodgson, an American historian, explains:

> The most perfunctory trawl through the high school and college textbooks of the Cold War period illustrate how pervasive was the exceptionalist theme. Americans who were at high school in the 1950s and at college in the 1960s were brought up with assumptions about the exceptional historical identity of the United States as uncontested as the air they breathed. . . . In these texts, we can actually watch young Americans being taught a quasi-official exceptionalism that takes little account of inconvenient facts. They could not be expected to see it for the tangle of dangerous half-truths that it was.[6]

These half-truths allow students to use American Innocence (the sister of American Exceptionalism, according to Roberto Sirvent and Danny Haiphong) to "remember slavery and settler colonialism as events of the past, not as structures of domination that haunt our present."[7] These half-truths also cause students to believe that no matter its missteps, America's heart has always been in the right place and those missteps were a mere part of the country's continued movement toward justice, liberty, democracy, and equality. As Sirvent and Haiphong write, for men "the inherent superiority and good intentions of the U.S. provide absolution for crimes against humanity."[8]

The idea of American Exceptionalism severs the portrayal of links in history that do not align with these ideals. It does not allow for the negative to have chain reactions and enduring legacies, for that is not on theme. Piotr Szpunar, a professor in political theory, conflict, and memory, believes that American Exceptionalism allows society and students to remember history in ways that help ease the discomfort of negative parts of

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[6] Godfrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 94.

[7] Roberto Sirvent and Danny Haiphong, *American Exceptionalism and American Innocence: A People's History of Fake News-- from the Revolutionary War to the War on Terror* (New York: Skyhorse, 2019), xxiv.

[8] Sirvent and Haiphong, *American Exceptionalism*, xvi.

the past, and this type of remembering absolves "society from the responsibility to act in the present."[9] The discomfort he alludes to is that felt by white Americans. What are African Americans (and white people as well) to think about situations today where Black men earn 75 cents to every $1.00 earned by a white man,[10] or that only 44% of Black families own their homes while 73.7% of white families do,[11] or why 62% of white students graduate from college once they begin compared with 38% of Black students?[12]

How can these discrepancies be explained if the structures of racism that were entwined with slavery fell along with emancipation? No linkages in high school textbooks allow for this. The continuum of events has been severed. American Exceptionalism does not allow for this understanding because the actions of slavery and racism have been justified, excused, overcome—painted as forgettable blemishes in American Exceptionalism narratives that are perpetuated in textbooks.

Finding these linkages are important. Julio Noboa, a professor in the College of Education at the University of Texas at El Paso says:

> Our students should be told the entire truth of our nation's travails as well as its triumphs, its perils as well as its promise. Only then can they be prepared to conform the global challenges of tomorrow, long after we are

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[9] Piotr M. Szpunar, "Memory Politics in the Future Tense: Exceptionalism, Race, and Insurrection in America," *Memory Studies* 14, no. 6 (2021): 1272-1284. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211054327, 1275.

[10] Eileen Patten, "Racial, Gender Wage Gaps Persist in U.S. Despite Some Progress," Pew Research Center, July 1, 2016. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/01/racial-gender-wage-gaps-persist-in-u-s-despite-some-progress/

[11] Michele Lerner, "One Home, a Lifetime of Impact," *Washington Post*, July 23, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/07/23/black-homeownership-gap/

[12] Emily Tate, "College Completion Rates Vary by Race and Ethnicity, Report Finds," April 26, 2017. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/04/26/college-completion-rates-vary-race-and-ethnicity-report-finds

> gone. Teaching students the bogus myth of "American Exceptionalism" will not prepare them for the future.[13]

Primary Sources

Since many scholars have determined that American Exceptionalism pervades U.S. history textbook narratives, and primary sources have been heralded as tools to better teach history in classrooms, I wanted to see how primary sources were currently used in popular textbooks. It was my hypothesis that the primary sources used, as well as the narrative of these books in areas of history that could be told through a lens of American Exceptionalism, would be robust and that fewer primary sources would be utilized in instances of American history that was not deemed exceptional or could be construed as a failure on the part of the United States. I took a deep look at how many, how well, and how engaging the primary sources in textbooks are used in areas deemed exceptional in American history and compared that with how primary sources are used in negative areas of American history.

I found, as have other scholars,[14] that American Exceptionalism pervades U.S. history textbooks both in their narratives and the primary sources that accompany the narrative. I hypothesized that when events in history are portrayed as part of the American Exceptionalism legacy or chain of events, the primary sources used to relay these events in U.S. high school history textbooks are myriad and encompassing; when

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[13] Julio Noboa, "From the Battlefront of the Texas History Wars: Contending with 'American Exceptionalism,'" *Multicultural Education* 19, no. 1 (2011): 44–45.

[14] See, for example: Tim Walker, "Educators Call Attention to Racist Stereotypes in Textbooks, Impact on Students," National Education Association (NEA), July 28, 2016. https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/educators-call-attention-racist-stereotypes-textbooks-impact; James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything American History Textbooks Get Wrong* (New York: New Press, 2019); Hodgson, *Myth of American Exceptionalism.*

events are not part of that exceptionalism narrative, the primary sources were scarcer and more selective, perhaps repetitively highlighting the few small victories during these times. If this observation proves to be true, the outcome could then be that students' abilities to make connections and linkages between historical events of the past and those of the present would be limited, since primary sources have been found to help explain and create these corrections.

Lee Ann Potter, director of learning and innovation at the Library of Congress and the lead of education and volunteer programs at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington D.C., highlights the key elements that teaching with primary sources allow for: (1) they encourage critical thinking; (2) they remind students that the past was once the present; and (3) they help students understand historical events and processes and their significance to the present.[15] Conversely, in other time periods, and also to Potter's point, the primary sources used in events that tell an exceptionalism narrative would allow students to easily see how consequent events were built on these alleged exceptional time periods. If the same amount, size, quality, and thoroughness of primary sources were used in textbooks to accompany a narrative with varied and complete perspectives in time periods not deemed exceptional as are employed to accompany exceptional events, perhaps students would have more tools to better make linkages between past and current racial injustices. It would help students understand the structural nature of racism that has its roots in the very institutions on which this country was founded. That is why this research matters, and what I hope to contribute to the existing literature.

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[15] Lee Ann Potter, "Connecting with the Past: Uncovering Clues in Primary Source Documents," *Social Education* 67, no. 7 (2003): 372.

I created a systematic approach to evaluating primary-source usage in textbooks. The method of this evaluation allowed for quantitative data to be extracted, and for qualitative and holistic examination of material and narrative to be included in the analysis. I aimed to contribute raw data on primary sources as well as content analysis to find strengths and weaknesses in how minority history is taught in U.S. high school history classrooms via textbooks—the most commonly used teaching tool.

The Intersection of History Teaching, Primary Sources, and Race

The teaching of race, racism, and the Black experience in U.S. classrooms is fraught. Critical race theory; diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice curriculums; and color-blind teaching are all buzzwords that create new—and rekindle old—versions of "culture wars." But my research found that addressing the nation's history with regard to African Americans is shown to be important in relieving racial guilt and shame in students. This is the opposite of the main allegations of teaching with race in mind. By demonstrating to students that we are talking about a systemic issue they can see and understand for themselves with better primary-source use in textbooks regarding the Black experience, rather than individual actors and individual feelings of prejudice, it may help alleviate and contextualize racial guilt.[16]

In 1975, Charles Glock and others conducted a survey of adolescents to determine their levels of prejudice. They found that explanations of racial prejudice in society that are sensitive to historical circumstances as reasons for their being are the most helpful

[16] Katherine Cartwright, "Teaching Children that Racism is Structural is Key to Finally Eradicating It," *Washington Post,* March 23, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/03/10/teaching-children-that-racism-is-structural-is-key-finally-eradicating-it/

tools in lessening adolescent prejudice. They argue "such reasoning makes it clear that the group itself is not at fault."[17] Robert Moore and Beryle Banfield expand on this, saying that studying time periods such as Reconstruction can help students find links to today that help create a "just, nonracist society" once students understand their role and know they are not at fault.[18]

Teaching about race and racism can also help alleviate the shame Black students might feel at the victimization of African Americans that is often portrayed in history books.[19] For example, James Loewen is a historian and author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything American History Textbooks Get Wrong*, one of the more recent and most comprehensive content-analysis reviews of high school history textbooks. He highlights the tragedy of African American students believing the hurtful myths taught about African Americans and their role in governments during Reconstruction, among other examples.[20]

Much of the existing literature from academics, historians, and educators outlines the way forward—the way to present a multi-faceted, varied, and complete history of the United States in all its glory and failures—is to toss out the history textbooks and instead construct a curriculum based chiefly on primary sources. This was done by Christopher Martell for his students when he crafted reader packets assembled from primary sources,

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[17] Glock, cited in Robert B. Moore, and Beryle Banfield, *Reconstruction: The Promise and Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1983), 5.

[18] Moore and Banfield, *Reconstruction*, 5.

[19] Laura J. Dull, "Teaching African Enslavement: A Pluralistic Approach," *History Teacher* 51, no. 2 (February 2018): 189-220.

[20] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 157.

oral histories, and historical and journalistic writings.[21] He did this in part to challenge his students to see various perspectives. Other teachers agree and have done similar or wish they could. This all shows that textbooks are a powerful point of contention. But rather than discard them, what about making textbooks better in a specific way: by adding more and better primary sources to them. In telling the narrative of American Exceptionalism —that America is unique in its religious freedom, freedom of speech, fight for equality, justice, equal rights, and democracy—primary sources are assumed to factor widely in textbooks. They encourage students to find those linkages and legacies in previous and future events related by textbooks. This model should be applied to areas of history where America is not and has not been exceptional, to show what the legacies of these unexceptional periods of history—slavery, prejudice, segregation, and inequality—have reaped in current and future events and institutions. Primary sources chosen to show the historical truth of minority and oppressed populations could help reveal the legacies those histories left on today's society, namely, systemic racism.

Teachers are underpaid, their classrooms are underfunded, and their hands often tied when it comes to using teaching tools outside of what is dictated. What Martell did is wonderful, but often out of reach for the average history teacher. Like it or not, textbooks are still the primary teaching tool in most history classrooms. In an ideal world, students could visit every the Smithsonian Museum, listen to speeches of notable figures, see every document in its original form, and visit the lands of battlefields and movements throughout history. They would all have access to Martell-like reading packets complete with evidence of important historical events relevant to all ethnicities, genders, religions,

[21] Christopher C. Martell and Erin A. Hashimoto-Martell, "Throwing out the Textbook," *Constructing Knowledge*, April 2011, pp. 305-320, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-930-5_17

and sexual orientations. But reality crashes in, and most students are left with a textbook and a teacher tasked with instilling an appreciation of history to dozens if not hundreds of students every day.

On the subject of state-mandated textbooks, Kate Slater writes:

> Many teachers are required by state educational standards to adhere to state-mandated textbooks. As [Christine Caulfield, a retired high school U.S. history teacher who taught in Maine] points out, "Some teachers in other states don't have the ability or the bandwidth to teach outside the scope of the curriculum. Essentially, their state board of education says, 'By Oct. 15, we expect that every single 10th grade class will be on this chapter of the state-mandated textbook.' So the textbook is the center of instruction, and the limitations of the textbooks create an even greater ignorance, because what the students are being taught is a gloss-over."[22]

The task of re-writing textbooks is not a simple fix. Most textbooks undergo a review-and-edit process to update editions, taking the opportunity to rewrite, omit, and include new passages and elements somewhat regularly. Some believe this is an easier path to forge.

The research I conducted shows the depth and breadth of primary sources used when dealing with the American Exceptionalism period of history: when America declared its independence from Britain. The sources are larger, more varied, and draw direct connections from previous exceptional ideas of colonists and future events in America's history. Conversely, fewer, smaller, and less engaging primary sources are used in three time periods that deal with the experiences of enslaved and newly freed persons: the slave trade, the cause of the Civil War, and Reconstruction.

I analyzed the ways in which these primary sources are utilized and how they either encourage linkages from past to present or how they do not. Table 1 provides a

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[22] Kate Slater, "Who Chooses the History Textbooks?" TODAY.com, September 10, 2020, https://www.today.com/tmrw/who-chooses-history-textbooks-t190833

snapshot of my findings on how primary sources are engaged within each of the six books analyzed. More nuanced, robust, and in-depth data can be found in the proper findings chapter.

Table 1. Level of primary source engagement per textbook.

	American Declares Independence	The Slave Trade	Cause of Civil War	Reconstruction
The Americans	Robust	Occasional	Occasional	Occasional
The American Journey	Robust	Occasional	Robust	Occasional
Holt American Nation	Robust	Occasional	Robust	Minimal
America: Pathways to the Present	Robust	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
The American Pageant	Robust	Occasional	Minimal	Minimal
American History	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust

Source: thesis author

I also researched what faults scholars believe lie in history education when it comes to race, and if and how textbook narratives and their accompanying primary sources address these faults or perpetuate them. I chose time periods to examine that have been called out by academics as important time periods in both Black American history

and American history in general.[23] Why these periods are important will be discussed in detail in the Observations and Analysis chapter.

It is my hope that this research brings new ideas to the teaching of minority history in this country in order to better serve students, create pathways to understanding race and the truth of racism in this country so as to help eradicate it in our society. Reading this thesis will allow teachers, educators, administrators, school board members, historians, and parents to create tangible, straightforward updates to the teaching of U.S. history. It will help create ideas on how to update curriculums, teaching tools, education policies, and bridge chasms in places where conflict in these areas is rife owing to misunderstandings and lack of common ground. I believe reading this will help all parties understand that students learn best when they are engaged, open, and have all the pieces of history at their fingertips as related by evidence directly from the past. My research shows that textbooks are lacking in certain areas, but there are ways to remedy the deficiencies and many of these remedies are already accessible. Primary sources are available, and textbooks are updatable.

[23] See, for example: Sleeper, "What I Got Wrong"; Olivia B. Waxman, "Schools Are Failing to Teach Reconstruction, Report Says," *Time,* January 12, 2022. https://time.com/6128421/teaching-reconstruction-study/; Ana Rosado, Gideon Cohn-Postar, and Mimi Eisen, "Erasing the Black Freedom Struggle," Zinn Education Project, January 15, 2022. https://www.teachreconstructionreport.org/; Anthea Lipsett, "Slavery History Lessons to Be Compulsory," *Guardian*, August 26, 2008), https://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/aug/26/slavery.schools; Dull, "Teaching African Enslavement, 189-220; and Kate Shuster "Teaching Hard History: American Slavery," Southern Poverty Law Center, January 31, 2018. https://www.splcenter.org/20180131/teaching-hard-history

Chapter II

Literature Review

To understand the connections this paper makes, I believe a careful review of the relevant literature is necessary. Such a review will provide evidence of several factors: why teaching history matters, why textbooks matter, American Exceptionalism in textbooks, why primary sources are important, and why the intersection of education and race is important.

Why History Matters and How it is Taught

Why is teaching history in the classroom important? Numerous educators, academics, and historians have answers to this question, but the general consensus is that understanding the past helps explain the present and guide the future.[24] In encouraging students to study history, the University of Wisconsin noted:

> Because history gives us the tools to analyze and explain problems in the past, it positions us to see patterns that might otherwise be invisible in the present — thus providing a crucial perspective for understanding, (and solving!) current and future problems.[25]

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[24] See, for example, Andrew Ujifusa, "Sure, We Teach History. but Do We Know Why It's Important?" *Education Week*, January 7, 2020. https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/sure-we-teach-history-but-do-we-know-why-its-important/2020/01; Kären Wigen, "History: Informing the Present," Stanford University School of Humanities & Sciences, 2013. https://www.pdffiller.com/294282754-History_broch_web_11_13pdf-You-cannot-understand-; Mark Edele, "What History Can Really Teach US," *Pursuit,* University of Melbourne, June 7, 2019. https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/what-history-can-really-teach-us

[25] "Why Should You Study History?" Department of History, University of Wisconsin. https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/history-careers/why-history/

It can help us see current problems, understand that they exist, how they came to be, and what they mean. The current problem I chose to focus on is systemic/institutional racism. History can also show us patterns or linkages between past and present, and how the present is built upon the past. Howard Zinn, a historian and advocate for updating historical teaching, agrees with the general premise that studying history allows us to "look for answers to the issues and problems" in the world around us, and to "understand and do something" about them.[26] This is the primary reason for encouraging students to make linkages from past to present.

Finding answers in the past to problems of the present can only be done if students understand the connections and legacies history has unfolded on the present. For example, the global non-profit organization Facing History and Ourselves (founded in 1976) created a short curriculum that asks students to consider the history of policing in the United States and its effects on Black people—part of systemic racism. The curriculum highlights slave patrols, black codes, vagrancy laws, and the criminalization of Black life after the Civil War. It asks students to understand policies of the past and their influence on the present.[27] If we can understand systemic racism as a current problem that grew out of historical events, then we can look for answers to the problem.

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[26] Barbara Miner, "Why Students Should Study History: An Interview with Howard Zinn," *Rethinking Schools Magazine*, 1994. https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/why-students-should-study-history/

[27] Facing History and Ourselves, "The History of Slave Patrols, Black Codes, and Vagrancy Laws," April 2021. https://www.facinghistory.org/educator-resources/current-events/policing-legacy-racial-injustice/history-slave-patrols-black-codes-vagrancy-laws

Once the importance of teaching history is established, the "how" becomes relevant, and textbooks are the most common answer. Bruce Lesh, co-founder of the Center for History Education at the University of Maryland, and author of *Why Don't you Just Tell Us the Answer?,* characterizes the most common way of teaching history in high school as "lecture, textbook, and coverage."[28] John Wakefield agrees that "textbook usage has long dominated classroom activities in the United States." He cites studies from 1980 and 1999 showing that (depending on grade level and subject) 70 to 95 percent of activities in U.S. classrooms were estimated to rely on textbooks. Social studies teachers ranked among the highest to use textbooks at 94 percent.[29] Similarly, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) surveyed history teachers from grades 4, 8, and 12. They found on average between 80 and 90 percent of students read from their textbooks daily or weekly.[30] Textbooks appear to be the most commonly used tool in teaching.

This significance has not waned. Those who predicted the decline or even death of the textbook—from Thomas Edison to Steve Jobs and Bill and Melinda Gates—in favor of online materials or other avenues of teaching, have continually been proven

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[28] David Cutler, "High School History Doesn't Have to Be Boring," *Atlantic*, May 1, 2014. https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/05/how-i-teach-history/361459/

[29] John F. Wakefield, "Textbook Usage in the United States," April 2006: 3. Available from: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED491579.pdf.

[30] Diane Ravitch, *A Consumer's Guide to High School History Textbooks* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2004), 14.

wrong. Publishers' print numbers have remained steady, and teachers' and students' desires for printed materials have remained high.[31]

Despite its ubiquity in classrooms, the textbook has withstood a great deal of scrutiny over the years and, according to Lizzi Milligan, for good reason:

> Textbooks are a crucial part of any child's learning. A large body of research has proved this many times and in many different contexts. Textbooks are a physical representation of the curriculum in a classroom setting. They are powerful in shaping the minds of children and young people.[32]

This influence over a student's development is why textbooks and history curriculums are viewed as so important by parents and school administrators alike, and why they are so often fought over. It is also another reason why teaching history is seen as so important.

The American Historical Association and multiple institutions of higher learning view the teaching of history as imperative for good citizenship, and key to providing identity and moral understanding.[33] This influence in these important realms of a student's learning and character development is precisely why what is taught in textbooks is so often in the spotlight. Author Stephen Noonoo said:

> Among contemporary education critics, the textbook is a classic and perennial foil—perhaps because its very construction is essentially a

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[31] Wade Tyler Millward, "Predictions of Print Textbooks' Death Remain Greatly Exaggerated," *EdSurge*, April 26, 2019. https://www.edsurge.com/news/2019-04-26-predictions-of-print-textbooks-death-remain-greatly-exaggerated

[32] Lizzi O. Milligan, "Accessible, Engaging Textbooks Could Improve Children's Learning," The Conversation, November 5, 2021, https://theconversation.com/accessible-engaging-textbooks-could-improve-childrens-learning-74175

[33] American Historical Association (AHA), "Guidelines for the Preparation, Evaluation, and Selection of History Textbooks (June 2018). https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline/guidelines-for-the-preparation-evaluation-and-selection-of-history-textbooks; "Why Study History?" History Department, University of Arizona, December 16, 2019. https://history.arizona.edu/why-study-history; Public History Initiative, "Significance of History for the Educated Citizen," UCLA. https://phi.history.ucla.edu/nchs/preface/significance-history-educated-citizen/

> compromise between experts and politicians, groups with sometimes competing agendas. This is especially true of history texts, which attempt to distill complex and contrasting events into simple, linear narratives, often at the expense of nuance and unpleasant truths. Yet, despite these limitations, textbooks are still the most popular way to teach and learn history.[34]

Intersection with Race

Some of the unpleasant truths that have traditionally been touched upon but not taught in depth in high school history classrooms are elements of history that deal with the Black experience, specifically surrounding slavery and its legacies. Textbooks have downplayed or glossed over the social, cultural, and economic ramifications of slavery. Often, summaries rather than in-depth teaching is used, and often not well, as Cynthia Greenlee notes: "How textbooks summarize this [slavery] history—one characterized by scant documentary record and often from the perspective of European settlers and white Americans—matters."[35] The Lost Cause myth—an ideology created by white Southerners after the Confederacy lost the Civil War, which highlights the righteousness of the South's lifestyle and contends that its leaving the Union was just, heroic and not centered on slavery—was inserted into textbooks not just in the South but all around the country. David Yacovone, an historian and scholar, notes that once textbooks enter the 20th century,

> the "Lost Cause" mythology takes over academia and white supremacy reappears with full force. During the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, it was

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[34] Stephen Noonoo, "Are History Textbooks Worth Using Anymore? Maybe Not, Some Teachers Say," *EdSurge,* June 30, 2020. https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-06-30-are-history-textbooks-worth-using-anymore-maybe-not-say-some-teachers

[35] Cynthia Greenlee, "How History Textbooks Reflect America's Refusal to Reckon with Slavery," *Vox*, August 26, 2019. https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/8/26/20829771/slavery-textbooks-history

> astonishing to see positive assessments of slavery in American history textbooks, which taught that the African American's natural environment was the institution of slavery, where they were cared for from cradle to grave.[36]

Yacovone reviewed more than 50 textbooks dated from 1800 to the 1980s, and found:

> One morning I realized precisely what I was seeing, what instruction, and what priorities were leaping from the pages into the brains of students compelled to read them: white supremacy. . . . Across time and with precious few exceptions, African Americans appeared only as "ignorant negroes," as slaves, and as anonymous abstractions that only posed "problems" for the supposed real subjects of history: white people of European descent.
>
> The assumptions of white priority, white domination, and white importance underlie every chapter and every theme of the thousands of textbooks that blanketed the country. This is the vast tectonic plate that underlies American culture. And while the worst features of our textbook legacy may have ended, the themes, facts, and attitudes of supremacist ideologies are deeply embedded in what we teach and how we teach it.[37]

Textbooks have improved when covering race and most are no longer overtly racist.[38] But as Yacovone notes, misguided themes and attitudes still exist. Additionally, pedagogy still often falls short as evidenced by the many instances of school districts coming under fire for the ways they teach slavery, including asking children to do math

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[36] Liz Mineo, "Harvard Historian Examines How Textbooks Taught White Supremacy," *Harvard Gazette*, September 7, 2020. https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/09/harvard-historian-examines-how-textbooks-taught-white-supremacy/

[37] Donald Yacovone, "Textbook Racism," *Chronicle of Higher Education,* July 22, 2020. https://www.chronicle.com/article/textbook-racism/

[38] Greenlee, "How History Textbooks Reflect."

problems calculating slave beatings,[39] forcing students to pick cotton on a field trip,[40] and asking them to run like slaves on the underground railroad in gym class,[41] among other insensitive and cruel anecdotes.

When it comes to understanding the systemic nature of racism, pedagogy is a problem. Keith Barton, a professor of curriculum and instruction at Indiana University, believes the ways slavery is taught are troubling. He notes, "Schools tend to teach students that slavery is a moral failing of individuals . . . a past problem that was solved by the Civil War, rather than an institution with impacts that African Americans continue to feel today."[42] My research found that the idea that America has overcome its mistakes is common in textbooks and permeates as strongly today as it did during earlier decades. It is common in American Exceptionalism narratives, and has improved very little in textbooks. For many who are invested in progressing textbooks and pedagogy surrounding race, addressing the legacies of slavery and the links to systemic racism is key. Cierra Kaler-Jones, Director of Storytelling for the Communities for Just Schools Fund states:

> Having opportunities to grapple and reckon with this nation's history allows us to analyze how power imbalances perpetuate division and oppression, so that we may dream a path forward toward a world rooted in

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[39] Greenlee, "How History Textbooks Reflect."

[40] Arika Herron, "Runaway-Slave Games. Sanitized Textbooks. Schools Do a Terrible Job Teaching about Slavery," *USA Today*, March 17, 2019. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2019/03/17/history-racist-teacher-slavery-curriculum-textbook-indiana/3141832002/

[41] Herron, "Runaway-Slave Games."

[42] Herron, "Runaway-Slave Games."

> justice, love, and connection. To learn about, name, and understand structural and systemic oppression threatens the status quo.[43]

Similarly, Shantel Gabriel Buggs suggests that "learning about the ways that the history of inequality in this country still informs the inequality that people experience today [is important]."[44] This intersection of race with history teaching and textbooks is what this thesis will address.

State of Textbooks

Textbooks have, of course, changed and evolved over the years and decades. Examining these evolutions is a subject that has been pursued by many scholars since the first textbook was printed to the new ones that have barely left the publishing house. Looking at this evolution can be helpful to students, argue Jordan M. Reed and Christina Connor.[45] They found that comparing a history textbook published in 1956 with the same book in a 2010 version "makes students realize that history is not a fixed concept and that interpretations vary in different books and time periods."[46] This is the progression of history at play. While Reed and Connor note that many changes have been made from mid-century textbooks to modern ones, the more recent ones "are by no means perfect."[47]

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[43] Brenda Álvarez, "We Need to Teach the Truth about Systemic Racism, Say Educators," NEA, May 27, 2021. https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/we-need-teach-truth-about-systemic-racism-say-educators

[44] Álvarez, "We Need to Teach the Truth."

[45] Jordan M. Reed, and Christina Connor, "Re-Reading the American History Textbook in the Global Age," *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 27, no. 2 (2017): 202-211. https://doi.org/10.1353/tnf.2017.0018

[46] Reed and Connor, "Re-Reading the American History Textbook," 203.

[47] Reed and Connor, "Re-Reading the American History Textbook," 209.

The evolution of textbooks has been documented by in-depth content analysis over time and more often than not the authors agree with a finding of "by no means perfect."

John Moore, professor of history at the University of Southern Louisiana, undertook a thorough evaluation of 30 high school history textbooks in 1969.[48] He noted the reliance on textbooks in history courses and stated that while "inspired teachers, projects, and field trips may improve the course, . . . the textbook . . . is the single most important teaching tool because it usually determines not only what will be taught but also how the subject will be taught."[49] The how, Moore found, was with "blatant ethnocentrism."[50] He found that the ways in which textbooks instill "appreciation of the state's rich heritage in order to encourage state consciousness and state pride" produces "ethnocentric belief in the superiority of the state's culture and disparagement of 'outside' contributions"[51]—the "outside" contributions being from communities and cultures other than those that were white and European-descended.

He went on to highlight missing links in African American history. He said those in the South were shocked by the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, but they should not have been if their history books had accurately related the Federal courts' decisions over the previous decades that ruled against "legal barriers discriminating on racial grounds."[52]

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[48] John Robert Moore and William B. Fink, "State History Textbooks: Essays in Ethnocentrism," *Social Education* 33, no. 3 (March 1969): 267-284.

[49] Moore and Fink, "State History Textbooks," 268.

[50] Moore and Fink, "State History Textbooks," 267.

[51] Moore and Fink, "State History Textbooks," 267.

[52] Moore and Fink, "State History Textbooks," 277.

William Fink, chairman of the Social Science Department at State University College, Oneonta, New York, responded to Moore's critique and mostly agreed with him:

> United States history texts . . . lead to ethnocentric belief in the superiority of the nation's culture, they stress 'building citizenship' which frequently means stress on isolated facts rather than insights into persistent problems and divergent views, they avoid controversial issues, they fail to relate the stream of United States history to the broader stream of world history.[53]

According to Loewen, this ethnocentrism still pervades our textbooks. He cites the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving story as one of the most notable examples: "Today, when textbooks promote this ethnocentrism with their Pilgrim stories, they leave students less able to learn from and deal with people from other cultures."[54] Other books, such as Appleby's *American Journey* (p. 67), Boyer's *Holt American Nation* (p. 66), Cayton, et al., *America: Pathways to the Present* (p. 52), and Brinkley's *American History* (p. 42)—all books that I reviewed for this study—tell the story of the Pilgrims and the first Thanksgiving in the ethnocentric manner that Loewen cautioned against.

Further in Loewen's book (one cited and reviewed in sources ranging from NPR to the *New York Times* to hundreds of consequent books and articles out of the academy), he derided the textbooks he had reviewed, citing their Eurocentric views. He published his book after a fellowship at the Smithsonian Institutes. As a professor, Loewen was dumbfounded by the inadequacies of his students' history education following graduation from high school. His research into their high school textbooks found narratives that he considered to be "a white, Eurocentric view of the past" complete with "stale prose and

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[53] Moore and Fink, "State History Textbooks," 281.

[54] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 90.

bland presentations of classroom books."[55] He posits that this Eurocentric view imbued in textbooks does not allow for recognition of injustices and links from period to period around these injustices to be made. He argued:

> Textbooks seldom use the past to illuminate the present. They portray the past as a simple-minded morality play . . . textbooks also keep students in the dark about the nature of history. . . . As a result of all this, most high school seniors are hamstrung in their efforts to analyze controversial issues in our society (I know because I encounter these students the next year as college freshmen).[56]

James Blunt, a former professor at the University of Illinois Chicago writes, in agreement with Loewen, that Eurocentrism in textbooks leads to the "acceptance of poor theories."[57] Marta Aranjo and Otto Spengler[58] concur that Eurocentrism is prevalent in curriculums and can have negative effects. It also can dissuade non-white students from engaging with history, possibly leading to poor marks and general failure in school. "Research finds that the overwhelming dominance of Euro-American perspectives leads many students to disengage from academic learning," wrote author and teacher Christine Sleeter in a 2011 report promoting the academic and social benefits of teaching ethnic studies in schools.[59]

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[55] Hillel Italie, "James W. Loewen, Wrote 'Lies My Teacher Told Me,' Dead at 79," ABC News, August 20, 2021. https://abcnews.go.com/amp/Entertainment/wireStory/james-loewen-wrote-lies-teacher-told-dead-79-79568786

[56] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 6-8.

[57] James M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993), 7.

[58] Marta Araújo and Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, *The Contours of Eurocentrism: Race, History, and Political Texts* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016); Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West.* Charles Francis Atkinson, Translator (New York: Knopf, 1926).

[59] Christine Sleeter, quoted in Alia Wong, "History Class and the Fictions About Race in America," *Atlantic*, October 21, 2015). https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/10/the-history-class-dilemma/411601/.

This Eurocentrism is akin to American Exceptionalism. Loewen argues this is prominent in textbooks as well. "In their pious treatment of the pilgrims, history textbooks introduce the archetype of American Exceptionalism—the notion that the United States is different from, and better than—all other nations on the planet." He argues that the qualities attributed to America in textbooks, such as "good," "strong," "ideal," "hardy," "resilient," and "resourceful," are evident from the "beginning at Plymouth Rock, according to our textbooks."[60]

Further, he states that the U.S. being "fair" is a common theme in textbooks.[61] Godfrey Hodgson claims textbooks "calm[ly]" but "certain[ly]" claim the "ethical superiority not only of the American condition, but also of American ideals."[62] He notes how textbooks champion America's "charity, tolerance, and faith" and "peaceful character."[63] He continues, "In these texts, we can actually watch young Americans being taught quasi-official exceptionalism that takes little account of inconvenient facts."[64]

Hodgson and Loewen are not the only ones who believe that these American Exceptionalism narratives are present and in fact thematic in U.S. history textbooks. Rebecca Fox and Ann Burnette suggest that American Exceptionalism has been "woven

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[60] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 84.

[61] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 213.

[62] Hodgson, *Myth of American Exceptionalism*, 94.

[63] Hodgson, *Myth of American Exceptionalism*, 97.

[64] Hodgson, *Myth of American Exceptionalism*, 98.

into the fabric" of "elementary, middle, and high school textbook guidelines."[65] Kreikemeier states that stereotypes in textbooks of people of Mexican heritage and others "is a manifestation of the ways in which an ideology of American Exceptionalism—built on a sense of Anglo-Protestant superiority—continues to shape contemporary society through U.S. textbooks."[66] Robert Tomes contends that the American Exceptionalist thinking of Frederick Turner made its way into textbooks: "His key contributions to exceptionalist thinking included a dual belief in rugged individualism and egalitarianism, extolling achievement and social mobility based on hard work, dedication and idealization of the self-made man or entrepreneur."[67] Daniel Rodgers,[68] Walter McDougall,[69] David Kaun,[70] Martell and Hashimoto-Martell,[71] and others agree that American Exceptionalism permeates U.S. textbooks.

The idea of American Exceptionalism causes harm. David Kaun writes:

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[65] Rebekah L. Fox, and Ann E. Burnette, "Feel Free to Agree: Promoting American Exceptionalism as Educational Ideology in the Texas Education Knowledge Standards," *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 11, no. 1/2 (2021): 16-35, 22.

[66] Melissa Bender, and Klara Stephanie Szlezák, *Contested Commemoration in U.S. History: Diverging Public Interpretations* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 131.

[67] Quoted in Robert R. Tomes, "American Exceptionalism in the Twenty-First Century," *Survival* 56, no. 1 (February 12, 2014): 27-50. https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2014.882150, 35

[68] Daniel T. Rodgers, "American Exceptionalism Revisited," *Rarity* 24, no. 2 (2004): 21-47.

[69] Walter A. McDougall, "American Exceptionalism . . . Exposed," Foreign Policy Research Institute October 2012. https://www.fpri.org/article/2012/10/american-exceptionalism-exposed/

[70] David E. Kaun, "Attitudes Toward Inequality: Racism and Other Varieties of American Exceptionalism," *Journal of Socio-Economics* 37, no. 2 (2008): 821-835. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2006.12.052

[71] Martell and Hashimoto-Martell, "Throwing out the Textbook," 305-320.

> Since history textbooks present the American past as 390 years of progress and portray our society as a land of opportunity in which folks get what they deserve and deserve what they get, the failures of working-class Americans to transcend their class origin inevitably get laid at their own doorstep.[72]

This guilt and shame he describes ring true in all minority experiences that do not fit with the American Dream narrative of hard work equaling prosperity. Of the optimism that textbooks espouse as to the American condition, Loewen says it can be:

> something of a burden for students of color, children of working-class parents, girls who notice the dearth of female historical figures, or members of any group that has not achieved socio-economic success. The optimistic approach prevents any understanding of failure other than blaming the victim. No wonder children of color are alienated.[73]

Tina Heafner, president of the National Council for the Social Studies and professor of education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, says Black history is often taught through "the prism of victimization and oppression instead of 'persistence and resistance.'"[74] She sees American Exceptionalism and the dominant white culture as imbued in curriculums.[75] Similarly, in a 1971 review of history textbooks, Melton McLaurin noted the lack of agency given to African Americans in textbooks, which can cause harm to Black students:

> Negroes are never portrayed as actors; rather they are always acted upon, always described as passive agents. . . . There is [also] a deliberate attempt to perpetuate the images of Negroes as emotional, trusting, lazy, child-like

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[72] Kaun, "Attitudes Toward Inequality," 825.

[73] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 6.

[74] Heafner, cited in Nicole Pelletiere, and Katie Kindelan, "'Children are Not Born Racist,' Yet Teaching Anti-Racism Not Mandated in US Schools," Good Morning America, ABC News, June 30, 2020. https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/story/teachers-reinventing-black-history-anti-racism-taught-schools-71450018

[75] Pelletiere and Kindelan, "'Children are Not Born Racist."

> creatures. . . . Another inescapable conclusion is that Negroes are made to seem to prefer their position, for almost no attention is given to their efforts to become active members of society.[76]

This is the harm Black students may experience.

Noting the underlying theme of American Exceptionalism is important as textbooks are analyzed. Understanding why it has been included is important as well. The "quasi-official exceptionalism" Hodgson refers to is not officially decreed by the U.S., but nearly so. In other countries, similar narratives are made official. According to Majid Al-Haj, when countries form, they create narratives to justify their existence and foster patriotism and nation building, to give direction to the future based on a past.[77] Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn agree, arguing that for many the purpose of teaching history is to instill patriotism and teach a unified national identity.[78] They argue that the problem with this directive lies in deciding who gets to choose the identity or what stories are used to teach this narrative. Sirkka Ahonen argues these narratives are crafted by the political and social elite of these often-fledgling countries and minorities tend to be excluded from the carefully constructed justifications.[79] Ahonen argues that such narratives inevitably form the basis of school history curricula: "Narratives are symbolic tools that mediate shared

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[76] Melton McLaurin, "Images of Negroes in Deep South Public School State History Texts," *Phylon (1960–)* 32, no. 3 (1971): 245. https://doi.org/10.2307/273925

[77] Majid Al-Haj, "National Ethos, Multicultural Education, and the New History Textbooks in Israel," *Curriculum Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (January 12, 2005): 47-71. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873x.2005.00315.x.

[78] Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Antoinette Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

[79] Sirkka Ahonen, "Politics of Identity through History Curriculum: Narratives of the Past for Social Exclusion—or Inclusion?" *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 33, no. 2 (November 8, 2001): 179. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270010011202

experiences within community . . . [and they] become objects of collective identification."[80]

But what happens when certain identities are left out? What happens when the elites who are crafting these narratives that lead to identity construction do not include swaths of the population—most notably and commonly, minority communities? Ahonen argues that these narratives are imposed on all, regardless of participation in them or truth felt in them. One way they are imposed is through the classroom:

> It was the task of the common school to convey these narratives to the whole community, but such narratives were developed in a way that ignored the experiences of each 'nation's' ethnic and social minorities (e.g., Smith 1991, Füredi 1992).[81]

The reference here is primarily to Central Europe in the 19th century. Ahonen's paper focuses on Estonia and Germany, but she could easily be talking about the United States. She argues that narratives and their telling in schools can be reconstructed, remedied to include more identities, as they were for many European countries after World War II—and as some may argue they have been in the United States. A common argument is that progress has been made. But without true inclusion of the minority perspective into the narrative—good and bad—discrimination, subordination racism, and institutional racism will all maintain. Additionally, negative psychological effects on children, their identity,

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[80] Ahonen, "Politics of Identity," 179.

[81] Ahonen, "Politics of Identity," 180.

sense of belonging, and sense of self have all been demonstrated when representation in the narrative of one's country is lacking.[82]

Over time, more multicultural content has been included in history textbooks, and this approach has been put forth by scholars and educators as a solution. But the theme of American Exceptionalism and its consequences remains. Andrew Hartman investigates the differences in curriculums in the area of race, and how teaching of race relations gave way to a softer version when multiculturalism was introduced.[83] On the surface, this appears to be an encompassing, inclusive solution. It is seen as "legitimizing diversity, empowering minorities and disadvantaged groups, and [deals] with problems of equality and equity."[84]

However, critics disagree on two fronts. From the right, critics argue "a common core curriculum and a common historical narrative"[85] is what is needed for unity and to bridge polarization. They urge teaching that America is exceptional and focusing on its accomplishments will instill patriotism and bind students together in American classrooms.[86] Others on the right argue that the way to create an egalitarian classroom

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[82] For example, see: Ahonen, "Politics of Identity"; Reed and Connor, "Re-Reading the American History Textbook"; Leon F. Burrell and Robert L. Walsh, "Teaching White Students Black History," New England Board of Higher Education, 2001: 31-32; Michèle Lamont et al., *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[83] Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

[84] Al-Haj, "National Ethos," 47.

[85] Al-Haj, "National Ethos," 47.

[86] Lamar Alexander, "Putting the Teaching of American History and Civics Back into Our Classrooms out of Many, One: E Pluribus Unum," Heritage Foundation, March 14, 2003. https://www.heritage.org/education/report/putting-the-teaching-american-history-and-civics-back-our-classrooms-out-many-one.

and to handle diverse student bodies is to teach with a colorblind attitude; one that says, "I don't see color, I only see kids."[87]

Al-Haj highlights arguments from critics on the left:

> [Multiculturalism education] attempts to "absorb Black radical demands for the restructuring of school knowledge and pedagogical practices' shifting the attention to 'sensitizing White teachers and school administrators to minority differences" (McCarthy, p. 268). Consequently, "by focusing on sensitivity training and on individual differences, multicultural proponents typically skirt the very problem which multicultural education seeks to address: White Racism" (McCarthy, p. 269).
>
> A similar conclusion was reached by Ladson-Billings (1996), who argued that somewhere in the "celebration of multiculturalism," multicultural discourse moved to an "equality of difference," thus overlooking or marginalizing issues of race and racism. In such a discourse, there is no mention of the historical and sociocultural reality of people of color (p. 252).[88]

This is the innate failure of multiculturalism as it does not "challenge the dominant ideological hegemony."[89] It does not allow for an in-depth teaching of the reality of Black Americans and their experiences of systemic racism, either historically or presently. Furthermore, as the multicultural curriculum is usually still led and constructed by the dominant groups of society, it is "usually emptied of its political and social content and becomes a form of pluralism that ignores the crucial disputes in the wider society, particularly those that run counter to the interests of the majority/dominant groups."[90]

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[87] Axinja Hachfeld, et al., "Should Teachers be Colorblind? How Multicultural and Egalitarian Beliefs Differentially Relate to Aspects of Teachers' Professional Competence for Teaching in Diverse Classrooms," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 48 (2015): 44-55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.02.001

[88] Al-Haj, "National Ethos," 48.

[89] Al-Haj, "National Ethos," 48.

[90] Al-Haj, "National Ethos," 48.

Ellie Vasta agrees that "multiculturalism is essentially backward-looking" and "runs the risk of ignoring institutional racism, and gender and class discrimination."[91]

In all critiques, I saw the same general problem: minorities and their negative experiences are not heard from. They may be seen, but the truth of their lived experiences is not taught. Rather than multiculturalism, which can be simultaneously absorbing and othering, a focus on teaching the historical experiences of minorities from past to present, and creating linkages that help illuminate today's social ills, could present a clear understanding of the institutions that perpetuate racism and its structural nature.

When it comes to textbooks helping students create linkages in order to properly understand history, Witgutoff and Santos-Rivera, in their textbook content analysis review, find that "important topics were presented in a fragmentary fashion and no attempt was made to clarify what they perceived to be the linkages between race, sex, and class issues, and such forces as imperialism, immigration, labor unrest, and the women's suffrage movement."[92] Their study focused primarily on how Puerto Rico was portrayed in textbooks, but I believe similar ideas could be drawn with respect to fragmented approaches to African American history.

One of the consistent criticisms of many of the above-mentioned and other textbook reviews is the lack of objectivity or a systematic approach to textbook content analysis. Garcia and Tanner explain:

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[91] Ellie Vasta, "Multiculturalism and Ethnic Identity: The Relationship between Racism and Resistance," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 29, no. 2 (August 1, 1993): 214. https://doi.org/10.1177/144078339302900204

[92] Quoted in Jesus Garcia and David E. Tanner, "The Portrayal of Black Americans in U.S. History Textbooks," *The Social Studies* 76, no. 5 (1985): 201. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00377996.1985.10114468

> What becomes apparent as one reviews the research is that there have been a substantial number of attempts to analyze the accuracy with which textbooks portray race and important related social issues, but these attempts have not been systematic. The investigations available in the literature are generally subjective in nature.[93]

He goes on to create a method that asks eight questions about the content of textbooks. While this method is systematic, it does not necessarily eliminate the subjectivity of "feelings" that the author discourages, as the questions themselves offer room for subjectivity.

Rahima Wade agrees that most content review analyses of textbooks lack a systematic approach, and in her 1993 review she lists specific categories one can utilize when evaluating textbook reviews to ensure they maintain as much of a systematic approach as possible.[94] Nine years after Wade's report, Scott Roberts published a similar review of textbook content analysis reviews, finding that not much has changed—systematic approaches were still few and far between.[95] Ten years after Roberts, Yiting Chu looked again and noted "textbook content analysis research . . . has improved little: many studies were unclear in their sampling strategies, validity and reliability of coding variables, the data collection and analysis procedures."[96]

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[93] Garcia and Tanner, "The Portrayal of Black Americans," 201.

[94] Rahima C. Wade, "Content Analysis of Social Studies Textbooks: A Review of Ten Years of Research," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 21, no. 3 (1993): 232-256. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1993.10505703

[95] Scott L. Roberts, "A Review of Social Studies Textbook Content Analyses Since 2002," *Social Studies Research and Practice* 9, no. 3 (2014): 51-65.

[96] Yiting Chu, "Twenty Years of Social Studies Textbook Content Analysis: Still 'Decidedly Disappointing'?" *Social Studies* 108, no. 6 (September 12, 2017): 229-241. https://doi.org/10.1080/00377996.2017.1360240, 229.

I have taken the comments of these three authors into account in my own research methodology and created systematic variables with which to analyze the primary sources found in the six textbooks reviews. Some degree of subjectivity is hard to avoid and comes into play in my research when addressing how the primary sources are employed, i.e., the qualitative research. To combat this, I sought to adhere to the established criticisms of textbooks when analyzing strengths and weaknesses of the primary sources and textbook narratives so as to have a baseline from which to work.

Primary Sources

Scott Roberts, a professor at Central Michigan University and former high school educator, was asked to write a history textbook for the State of Georgia in 2011. To begin his endeavor, he thoroughly reviewed textbook analyses, especially those by Loewen and Moore. He determined there were six limitations in other textbooks he would attempt to combat in the one he would write:

> 1) To remove unnecessary information and focus on the standards; 2) To remove elements of heroification; 3) To make the people and events discussed in the textbook more relevant to students' lives; 4) To remove elements of an omniscient and noncritical narrator; 5) To provide a discussion of primary and secondary sources; and 6) To identify and reconcile Moore's critiques . . . such as limiting the "ethnocentric belief" in the superiority of the state's culture and disparagement of "outside contributions."[97]

Roberts, Loewen, and Martell are not alone in suggesting primary sources be widely used to teach history. Scholars understand the importance of primary sources in helping students connect the past to the present; helping them establish linkages through

[97] Scott L. Roberts, "'Georgia on My Mind': Writing the 'New' State History Textbook in the Post-Loewen World," *History Teacher* 47, no. 1 (November 2013): 41-60, 45.

time. Louis P. Masur insists that "reading the image, like reading the text, is a way to engage the past and connect it to our lives."[98] Many have suggested using primary sources completely in lieu of textbooks due to a lack of inclusion, reliance on one-sided narratives, and undercurrents of American Exceptionalism.[99] Recall Martell's decision to forego textbooks and use reader packets containing primary sources. Scholars argue primary sources in teaching increase students' interest in history and improve scores as well as help "non-white students better identify with the people in history."[100] Primary sources help to develop analytical skills and encourage students to feel invested in and closer to the lives of people in the past, thereby making history more interesting.[101] Primary sources aid in engaging students in historical inquiry, and help them detect bias and draw conclusions based on evidence.[102] Waring, Torrez, and Lipscomb conducted a study which found that 76% of the lesson plans they analyzed failed to group the

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[98] Louis P. Masur, "Pictures Have Now Become a Necessity: The Use of Images in American History Textbooks," *Journal of American History* 84, no. 4 (March 1998): 1410. https://doi.org/10.2307/2568088.

[99] Wong, "History Class"; Michael Conway, "The Problem with History Classes," *Atlantic*, March 16, 2015. https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/03/the-problem-with-history-classes/387823/

[100] Martell and Hashimoto-Martell, "Throwing out the Textbook," 2.

[101] "History in the Raw," National Archives and Records Administration, August 15, 2016. https://www.archives.gov/education/research/history-in-the-raw.html.

[102] For example, Scott M. Waring, Cheryl Torrez, and George Lipscomb, "Pay It Forward: Teacher Candidates' Use of Historical Artifacts to Invigorate K-12 History Instruction," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 6, no. 2 (2015): 18-30, https://doi.org/10.17499/jsser.98048; Bruce Fehn and Kim E. Koeppen, "Intensive Document-Based Instruction in a Social Studies Methods Course and Student Teachers' Attitudes and Practice in Subsequent Field Experiences," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 26, no. 4 (1998): 461-484. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1998.10505861; Chara Haeussler Bohan and O. L. Davis, "Historical Constructions: How Social Studies Student Teachers' Historical Thinking is Reflected in Their Writing of History," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 26, no. 2 (1998): 173-197. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1998.10505843; Peter Seixas, "Student Teachers Thinking Historically," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 26, no. 3 (1998): 310-341. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1998.10505854; Elizabeth Anne Yeager and O. L. Davis, "Classroom Teachers' Thinking about Historical Texts: An Exploratory Study," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 24, no. 2 (1996): 146-166. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1996.10505774

complexity of historical causation. They found that by utilizing primary artifacts and sources such as newspapers, period maps, and postcards, from the period in question, students were able to construct working theories on reasons for present circumstances.[103] Fehn and Koeppen conducted a study with student teachers, asking them to create lesson plans based on primary sources to promote students' engagement in the historical inquiry process. The researchers found that this helps students reconstruct and reinterpret the past as they check for credibility and bias.[104]

The word *continuum* is often brought up when using primary sources. *Continuum* could be substituted for the linkages I speak of. Understanding that historical events have causes and consequences is crucial to historical and present understanding. Waring and Cargill argue it is important for students to be able to "understand present events in light of the past," and history teachers need to move students along a "continuum of historical thinking" to find causes for events.[105] The authors posit that primary sources help students do this. Eastern Illinois University published findings from their Library-of-Congress-sponsored Teaching With Primary Sources program, which furthered the continuum idea. They argued that primary sources help students understand that history is made every day, that everyone leaves behind primary-source documentation that future scholars may study as part of the "past," thus creating a continuum.[106]

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[103] Waring, Torrez, and Lipscomb, "Pay It Forward," 25-26.

[104] Fehn and Koeppen, "Intensive Document-Based Instruction."

[105] Scott Waring and Daniel Cowgill, "Historical Thinking: An Evaluation of Student and Teacher Ability to Analyze Sources," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 8, no. 1 (2017): 118.

[106] "EIU Teaching with Primary Sources," Eastern Illinois University, 2018. https://www.eiu.edu/eiutps/why_ps.php

Even social media has taken up the idea of using primary sources in teaching. The hashtag movement (#teachoutsidetextbook) encourages teachers to use resources other than textbooks. Deborah Menkart, Executive Director of Teaching for Change and one of the originators of the movement, says there has been history left out of textbooks[107] that can be filled with primary sources from other resources. Many supplemental programs have been created to assist teachers with introducing primary sources as supplements in their classrooms, including ones from the Zinn Education Project,[108] the Library of Congress,[109] Maryland PBS,[110] and other high- and low-profile organizations.

While teaching with primary sources in lieu of or supplemental to textbooks has become popular, fewer scholars and educators advise a solution like mine: include more primary sources in textbooks thereby giving teachers one source for more robust teaching tools. Teachers are often dictated by standards and textbooks regardless of their best efforts to go beyond and find supplemental primary evidence. Roberts committed to more primary sources in his textbook, and found that using primary and outside sources actually helped to explain the fallacies of a common myth about the founding of Georgia.

> A widespread misconception concerning the founding of Georgia is that it was a debtor's colony, settled by men who were released from prison and sent to the territory. However, this simply was not the case. In 1943, Professor Albert B. Saye wrote "New View Points in Georgia History" and discussed that his discovery of British archival evidence proved no

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[107] Pelletiere and Kindelan, "'Children are Not Born Racist.'"

[108] Zinn Education Project, "Explore by Resource Type: Zinn Education Project: Teaching People's History," March 12, 2018. https://www.zinnedproject.org/teaching-materials/explore-by-resource-type.

[109] "About This Program: Teachers: Programs: Library of Congress," Library of Congress. https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/about-this-program/

[110] Maryland Public Television, "Teaching with Primary Sources Inquiry Kits," PBS Learning Media, Maryland Public Television, November 23, 2020. https://rmpbs.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/teaching-with-primary-sources-inquiry-kits-for-social-studies/

> debtor was released from prison to settle the colony. Still many textbooks written since 1943 have done little to dispel this myth.[111]

Roberts used third-party sources from Saye's book and printed primary evidence from the archives to help students see the truth and make connections to their own situation as Georgians. Danielle Renee Wager finds that textbooks have included some primary sources over time, but not enough are included for teachers to forego significant supplemental primary evidence in classrooms.[112] Misty D. Rodeheaver, in her study of primary sources in textbooks, found that the way primary sources are used and what types are used in textbooks, varies greatly. She states: "Primary sources were much more likely used to illuminate 'points in the story of the United States' rather than presenting multiple perspective on issues in the subject matter."[113] My findings agree with hers: primary sources need to be used not just to back up the traditional American Exceptionalism linear narrative (as they do robustly in my findings), but also to provide greater and more varied perspectives to better understand the minority experiences of past and present.

Historical Thinking

Rodeheaver also links the use of primary sources—whether within textbooks or as supplementary material—as the most important tool from which students can learn to

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[111] Roberts, "Georgia on My Mind," 54.

[112] Danielle Renee Wager, "A Textbook Analysis: A Case Study of Changes in History Textbooks Based on the Revolutionary War," Masters thesis, Grand Valley State University, April 2014: 78. http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/690.

[113] Misty D. Rodeheaver, "An Analysis of U.S. History Textbooks: The Treatment of Primary Sources," Doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University, 2009: 68. https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd/4521d.

analyze to think historically and engage in historical inquiry.[114] This has been echoed by many.[115] Bruce VanSledright, for instance, argues that only when exposed to primary sources can students begin to understand the gaps that might otherwise be present in their history teachings.[116] These primary sources provide stories to fill those gaps and build more robust and comprehensive periods of history. He says that differences in the telling of history between sources and textbook narratives can be understood as bias, exaggeration, or ideology. This all helps students to think historically and engage in historical learning.

Waring, Torrez, and Lipscomb contend that primary sources are paramount in helping students detect bias and draw conclusions about what history means for the present.[117] Tally and Goldenberg, in their survey study regarding primary sources, concluded that their findings agree with the literature, which says using primary sources

> gives students a sense of the reality and complexity of the past; the archives thus represent an opportunity to go beyond the sterile, seamless quality of most textbook presentations to engage with real people and authentic problems.[118]

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[114] Rodeheaver, "Analysis of U.S. History Textbooks," 6–7.

[115] For example: "About This Program," Library of Congress; Waring, Torrez, and Lipscomb, "Pay It Forward"; Elizabeth Langran and Marsha Alibrandi, "Integrating Biography-Based Video in a Multiplatform Approach to Teach Historical Thinking," *Teacher Educators' Journal* 12 (2019): 50-72; Bill Tally and Lauren B. Goldenberg, "Fostering Historical Thinking with Digitized Primary Sources," *Journal of Research on Technology in Education* 38, no. 1 (2005): 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2005.10782447; Samuel Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Bruce A. VanSledright, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically . . . and How Do You Teach It?," *Social Education* 68, no. 3 (April 2004): 230-233. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315726885-24.

[116] VanSledright, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically?"

[117] Waring, Torrez, and Lipscomb, "Pay It Forward."

[118] Tally and Goldenberg, "Fostering Historical Thinking," 3.

They found that 68% of students who were taught using primary sources and new technologies to introduce these sources in addition to previous teaching methods, gained a deeper understanding of history, and liked the new type of classes more. Students felt they were learning the "whole picture" of history.[119]

This ability to think historically is what enables students to make connections from the past to the present. In other words, primary evidence is the most important historical resource students can be introduced to to link past events to current circumstances. As VanSledright says:

> Historical thinking is a very close relative to active, thoughtful, critical participation in text- and image-rich democratic cultures. Consider what good historical thinkers can do. They are careful, critical readers and consumers of the mountains of evidentiary source data that exists in archives and that pours at us each day via the media. Good historical thinkers are tolerant of differing perspectives because these perspectives help them make sense of the past. At the same time, such thinkers are skilled at detecting spin, hype, snake-oil sales pitches, disguised agendas, veiled partisanship, and weak claims. They also know what it means to build and defend evidence-based arguments because of practice constructing interpretations rooted in source data. In short, they are informed, educated, thoughtful, critical readers, who appreciate investigative enterprises, know good arguments when they hear them, and who engage their world with a host of strategies for understanding it.[120]

This historical thinking (described by Tally and Goldenberg as "observation, sourcing, inferencing, evidence, question-posing, and corroboration"[121]) that enables students to link the past to the present is precisely why it—and primary sources—are important in teaching about race and the Black experience in the United States. Courtney Bentley and Scott Waring argue: "Critical historical thinking is a dynamic, reflective process that asks

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[119] Tally and Goldenberg, "Fostering Historical Thinking," 8.

[120] VanSledright, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically," 232.

[121] Tally and Goldenberg, "Fostering Historical Thinking," 1.

thinkers to interpret and understand persistent historical themes. They do so by drawing on connections to contemporary events."[122] The authors go on to say that many of these contemporary events that students are considering are social justice issues that are presented to them in social media. They argue historical thinking and drawing connections to the past can help students make sense of these issues.[123]

Another way to understand historical thinking and find linkages is to work backward from present to past. Howard Zinn notes that history comes alive to students when they are asked if something they learned in history reminds them of something they read in a newspaper or saw on TV. He states:

> When you press students to make connections, to abstract from the uniqueness of a particular historical event and find something it has in common with another event—then history becomes alive, not just past but present.[124]

The social justice movements happening throughout the United States create questions for students. Asking them to make connections to history is one way of teaching the relevance of these movements today. Jamia Hoover is an 11th grade U.S. history teacher in Texas. She recounts a story about students asking questions about the death of Freddie Gray:

> I was tasked with explaining this national movement to my young student. So, I took a deep breath and launched into a brief historical context about the history of police brutality, Black resistance to it, and how all of this goes back to American's Reconstruction era. These conversations often take place in my class. Young people want to understand the world around them, and it's my job to do my absolute best to help them make sense of

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[122] Courtney C. Bentley and Scott M. Waring, "What Did Pilgrims Look like?," *Teaching Tolerance* (Spring 2017): 41. https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/spring-2017/what-did-pilgrims-look-like.

[123] Bentley and Waring, "What Did Pilgrims Look like?," 41.

[124] Miner, "Why Students Should Study History."

> things, even if it's just by providing them with knowledge of past events that created the inequalities, they witness on a regular basis. . . . I pride myself on helping kids to make connections between these kids of events and our nation's history.[125]

Hoover "helps kids learn strategies to find answers"[126] to the questions they bring about the world around them. One of those strategies is referencing primary sources to create links from past oppressions to current ones. Making these historical connections to racial injustices from past to present or present to past help students understand racism is structural. A great deal of research shows teaching that racism is structural and systemic—rather than teaching kids to be colorblind or that any experience of racism is from individual actors—is the way to eradicating it.[127]

Ways to help students make historical connections goes back to pedagogy. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) addressed this in its report, *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. They conducted surveys on what and how high school history students are learning with regard to slavery. In the end, they recommend four ways to strengthen the pedagogy. "1) Improve instruction about American slavery and fully integrate it into U.S. history, 2) use original historical documents, 3) make textbooks better, 4) strengthen curriculum."[128]

Essentially, my research hopes to help promote all four components, but I focused on the first three. I believe textbooks can be made better by including more historical

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[125] Jania Hoover, "Critical Race Theory Hysteria Overshadows the Importance of Teaching Kids About Racism," *Vox*, July 9, 2021. https://www.vox.com/first-person/22568672/critical-race-theory-crt-education-racism-teachers

[126] Hoover, "Critical Race Theory Hysteria."

[127] For example: Cartwright, "Teaching Children That Racism Is Structural"; Pelletiere and Kindelan, "'Children Are Not Born Racist"; Álvarez, "We Need to Teach the Truth/"

[128] Shuster, "Teaching Hard History."

documents and primary sources in them. Doing so in the non-exceptional areas of American history that focus on the experiences of African Americans will help fully integrate the history and legacies of slavery into students learning and help them better understand the institutional nature of racism. As James Loewen so eloquently says about primary evidence and historical teaching with textbooks in his introduction to the book *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader:*

> At its best, history embodies the triumph of evidence over ideology. Textbooks do not embody history at its best . . .[129]
>
> . . . White history may be appropriate for a white nation. It is inappropriate for a great nation. The United States is not a white nation. It has never been a white nation. It is time for us to give up our white history in favor of more accurate history, based more closely on the historical record, such as these [secession] documents. Surely a great nation can afford to do that.[130]

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[129] Edward H. Sebesta, and James Loewen, *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader: The "Great Truth" About the "Lost Cause"* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 9.

[130] Sebesta and Loewen, *Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader*, 21.

Chapter III

Methods

Drawing on the strengths and weaknesses of previous textbook reviews, I created a methodology that systematizes data collection of primary sources used in six United States high school history texts. From there, the ways the sources are used is analyzed according to common criticisms of books.

Textbook Selection

To study the use of primary sources in textbooks, I had to first determine what textbooks to examine, how many, and why. I looked at five textbooks, chosen for their prevalence in large school districts in different states around the U.S. and the determination by independent sources as to their broad usage. I examined the following books for this analysis:

- *The American Pageant: A History of the American People* (2019), published by Houghton Mifflin (now Cengage) [131];
- *The American Nation* (2005), published by Holt, Reinhart, and Winston[132];
- *The Americans* (2012), published by McDougal Littell[133];

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[131] David M. Kennedy and Lizabeth Cohen, *The American Pageant: A History of the American People* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2019).

[132] Paul S. Boyer, *The American Nation* (Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 2005).

[133] Gerald A. Danzer, *The Americans* (Evanston, IL: Holt McDougal, 2012).

- *America: Pathways to the Present* (2005), published by Prentice Hall[134];
- *The American Journey: Building a Nation* (2009), published by Glencoe.[135]

I also examined a sixth book based on praise-worthy reviews: *American History: Connecting with the Past* (2015)[136] published by McGraw-Hill. This book is not as widely used. I could not find it listed in the curriculum of any large school districts; it is primarily used in Advanced Placement (AP) classes. I thought it pertinent and potentially interesting to have a book that was reviewed favorably to see if the results of my study differed from this book compared to the other five. I call this book the "model" book.

As actual publication and usage numbers are held close to the vest by school districts and publishing companies,[137] I relied on other sources to help determine what books to use. I chose these five books based on a variety of factors. First, I consulted as many independent sources as I could find that have done U.S. history textbook analysis: The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and its *Teaching Hard History* report;[138] James Loewen for his book *Lies My Teacher Told Me;* the Thomas B. Fordham Institute,

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[134] Andrew R. Cayton, et al., *America: Pathways to the Present* (Needham, MA: Prentice Hall, 2005).

[135] Joyce Appleby, *The American Journey* (Columbus, OH: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2009).

[136] Alan Brinkley, *American History: Connecting with the Past* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015).

[137] Shuster, "Teaching Hard History." Shuster stated: "We sought texts commonly used in American schools but finding them proved challenging. No authoritative source lists the most widely used American history textbooks. Sales information is closely guarded by publishers. States may list 'approved' or adopted textbooks, but not which are actually in wide use. And, since different states may use modified versions of the same book, there are incommensurability problems. We ended up choosing a balance . . . trying to make sure that we included texts by all major publishers."

[138] Shuster, "Teaching Hard History."

publishers of Diane Ravitch's book;[139] and the American Textbook Council.[140] These organizations have undertaken their own investigations into which books are most widely used in high school U.S. history classrooms. Fearing that the SPLC, and to a lesser extent James Loewen, might be considered left-leaning, I also consulted the right-leaning think tank Thomas B. Fordham Institute and the independent-to-conservative-leaning American Textbook Council. If a textbook landed on at least two of these four lists, I added it to my initial compilation.

Then I conducted my own research by examining state adoption lists and published syllabuses from 11th grade U.S. history classes. This research consisted of identifying which U.S. history books were used by the 20 largest school districts.[141] States use one of two methods to determine which textbooks are used in the classroom:

1. 30 states allow books to be chosen at the school level. For districts in these states, I called schools to inquire what books are used in 11th grade U.S. history classes; I also found some syllabuses published online from classes within that district.
2. 20 states determine adoption of books at the state level. For districts in these states, textbook adoption lists are published online. Texas, for instance, has lists of books adopted going back to 1920 and as recently as 2019.

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[139] Ravitch, "Consumer's Guide to High School History Textbooks."

[140] American Textbook Council, "Widely Adopted History Textbooks," 2021. https://www.historytextbooks.net/adopted.htm

[141] These 20 districts are found in 12 states. Ten districts are in states that voted for the Republican candidate in 2020 and ten are in states that voted for the Democratic candidate. I felt this ensured ideological balance.

I cross-referenced my list with the initial compilation from the independent sources. Any book that was on both lists made it to my final list. The five books mentioned above made the cut.

To ensure balance, I was careful to make sure the final list included books from five different publishers, each of whom is one of the most prominent textbook publishers in the country. The selected books were also used in states with both Republican-led legislatures and Democratic-led legislatures (so-called "red" and "blue" states).

I also attempted to find the most updated version of each of these books possible. For instance, James Loewen looked at the first edition of *The American Journey* while I tracked down and examined the 8th edition.

Description of Methods

From my list of five U.S. history textbooks plus the model book, I sought to determine if and how primary sources were being used to teach four specific topics—one book where I imagined primary sources were being employed well to bring the subject matter to life, and three where I imagined such use fell short. The first was used as a basis of comparison for the other three.

The first, what I refer to as the benchmark case, represents how primary sources are being used when teaching about the American colonies' declaration of independence from Great Britain. The other three are the slave trade, the cause of the Civil War, and Reconstruction. The final three all pertain to slavery or the Black experience in the United States.

I define primary sources used in textbooks as immediate, first-hand accounts of a topic from people who had a direct connection with it. These can include photographs,

paintings, narratives, or diaries of people of the time; documents; maps of the time; quotes or letters; newspaper articles; survey or census data; and laws. Almost all books are modern enough to have online components that offer ways to see videos or other online resources. For simplicity and equal examination, I did not consider the online components of any books as many students may not have internet or computer access. Furthermore, far less research has been done on the actual use of online materials, while a great deal has been done on the use of textbooks themselves.

The number of primary sources and the space given to the sources were a factor in analysis. I wanted to see what resources beyond the narrative of the textbook authors are mobilizing to bring these four time periods of history to life for students. An additional factor in analysis was whether the book asks students to think critically about the primary source or if it is simply displayed. Also, I wanted to discern whether the narrative engaged with the source, or if the source was simply used as window dressing. The way these sources are employed matters to the quality of education. Louis Masur argues in his article "Pictures Have Now Become a Necessity," that the ways in which the primary sources are used is important. He wants analysts to consider whether the narrative of the book actually engages with the source, or if the source is merely "gift wrapping" rather than the gift (the history) itself. Essentially, he feels textbooks that do place primary sources in their pages do so simply for illustrative effect, but do not engage with the source directly, thereby leaving students to see them more as illustrations to the narrative rather than important elements of history itself. "Every image reveals, as well as defines, events. . . . it is a way to engage the past and connect it to our lives."[142]

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[142] Masur, "Pictures Have Now Become a Necessity," 1410.

There is no set standard for textbook analysis—and there is nothing that directly addresses what I am specifically trying to understand. Therefore, the tool and variables used are my own creation. However, I have drawn on other studies for inspiration and guidance. Many researchers have endeavored to identify and use their own methods. These range from reading 16 books cover to cover and interpreting themes, as Loewen has done; analyzing content and quantifying it as to space given a topic, theme, or historical event,[143] as I have done; others attempt to qualify content and discern bias or pedagogical approaches.[144]

For my methodology, I used an approach similar to that taken by Misty Rodeheaver.[145] Her instrument examines type of primary sources, location of corresponding questions, classification of corresponding questions according to the Depth of Knowledge and Library of Congress steps in examining primary sources, and presence of answers in the narrative. I gleaned much of my method from this, and added to it as necessary for my specificity. Similarly, but more simply (as she was not looking at primary sources specifically), Danielle Wager counted the number of paragraphs devoted to a topic within a timeframe.[146] She then calculated a percentage of space that topic was given within that timeframe's section and compared it from book to book. I have utilized the percentage of space given per section in my analysis.

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[143] Wade, "Content Analysis of Social Studies; Roberts, "A Review of Social Studies Textbook Content Analyses."

[144] Garcia and Tanner, "The Portrayal of Black Americans."

[145] Rodeheaver, "An Analysis of U.S. History Textbooks."

[146] Wager, "A Textbook Analysis."

Researchers such as Wade, Roberts, and Chu published research articles on analytical studies of textbooks to identify strengths and weaknesses in such studies.[147] I paid close attention to the weaknesses they found, and sought to ensure that my study avoided or compensated for those weaknesses. A few examples are given below:

- All three authors found that a majority of studies do not state the units of analysis. By employing the methods used by Wager and Rodeheaver, combining them with my own and explicitly stating my units of measure, I sought to overcome this first weakness.
- All three analysis papers found that statistical analysis and data reported in the form of tables was only used by roughly 10% of the studies they researched; I include data and analytical tables in my research.
- Another criticism posed by the researchers was:

> If these studies are to be more effective for their primary audience, researchers should provide information about which sections of widely used textbooks are useful as resources and which section of the book are weak or biased.[148]

I remedied this weakness by comparing one source I believe has been done well —the benchmark case—compared with three where I believe it can be improved. Additionally, I included a less-employed U.S. history textbook that I believe uses primary sources and pedagogical methods to teach these sources well, especially with the topics and timeframes I contend the popular books do not. So not only do I have other areas of

[147] Wade, "Content Analysis of Social Studies Textbooks"; Roberts, "A Review of Social Studies Textbook Content Analyses"; Chu, "Twenty Years of Social Studies Textbook Content Analysis."

[148] Roberts, "A Review of Social Studies Textbook Content Analyses," 60.

popular books that use primary sources well to serve as a benchmark, I also examined a less-popular book that treats the otherwise poorly taught subjects in a positive manner.

In addition to the variables borrowed from Rodeheaver, Wager, Roberts, Wade, and Chu, both Reed and Connor and Roberts have noted the importance of including third-party experts in textbooks.[149] I have included the use of third-party experts (which I define as scholars, academics, contemporary relatives, historians, etc) as a variable in my analysis to weigh in on the primary sources and the imperative of presenting conflicting opinions and where they stem from in still controversial accounts of history and their bearing on contemporary thinking.

Limitations to the Methodology

Even with trying to draw methodology from other studies and updating them for my needs, my approach brought up inevitable limitations. I cannot possibly review every textbook in use to teach United States history in every high school across the country. There are simply too many. Furthermore, not every state has the same book in use in every school district. Some states and districts have more up-to-date tools and books while others are woefully lagging.

I attempted to identify a smattering of widely adopted books that represent states and districts with opposite political leanings, but this is merely representative and not comprehensive. I made an effort to use books that have been in circulation for some time, but not older than 20 years.

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[149] Reed and Connor, "Re-Reading the American History Textbook in the Global Age,"; Roberts, "'Georgia on My Mind," 54.

Teachers and the way in which each textbook is employed in each classroom is another element that I cannot account for in this research. The choice of supplemental tools, narratives, and pedagogical methods individual teachers use is beyond the scope of this project but could significantly influence how and what students learn. Classroom observations and attendance at teaching seminars is another possible component of this project, one saved for another time.

The element of subjectivity comes into play. I have attempted to limit subjectivity by relying on hard data in the size and use of primary data. But how these sources engage with the narrative is still subject to my interpretation as the author of this thesis.

Research

For the research itself, I have taken a mixed-methods approach to gathering data surrounding the use of primary sources in textbook and to what end this is or is not beneficial to high school history students and their ability to make connections between past and current racial injustices.

Quantitatively, I looked at how many primary sources are used in textbooks, how much space these sources are given, and how they are engaged with. I constructed a list of variables to examine in each of the four historical instances I researched. The variables are:

- How many primary sources are used?
- The size of the space given to primary sources as a percentage of total the size of the section. This will be measured in square inches.
- Does the text engage with the primary sources? Does the narrative reference the source?
- Are the sources described? Is there a caption?

- Are there corresponding questions in the text to the primary sources that ask the students to critically analyze them?
    - If they exist, where are the corresponding questions to the primary source located? Same ¼ page, same ½ page, same page, or same section?
    - If they exist, do the questions ask students to analyze the sources according to the Library of Congress's primary source evaluation criteria?
        - Observe
        - Reflect
        - Question
        - Further investigation
    - Are there answers to the questions or questions for further thought in the narrative?
- Is there an introduction of a third-party historian, sociologist, academic, or contemporary relative to respond or interact with the primary source?

I submitted each section under review for each textbook to this system of questioning and each is presented in a table for a total of 20 tables. An example is shown below in Table 2.

Qualitatively, I examined how primary sources are used, and I explored why and how they are beneficial to United States history education in each given time period—specifically as they relate to race. I also looked at linkages provided by the included primary sources or what could have been provided to create clearer linkages for students.

Table 2. Example of a table.

Textbook	**Holt American Nation**											
Section	**America Declares Independece**											
How many primary sources are used	13											
Size of space given to primary sources as a percentage or total size of section	18%											
PRIMARY SOURCES												
	Type of source	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?	Does the textbook engage with the primary source? Does the narrative reference it?
Quote from John Adams letter to Abilgail	letter	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Quote from Patrick Henry "Liberty or Death"	pamphlet	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Thomas Paine, Common Sense	document											
Quote from Declaration of Independece	document											
Image of Thomas Jefferson draft of Dec of Ind	document											
Abigail Adams quote from letter for John	letter											
Quote from Thomas Thacher, Voices of 1776	pamphlet											
Anne Hutton Colonist writing	newspaper											
Image of troops marching	contemporary painting											
Quote from Joseph Hodgkins, letter to Sarah	letter											
Image of soldiers uniform	clothing											
4 pages of Declaration of Independecne	document											
painting of continental congress	contemporary painting											

Source: thesis author

Chapter IV

Findings

When making observations on the six textbooks analyzed, I created multiple quantifiable variables so as to be as strict as possible from book to book in my review and to ensure that the same criteria was applied to each textbook. I then created easily digestible ways to compare these variables from book to book and created tables with the data. I calculated each of the following:

- How much space was given to primary sources as a percent of the total size of the corresponding section in each book in each time period.
- What percentage of primary sources were engaged with the narrative in each book in each time period.
- What percentage of primary sources had related questions for each element of the Library of Congress's primary-source-question criteria in each book in each time period.
- The percentage of sources that had third-party engagement in each book for each time period.
- The average size of a primary source in each book for each time period.

Again, I looked at four historical periods: 1) the benchmark case, America declaring independence from Great Britain, and the three other periods 2) the slave trade, 3) the cause of the American Civil War, and 4) Reconstruction.

Space Given to Primary Sources

The variable I found to be the most forthright when looking at each historical period was the percentage of space given to primary sources in corresponding sections. In all five commonly used textbooks, the historical period that gave the most space to primary sources was the period America declaring independence.[150]

Table 3 shows the percentage of primary-source space given to America declaring independence in *The American Pageant* is 20% (this is the only book of the five common books that does not include the Declaration of Independence in the narrative itself), in *America: Pathways to the Present* it is 40%, in *The Americans* it is 39.60%, in *Holt American Nation* it is 44.16%, and in *The American Journey* it is 39.33%. In *American History*, the model textbook, it is 15.75% and it does not include the Declaration in the section either.

[150] The Declaration of Independence is included in its entirety in four of the five commonly used books. This accounts for a sizable portion of the primary-source percentage. However, the book that does not include the Declaration in the section still gives more primary-source space to this period than any of the other periods. Even if it had been omitted entirely in every book, this historical period would still have seen greater space in all five books than other periods. The Declaration of Independence is an important document to include when studying this time period, and omitting it is not a viable option.

Table 3. Space given to primary sources as a percentage of total time-period section size.

	America Declares Independence	Slave Trade	Cause of Civil War	Reconstruction
The Americans	39.60%	13.18%	9.59%	9.17%
The American Journey	39.33%	13.44%	10.12%	7.31%
Holt American Nation	44.16%	9.33%	8.19%	9.40%
America: Pathways to the Present	40%	15.94%	13.21%	8.43%
The American Pageant	20%	18.77%	14.3%	16.54%
American History	15.57%	20.50%	7.70%	12.05%

Source: thesis author

To note, in all six books, the two historical periods with the least amount of space given to primary sources are the cause of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Narrative Engagement

As noted, one variable highlighted by researchers of textbooks and primary sources is whether the narrative engages with the primary source.[151] With guidance from the literature, I defined narrative engaging with the primary source if the narrative referenced the source directly. If the source merely depicted what was being narrated but did not address it directly, it was not engaged with. Noting author, artist, historical relevance, date, time, location, and other characteristics helped determine the narrative engagement. The percentage used in Table 4 below is calculated by dividing the number

[151] Masur, "'Pictures Have Now Become a Necessity.'"

of sources that saw narrative engagement in a section with the number of sources in each section.

Table 4: Percentage of times the narrative engages with the primary source

	America Declares Independence	The Slave Trade	Cause of Civil War	Reconstruction
The Americans	85.71%	33.33%	38.89%	31.03%
The American Journey	50%	25%	45.45%	17.65%
Holt American Nation	77.78%	33.33%	68.75%	53.33%
America: Pathways to the Present	54.54%	60%	63.16%	50%
The American Pageant	53.85%	14.29%	41.67%	29.17%
American History	66.66%	80%	50%	78.57%

Source: thesis author

In the model textbook, *American History*, the lowest percentage of times the narrative engages with the primary sources is 50% in the cause of the Civil War period. The America declares independence period is 66.66%, the reconstruction period is 78.57%, and the slave trade period is 80%. Overall, the narrative in this book engages with the primary sources to a greater degree than the other books.

In all but one of the other five textbooks, the historical period that sees the narrative engaging with the primary sources the most is America declares independence.

Three of the five books see reconstruction as the period where the narrative engages the least with the primary sources.

Questions Relating to Primary Sources

The next variable considered was whether the primary source had associated corresponding questions; then, did the questions ask students to analyze the sources according to the Library of Congress's primary source evaluation criteria. For purposes of this variable, I deemed the question associated with the primary source if it was asked in reference to what the source was depicting.

All but one of the six books had the most questions per primary source in the time period of America declaring independence. All but one had the least in the time period of the slave trade. The percentages in Table 5 below were calculated by dividing the number of sources that had a question by how many total primary sources there were in that section.

Table 5. Percentage of times a question is asked in correspondence to a primary source, and what the question asks students to do.

	America Declares Independence					The Slave Trade					Cause of Civil War					Reconstruction				
	% of Questions compared to Primary Sources	Observe	Reflect	Question	Further Investigation	% of Questions compared to Primary Sources	Observe	Reflect	Question	Further Investigation	% of Questions compared to Primary Sources	Observe	Reflect	Question	Further Investigation	% of Questions compared to Primary Sources	Observe	Reflect	Question	Further Investigation
The Americans	53.33	46.67	53.33	46.67	33.33	0	0	0	0	0	44.44	44.44	44.44	27.78	33.33	46.43	41.38	37.93	31.03	24.14
The American Journey	58.33	50	58.33	25	41.67	25	25	25	0	0	109	100	81.82	81.82	27.27	64.71	52.94	52.94	58.80	47.06
Holt American Nation	144	111	144	122	50	50	50	50	50	50	93.75	93.75	93.75	81.25	93.75	60	60	60	36.66	30
America: Pathways to the Present	72.73	63.64	63.64	36.36	27.27	60	60	60	20	60	63.16	52.63	68.42	52.63	57.37	58.33	58.33	54.17	33.33	29.17
The American Pageant	30.77	30.77	30.77	30.77	30.77	0	0	0	0	0	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67
American History	200	200	200	200	200	120	120	120	120	120	150	150	150	150	150	85.71	71.43	78.57	85.71	85.71

Note: all numbers are a percentage (%)

Source: thesis author

Third-Party Authorities

The next variable considered was one only sometimes found in other academic research that study textbooks but one I feel is important based on that research. This variable is the inclusion of a response to or interaction with the primary sources and/or the time period in general from a third-party historian, academic, journalist, or contemporary relative. This allows students to gain thoughts, opinions, and professional research from more than just the textbook authors, but also from those with authority on the more specific subject matter. This helps to combat a criticism of textbooks which is that personal narrative is inevitably introduced in historical writing.[152] Authors of textbooks are not immune to this truth and while the third-party experts will also imbue "personal agency on the texts they write,"[153] pulling from multiple sources from a pedagogical standpoint helps to mitigate the one-narrative positioning.

For the purpose of this variable, I included the primary source as having a third-party expert engage with it if a third-party was referenced when describing the source or the historical period or if the student was directed to third-party works such as books for further reading. The disparity in this variable is the greatest (as seen in Table 6 below), as some authors clearly believe this is an important component of textbook authorship—or they do not. The model textbook, *American History*, had a third party engage with the source or the topic in a majority of instances. *The American Pageant* saw third-party engagement in about half of instances in the America declares independence section,

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[152] Richard J. Paxton, "A Deafening Silence: History Textbooks and the Students Who Read Them," *Review of Educational Research* 69, no. 3 (1999): 315–339. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543069003315, 318

[153] Paxton, "Deafening Silence," 317–318.

cause of the Civil War section, and Reconstruction section. The slave trade section saw no third-party engagement for this book.

For this variable, I calculated the percentage shown by dividing the number of sources that had a third-party engage with them in a section with the total number of sources in each section.

Table 6. Percentage of times a third-party expert engages with a primary source.

	America Declares Independence	The Slave Trade	Cause of Civil War	Reconstruction
The Americans	13.33%	0%	0%	0%
The American Journey	0%	0%	0%	0%
Holt American Nation	0%	0%	0%	3.33%
America: Pathways to the Present	0%	0%	0%	0%
The American Pageant	69.23%	0%	50%	54.17%
American History	33%	20%	50%	21.43%

Source: thesis author

Size of Primary Source

As I began to look at primary sources in textbooks, I found some were so small a magnifying glass was needed to make out details, or the image was too small to render details at all. Upon further research, it became apparent that larger sources are more engaging for students,[154] and they display the content more powerfully.[155] Table 7 shows

[154] Daniel C. Edelson, "Scaling up Classroom Maps," *National Geographic* , November 1, 2011. https://www.nationalgeographic.org/article/scaling-classroom-maps/

[155] Rakesh Agrawal, et al., "Enriching Textbooks with Images," Proceedings of the 20th ACM International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management—CIKM '11, 2011:1847-1856. https://doi.org/10.1145/2063576.2063843; Masur, "Pictures Have Now Become a Necessity."

my calculations of the average size of primary sources used in each time period in each book.

Table 7. Average size of primary source.

	America Declares Independence	The Slave Trade	Cause of Civil War	Reconstruction
The Americans	23.23	9.67	6.93	7.49
The American Journey	25.96	9.61	7.69	6.44
Holt American Nation	32.39	3.67	5.89	5.28
America: Pathways to the Present	25.04	7.54	8.03	6.34
The American Pageant	16.27	16.52	10.49	12.13
American History	21.58	22.45	18.03	18.09

Source: thesis author

Averages By Book

It may be interesting for readers to see the averages of each variable by book to see how each book treats the variables considered independent of time period (see Table 8).

Table 8. Summary of primary source usage by book

	Asks questions of sources	Sources size % of total section size	Engage with narrative total	Third-party expert total	Average size of source
The Americans	45.04%	15.16%	43.11%	2.40%	10.82
The American Journey	70.76%	15.95%	32.59%	0%	12.36
Holt American Nation	85.35%	15.53%	61.38%	1.48%	9.28
America: Pathways to the Present	62.40%	15.95%	55.16%	0%	10.47
The American Pageant	15.52%	16.64%	37.86%	52.04%	12.79
American History	118.81%	12.57%	70.85%	29.15%	19.32

Source: thesis author

As this chapter shows, not all textbooks are equal in primary-source usage. They all display strengths and weaknesses both in how various time periods are addressed and the use of primary sources overall. These strengths and weaknesses are quite stark and clear, as my research found. The biggest takeaway is the differences in how primary sources are used in the period of America declaring independence versus time periods relating to the Black experience.

Now that the broad trends of both analyzed time periods and books studied in quantitative data have been observed, the next chapters consider them in detail through qualitative analysis.

Chapter V

Observations and Analysis by Time Period

In this chapter, each time period studied is broken down into three sections:

1) why analyzing that time period is important to education and the pages selected in each book to cover that time period,

2) observations of that time period in the six books, and

3) an analysis of the inclusion or omission of linkages from past to present relating to that time period.

Benchmark Case: America Declares Independence

The goal of my research is to examine how Black history is represented in American high school history textbooks. I believe it also is important to examine a period of history that does not necessarily deal with the Black experience[156] in order to make a comparison.

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[156] Although the lack of representation of minority populations—Native American, slave, free Black, women—is problematic during this timeframe, that issue is beyond the scope of this paper. It is worth noting, however, that the events of this time period and the ways in which the history of these events is told have been whitewashed. There is extensive research on the enormous material wealth created by enslaved persons during this time in history, and the foundation they created for the lives of the white founding fathers, which enabled these historically remembered men to fight for liberty from an oppressive power—a hypocrisy not lost on most of them. Forty of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence owned slaves. African Americans—both enslaved and free—fought in the Revolutionary War. Other countries have chosen to recognize the role enslaved people played in founding these their countries' liberty. An article by Martha Jones notes: "Words etched in a granite monument installed in France in 2011, credit enslaved people, by their struggle and quest for dignity, with laying a foundation for the French republic's ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Here, enslaved people are honored as among France's founders." Martha S. Jones, "Enslaved to a Founding Father, She Sought Freedom in France," *New York Times,* November 23, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/23/travel/john-jay-paris-abigail-slavery.html

Importance of Studying American Independence for High School American History

American Exceptionalism can be found running as an undercurrent in many United States textbooks. Therefore, I decided to look at the time period where America was arguably the most exceptional: in breaking its ties with the British Empire and declaring national independence.

The reasons for teaching how and why America declared independence from Great Britain are many, but as many education scholars and historians say, teaching the ideas of this period inform students that the principles of liberalism and democracy are joined in the Declaration of Independence,[157] that the United States embarked upon a unique and ambitious experiment of rule by the consent of the governed,[158] and that America was established on a foundation of equal rights.[159] The authors of the National Standards for History say the teaching of the American revolution is of "signal importance" in the study of American history. They lay out four tenets as to why:

> First, it severed the colonial relationship with England and legally created the United States. Second, the revolutionary generation formulated the political philosophy and laid the institutional foundations for the system of government under which we live. Third, the Revolution was inspired by ideas concerning natural rights with political authority that were transatlantic in reach, and its successful completion affected people and governments over a large part of the globe for many generations. Lastly, it called into question long-established social and political relationships — between master and slave, man and woman, upper class and lower class, officeholder and constituent, and even parent and child — and thus

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[157] "Liberty! The American Revolution—Lesson 2: Declaration of Independence. Teacher's Guide," Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), 2004. https://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/tguide_2.html

[158] "Liberty!"; "Teaching Six Big Ideas in the Constitution," National Archives and Records Administration, October 13, 2020. https://www.archives.gov/legislative/resources/education/constitution

[159] These equal rights were independent of class, but not race or gender, which is an important nuance to teach.

> demarcated an agenda for reform that would preoccupy Americans down to the present day.[160]

One of the underlying themes in the justification of the importance of teaching this time period carefully is the uniqueness and ambitiousness of the foundation of the country. The Yale National Initiative states: "The idea of America is as unique as the people who make up our great nation."[161] This idea of American Exceptionalism is apparent in textbooks, but they do come by this theme honestly. The idea of the specialness of those in the colonies was present during revolutionary times. As Patrick J. Kiger says: "By promoting the idea of American exceptionalism and the need to form a new nation to realize its promise, Paine's pamphlet not only attracted public support for the revolution but put the rebellion's leaders under pressure to declare independence."[162]

Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, published in 1776, was one of the most influential pieces of writing of the time. It features prominently in all of the textbooks analyzed. The pamphlet's idea of American Exceptionalism, embodied in the reasons the colonies split from Britain, were very much alive then as now.

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[160] Quoted in D. Antonio Cantu, "Teaching the American Revolution and Founding of the American Republic on the Web," *Journal of the Association of History and Computing* 4, no. 3 (November 2001). https://doi.org/https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jahc/3310410.0004.307/--teaching-the-american-revolution-and-founding?rgn=main;view=fulltext

[161] Laura Turner, "The Declaration of Independence: Still Inspiring Americans to Fight for Freedom!" Yale National Initiative. https://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/initiative_11.03.10_u

[162] Patrick J. Kiger, "How Thomas Paine's 'Common Sense' Helped Inspire the American Revolution," History.com, June 28, 2021. https://www.history.com/news/thomas-paine-common-sense-revolution

Page Selection

Each book analyzed has a specific chapter relating to the ideas and events that led to and culminated with the colonies declaring independence from Great Britain. As they were all fairly straightforward, I used the chapters as my guide.

What the Books Cover

The only book that did not have a straightforward chapter on the time period was *American History*. As for page selections for each book, I used the pages that covered the same historical events and ideas as the chapters covered in the other five books to maintain equal review.

The Americans. In this book, in the chapter that deals with declaring independence, a reader is first shown the title of the chapter: "Ideas Help Start a Revolution." Already ingenuity and exceptionalism are front and center, pointing out that those living in the colonies had revolutionary ideas.

To establish the division that was forming among the colonists between "patriots" and "loyalists," the first paragraph of the chapter uses the first primary source: a quote from William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin, to highlight his loyalist sympathies and contrast them to his father's patriotic mentality. Other patriots like John Dickenson, Thomas Paine, Nathanael Greene, James Armistead, and Mercy Otis Warren are quoted using first-hand sources to explain the value of independence.

Another primary source, a political cartoon, is given a pull-out to talk students through how to analyze such a source. This is an important technique only sometimes

used in textbooks. Another pull-out has an "analyzing primary sources" component that looks specifically at Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" pamphlet. It asks students to evaluate the significance of Paine's statement, "the cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind"[163]—in relation to Locke's views on natural rights and Jefferson's views on "inalienable rights." This represents another important analytical skill but the context is entrenched in American Exceptionalism.

Finally, the book prints the entire Declaration of Independence, then dissects it. The pages also use side bars and a primary source—Abigail Adams's letters to her husband John—to highlight gender inequality in the Declaration. The book states: "Although the declaration dealt with issues of equality, justice, and independence, it did not address conditions of inequality within the colonies themselves,"[164] then goes on to use Abigail Adams and her experiences as a lens through which to address those inequalities. In a much smaller pull-out on the opposite page, titled "Independence and Slavery," the book simply states, "the Declaration of Independence went through many revisions before the final draft. Jefferson, a slaveholder himself, regretted having to eliminate one passage in particular—a condemnation of slavery and the slave trade."[165] No primary source accompanies this pull-out, and it feels like an apologist narrative. Certainly, the lack of rights given slaves and African Americans is not mentioned although it does mention the lack of rights given to women.

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[163] Danzer, The Americans, 108.

[164] Danzer, The Americans, 111.

[165] Danzer, The Americans, 110.

Holt American Nation. The chapter in this book that deals with America declaring independence is called “Independence Declared.” It opens with a primary source: John Adams’s letter to his wife Abigail, describing his belief that July 1776 will be celebrated for generations as the most memorable time period in the history of America. The underlying idea that this day is special in the history of the world is there as well. The book continues with quotes from patriots like Patrick Henry, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson.

A long excerpt from Paine’s “Common Sense” is pulled out and a question is asked of students in its regard. An excerpt from a letter from Abigail Adams to her husband John is highlighted as an anecdote for the fight to include women in the Declaration of Independence. The only mention of slavery is a brief note that Abigail Adams opposed this institution. There is no mention with primary sources or in the narrative about including African Americans in the Declaration at all.

In the pull-out of the complete printing of the Declaration of Independence, multiple questions are asked of students in their analysis. Once again, there is mention of a passage that was deleted that references slavery in this pullout section. It is two sentences long.

The American Journey. In this book, the title of the chapter relating America declaring its independence is titled “Moving Toward Independence.” It begins with a primary-source excerpt from “Common Sense” by Thomas Paine. A large painting of the Second Continental Congress and a photo of the Declaration of Independence with a long printed excerpt from the writings of Thomas Jefferson on why Adams wanted Jefferson to write the Declaration are on the opening spread. Two critical thinking questions are

involved here. The following page gives two primary sources: a quote and a portrait of Thomas Paine on why he believed in independence; the from Charles Inglis and why he believed in staying loyal to Great Britain. Two more questions are asked in relation to these sources. More sources and questions on the 4th of July are on the next page along with quotes from revolutionaries. The Declaration of Independence is printed in its entirety, but only one question accompanies it. Neither slavery nor the enslaved are ever mentioned in this section.

America: Pathways to the Present. The chapter in this book that teaches America declaring its independence is titled "Ideas Behind the Revolution." To set the scene, the chapter uses a portrait of Thomas Paine, a photo of "Common Sense," and a quote from Paine's pamphlet. Two questions accompany these sources. A pull-out titled "Comparing Historians' Viewpoints" gives a quote from a newspaper editorial to highlight the revolutionary position and a contrasting quote from the Rev. Charles Inglis highlighting the loyalist position. More primary sources—quotes from John Locke and Thomas Jefferson—give reasons for the revolutionary position. Abigail Adams' letters to her husband John are highlighted and used to shine light on the issue of including rights for women in the Declaration of Independence. No primary sources specifically mention slavery, but the narrative says earlier in Abigail Adams' letters that she "raised the issue of slavery," and suggested that it, too, should be addressed by the Congress. She felt it "contradictory that delegates should speak of liberty for themselves but not for others."[166] Finally, the Declaration is printed in its entirety.

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[166] Cayton et al., *America: Pathways to the Present*, 122.

The American Pageant. The section that deals with America declaring its independence is titled "America Secedes from the Empire" (an interesting verb to use) and opens with a quote from Thomas Paine's "Common Sense." The reader sees a large painting of George Washington, and the text talks about how the artist physically depicted Washington as having "imposing height" and "towering over his horse."[167] The size of the primary source is one-quarter of a page.

Many sources in this book are larger than their counterparts in other books. Large quotes from and a portrait of Thomas Paine can be found further into the book, as well as quotes from Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence. Abigail Adams's letters to her husband John received their own page—again highlighting the desire of women to be included in the rights laid forth in the Declaration. Three detailed questions accompany these letters.

Slavery and the enslaved are mentioned in this book a few more times than in previous books, but only one primary source is dedicated to the Black experience of this time: a Black loyalist and former slave is quoted about finding freedom in the "protection of the British Army."[168] The quote, however, says he was "grieved at first to be obliged to leave my friends and reside among strangers"[169] which sounds dangerously close to the paternalist narrative that the enslaved were happier to live in slavery among "kindly masters" than live with liberty . . . a questionable choice of quote.

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[167] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 139.

[168] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 147.

[169] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 147.

No other primary sources address slavery, but there is a page-length pull-out that is dedicated to "Varying Viewpoints," which relates different historical interpretations about the revolution and the colonies declaring independence. It cites a historian who gives agency to minorities in this time period, "Woody Holton in *Forced Founders* (1999) argues that pressures exerted by the presence of Indians, slaves, and poor whites forced the Virginia elite onto the road toward independence."[170]

American Pageant also gives a "To Learn More" section at the end of the chapter with multiple historical and academic books recommended to those wishing to pursue further investigation. This book does not print the Declaration of Independence in this chapter, but alerts readers that its entirety can be found in an appendix.

American History. This book reads much more like an academic book with less strict chronology and more cause-and-effect utilized in the narrative. Fewer primary sources are employed, but the ones that are, are larger and more questions are asked of the sources.

The first source seen by readers in this book relating to this time period is a portrait of Thomas Paine. Then, a section pull-out with a Yankee Doodle pamphlet is printed. It is accompanied by four questions, and many third-party academics weigh in on how the lead-up to the American revolution has been depicted historically. It includes "little-studied groups" like women, enslaved persons, and Native Americans. Again, there are larger depictions of primary sources but less emphasis placed on American Exceptionalism and traditional heroes—which may explain why *American History* provides fewer sources. There is less emphasis on the ideas of revolution, which other

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[170] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 158.

books insist make America exceptional; there are fewer individual hero depictions, and more emphasis placed on what life was like for general populations.

Further into the book, when the narrative turns to life during the Revolutionary War, there are sections on "The War and Slavery," "Native Americans and the Revolution," and "Women's Rights and Women's Roles." Other books, when they enter this time period, more commonly depict specific events and quote popular men rather than teach about how minority populations or even common people lived during the time. Other books also do not talk about how the American revolution fit into global history at the time—another thing this book does well. These elements are beyond the scope of this thesis but give insights into the ways this book handles other elements of historical teaching that are criticized in academic textbooks analyses.

Overview of the Benchmark Case

Many of the same primary sources are utilized in all the textbooks I studied. Thomas Paine and his "Common Sense" pamphlet feature prominently, since his ideas and language certainly were influential and encompassed the revolutionary feelings of the time. The Declaration of Independence and its primary author, Thomas Jefferson, are also widely used and quoted as important to America's independence. Jefferson's status as a slave owner is mentioned in most of the books, but rarely is the contradictory nature of his status and writings on "inalienable rights" discussed. Abigail Adams features prominently in nearly all of the books. She is used to represent the idea that women were not subject to the same rights given men in the Declaration of Independence. Nothing similar from other groups not included, such as African Americans is used.

The sources used in this section help create linkages to further historical periods in history. The ideas planted in these chapters—revolution, equality, rights, democracy—all feature prominently throughout these books. When students are presented with the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence in classrooms, the reasons behind these events are made very clear: colonists left Britain to flee religious persecution, they established a thriving way of life against the odds, and they were unfairly taxed by an overseas monarchy. Thus, they were in the right to declare independence and the right to govern themselves and to fight a war to secure that right. Consequently, the ideas of democracy, rights, representation, innovation, free markets, and others, are established, and those values have driven historical events since the nation's founding.

Linkages are not hard to find. Women's suffrage, land expansion, innovations, workers' rights, immigrant programs, elections, and consequent wars are all displayed in the pages of history books as direct descendants of American independence and ideas of liberty, revolution, and democracy. "Revolutionary new inventions"[171] such as the telegraph, typewriter, camera, vacuum cleaner, telephone, airplane, light bulb, and others, are put forward in multiple chapters of *The American Journey* as examples of ways America continues to "revolutionize."[172] *Pathways to the Present* has a special pull-out called "Fighting for Freedom and Democracy," which states: "Throughout the nation's history, Americans have stepped forward to risk their lives to protect freedom and

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[171] Appleby, *The American Journey*, 590.

[172] Appleby, *The American Journey*, 589.

democracy."[173] It goes on to list primary sources associated with the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the "Civil War and Reunion," World War I, World War II, the Cold War, and Terrorism. All were fought, according to the book, to preserve a "country built on the foundations of freedom, equality, and self-government"[174] and to "make the world safe for democracy."[175] Linking these reasons for fighting—from the Revolutionary War all the way to the war on Terror—become very clear.

Holt American Nation says the "greatest legacy" that "progressive presidents" left "was to demonstrate that the U.S. democratic system could respond and adapt to changes in American life"[176] and that "despite these shortcomings [supporting racial segregation], some scholars note that progressives took real strides toward making the new industrial society more just, orderly, and humane."[177] It is easy to see the links this book makes from historical period to historical period of American Exceptionalism and advancement—but only for those in the racial majority. It even notes the disparity while at the same time claiming this exceptionalism. These are places ripe for creating links to racial prejudice and the experiences of Black Americans, but these opportunities are missed.

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[173] Cayton et al., *Pathways*, 642.

[174] Cayton et al., *Pathways*, 642.

[175] Cayton et al., *Pathways*, 642.

[176] Boyer, *Holt American Nation,* 592.

[177] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 592.

The Americans link the "spirit of American character" from the "settlement at Jamestown" to "settlers moving westward to farm"[178] in 1870 with a quote from Frederick Jackson Turner's book *Frontier Thesis*:

> American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion Westward with its new opportunities, its continuous tough with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character.[179]

This obvious allusion to American Exceptionalism is clearly connected from the initial colonists to westward settlers and beyond.

In his article "Political Symbols and American Exceptionalism," John Engle says Americans feel a collective "specialness" due to "centuries of rhetoric and ideology."[180] Much of this rhetoric is in textbooks. He continues:

> In some ways, this distinctiveness is probably earned. America was, at the time of its founding, a rare instance of republican government, one that began the process of institutionalizing principles of government and individual liberty that have been adopted in many and varied forms across the world. That is a special legacy for the American state.[181]

So, while Engle recognizes the importance of teaching America declaring its independence from Great Britain, he then offers a caveat suggesting that perhaps the way this uniqueness has been mythologized and taught is detrimental. It has created a

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[178] Danzer, *The Americans*, 420.

[179] Danzer, *The Americans*, 422.

[180] John Engle, "Political Symbols and American Exceptionalism," *Etc*. 71, no. 4 (October 2014): 324–329, 326.

[181] Engle, "Political Symbols," 326.

philosophy that "America is especially free, that is enemies 'hate their freedom.' The rest of the world is perceived as somehow less free. Yet that is false on the face of it."[182]

But textbooks fall short of stating the falseness. They focus on linkages between the founders and their notions of "participatory democracy" integrating a "public exchange of ideas into democratic life,"[183] and James Madison's idea of championing "the role of government in protecting different opinions"[184] and vision of "exchanging opinion as central to flourishing democracy directed toward the common good"[185] to these same ideas in other large events in American history and uniqueness. Just as the "prospect of losing personal liberties due to taxation and legal oversight of the growing government infuriated colonists,"[186] "similar concerns are loudly expressed today . . . by organizations . . . that prefer smaller government and greater individual freedom."[187] Stitzlein also links the start of town halls by Madison and Franklin to today's "community members filling, and even sometimes storming town hall meetings to express their views and to demand recognition from local leaders."[188] She links Franklin's community groups influencing the government to work for them to Barak Obama's campaign built on community organizing and his later organization Organizing

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[182] Engle, "Political Symbols," 326.

[183] Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 19.

[184] Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 19.

[185] Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 20.

[186] Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 19.

[187] Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 19.

[188] Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 19.

for America[189] as well as grassroots movements for the environment, the occupy movement on the left, and the pro-life and tea-party movements on the right.[190]

Primary sources like the excerpt from Turner's work are used to help create links for students when it comes to American Exceptionalism and the ideas of the American revolution. But similar sources that could help link minority experiences but do not often fall under "things that make America exceptional" are often lacking.

Slave Trade

To begin understanding the Black experience in the United States, it is important to begin when Black people first truly became a percentage of the population, and the accompanying start of the trauma these men, women, and children felt at being separated from family, sold like chattel, forced to live in unfamiliar places, forced to labor, and more.

Importance of Studying the Slave Trade for High School American History

Considering the origins of the dehumanizing and oppressive system of slavery is important to considering the origins of the system of anti-Black racism experienced in the United States. Contemporary figures including journalists, scholars, and educators on the front line of combating institutional racism agree.[191] The transatlantic slave trade is the beginning of a long period of time in which black bodies were reduced to

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[189] Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 20.

[190] Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 10.

[191] Joe Heim, "The Missing Pieces of America's Education," *Washington Post*, August 28, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/08/28/historians-slavery-myths/

commodities.[192] As W.E.B. DuBois wrote in his 1920 essay "The Souls of White Folk," the slave trade began modern capitalism and modern racism[193] since, as Eric Williams says, "slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery."[194]

The slave trade not only affected those captured and enslaved, but their descendants and economies all over the world.[195] So, to understand today's racism, we must understand its origins.

The slave trade contributed to the development of racist ideology.[196] Europeans needed a reason and rationale for justifying forced labor. Many went to great lengths to justify the theory that Africans were biologically inferior to Europeans. "Thus, slavery in Europe and the Americas acquired a racial basis, making it impossible for slaves and their descendants to attain equal status in society."[197] Christian guilt over enslaving people had to be assuaged.[198]

With this idea entrenched, the slave trade from Africa to the Americas ensued and was allowed to flourish. "Informing ourselves about this history shows us that Atlantic slavery was driven by the desire of a relatively small number of people for a massive

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[192] Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery a Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[193] Heim, "Missing Pieces."

[194] Eric Eustace Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 7.

[195] "The Atlantic Slave Trade: What Too Few Textbooks Told You," TedEd, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NXC4Q_4JVg

[196] "The Atlantic Slave Trade"; Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery.*

[197] The Atlantic Slave Trade."

[198] Ibrahim X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2017).

accumulation of capital at the cost of millions of lives."[199] Informing is arguably best done in classrooms. But this information does not qualify as American Exceptionalism. In fact, it is part of the disgrace of American history. So, finding space for this in the curriculum is hard to do.

One reason the slave trade is an important place to begin when examining the black experience in history in textbooks was brought to light in 2015 when national attention was drawn to a book published by McGraw-Hill—*World Geography*—which referred to slaves as "workers" brought "from Africa to the southern United States to work on agricultural plantations."[200] This choice of verbiage elevated the status of those brought here to that of economic migrant or immigrant. It gave them voluntary choice rather than making it clear they were forcibly captured and forced to labor.

Understanding African slaves' lack of independence also helps to understand the history of Black people in America within the racial hierarchy that began during this period. Often the trade component of the slave trade is left out of U.S. history teachings altogether. Slavery, according to many textbooks, appears to be a uniquely American phenomenon. Laura Dull, a professor of social studies education at State University of New York at New Paltz, a public-school teacher, and author notes:

> Since American history is usually separated from world history in schools, students may learn about the trans-Atlantic slave trade among Africans and Europeans in one grade, then study the "American' part of the narrative in another grade of class. This means that, for American history

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[199] Josh Jones, "What the Textbooks Don't Tell Us about the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Animated Video Fills in Historical Gaps," Open Culture, June 21, 2019. https://www.openculture.com/2019/06/what-the-textbooks-dont-tell-us-about-the-atlantic-slave-trade.html

[200] Tom Dart, "Textbook Passage Referring to Slaves as 'Workers' Prompts Outcry," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, October 5, 2015), https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/oct/05/mcgraw-hill-textbook-slaves-workers-texas

> students, slavery starts on the auction blocks or on the slave ships, completely disconnected from the international milieu that led to "Africans" arrival in the United States.[201]

Not only does this prevent linkages being made between the United States and the rest of the world in a global context—an issue that has ramifications for understanding global economics, politics, and conflict of the time and one the of the major issues with U.S. history teaching, according to Howard Zinn[202]—but it severs any connections that students might make between the racism of the trade itself, and the racism of the United States. In fact, when surveyed, only 46% of high school students can identify the term "middle passage" as the transport of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to North America.[203]

Dull makes another salient point as to why teaching the truth about the slave trade—who enslaved who, what countries were part of it, and its connections to today's racial injustices—is important.

> The questions and answers presented [in this paper] disrupt . . . dichotomies of black/victims and white/victimizers—conceptions that cause shame for black people and guilt for white people. . . . A pluralistic history moves beyond guilt and shame, toward action and justice, by showing students "that the divisions between black and white have prevented blacks and whites from getting together to bring about the social change that would benefit them all" (Zinn).[204]

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[201] Dull, "Teaching African Enslavement," 189–220, 190–191.

[202] Barbara Miner, "Why Students Should Study History: An Interview with Howard Zinn," Zinn Education Project (Rethinking Schools Magazine, 1994), https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/why-students-should-study-history/

[203] Shuster, "Teaching Hard History."

[204] Laura J. Dull, "Teaching African Enslavement," 207-208.

Page Selection

When looking at the slave trade in the textbooks, no book had a specific section or chapter on the slave trade. So, to ensure equality of pages studies, I used the pages listed in the index of each book under the term "slave trade."

What the Books Cover

The Americans. In this book, the reader first sees the slave trade introduced in the first unit of the book, chapter five called "Transatlantic Encounters." It notes that as Native Americans died of disease, and as the perception of African labor increased in comparison to Native Americans for this reason as well as others, the importation of African slaves grew. No primary sources are used here at all. The slave trade is then not talked about for another 50 pages until the chapter titled "The Agricultural South." The book shows a diagram of a slave ship with African people crammed into a boat. The diagram is 18 inches square. The only two other primary sources in this book are a small portrait of slave-turned-free-man Olaudah Equiano, and a quote from him about how crowded the slave ship was and its degrading conditions.

Hold American Nation. Similar to *The Americans*, readers are first introduced to the slave trade in an early chapter titled, "The Lure of Trade Exploration." One primary source, a photo of an African mask used to depict African family life, is printed. A further 50 pages on, the slave trade is again introduced in the chapter "The Southern Colonies and Slavery." Here, the middle passage is described, but the diagram of the slave trading ship is not used. An African sculpture of a Portuguese soldier is included and described, followed by a portrait of Olaudah Equiano and a quote from him about

slave-ship conditions. One of the associated questions asks, "How typical were Olaudah Equiano's experiences as a slave?" but nothing in the narrative teaches about other slaves. So, it appears that if one were only using the textbook, Equiano's experience—kidnapped and enslaved, then able to buy his freedom and become an educated lecturer—is not extraordinary when indeed it was.

The American Journey. References to the slave trade begin in the chapter called "Life in the Colonies." The first primary source is a quote from Olaudah Equiano about conditions on the ship. Next is a small (four square inches) diagram of a slave ship followed by a large painting of a European dealing in chained men and a quote from a slave ship captain: "This morning [we buried] a woman slave (No.47). Know not what to say she died of for she has not been properly alive since she first came on board."[205]

America: Pathways to the Present. The first time the slave trade is mentioned in this book is in the chapter titled "The Atlantic World is Born." An engraving of the Sao Jorge da Mina trading post is shown. The slave trade is mentioned about 50 pages later when the triangle trade is brought up. Ten pages later, in the section titled "African Americans in the Colonies," two pages focus on the middle passage and again use Equiano's quotes describing the slave ship and feature his portrait. No slave ship diagram is used in this book. A painting of African people aboard a slave ship shows cramped conditions. Two questions are posed surrounding this painting. Finally, another Equiano quote finishes the primary source usage. There is a strong focus on Equiano, including a biographical pull-out that highlights his story, writings, accounts of enslavement, and passage aboard the

[205] Appleby, The American Journey, 93.

slave ship. A question is asked if he is the norm for slave experiences, but the narrative does not explain that he is not.

The American Pageant. Early in this book (page 13), a painting of a slave fortress takes up 26 square inches in the chapter titled "The Impact of Discovery." Sixty pages later, a two-page pull-out from the chapter titled "American Life in the Seventeenth Century" called "Thinking Globally: The Atlantic Slave Trade, 1500–1860" is a half-page painting showing Africans yoked and bound, followed by a diagram covering one-third of the page showing slaves aboard a slave ship. Another painting of slaves aboard a ship is also used, as well as a quote from Olaudah Equiano further into the chapter, to highlight his narrative. Also shown is a pull-out titled "Makers of America: From African to African American" that shows a Yarrow Mamout portrait. Mamout was brought to America from Africa. Finally, a painting of the trade of humans being negotiated on the shores of Africa is shown.

American History. Introduction of the slave trade occurs in chapter one of *American History* titled "The Collision of Cultures." It introduces a sculpture of an enslaved Mali prisoner. One interesting element in the narrative is a statement on the origins of racism: "Europeans and white Americans came to portray African society as primitive and uncivilized (in part to justify the enslavement of Africa's people.) But most Africans were civilized peoples with well-developed economies and political systems."[206] This is the only book to link the slave trade to racism. Some 50 pages later, the middle passage is introduced along with a pull-out called "The Origins of Slavery," where an engraving shows the slave trade, asks three questions, and engages many third-party historians.

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[206] Brinkley, *American History*, 20.

Another engraving, 42 square inches, shows the cramped conditions of slaves on a ship. The next page shows a 25-square-inch diagram of a slave ship.

Overview of the Slave Trade

Olaudah Equiano is a commonly used example of a kidnapped and enslaved African. This is understandable, since his story is readily available. He bought his freedom and wrote about his experience, which was then published and widely disseminated. However, rarely is it mentioned that he is extremely exceptional. Allowing students to believe Olaudah Equiano is the norm minimizes the horrors of the trade and the experiences he himself is describing. Zachary Wright, professor at Relay Graduate School of Education, author, and former high school teacher says:

> By focusing solely on larger-than-life figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. or Rosa Parks . . ., the underlying message is that these heroes represent the entirety of the non-dominant experience. This is incredibly important because this practice perpetuates the theory of Black Exceptionalism. Paraphrasing Michelle Alexander, Black Exceptionalism is the belief that since there are some people who have succeeded, then the system must, in fact, be equitable and accessible for all.[207]

This idea could easily be applied to Equiano and the institution of slavery in the United States. Focusing on Olaudah Equiano as a dominant narrative is overly romantic. Yes, he is used to describe the horrors, but using his exceptional biography as an example of a person who experienced the slave trade helps to dilute the horrors of the experiences of millions who did not share his fate—as well as his own experiences. "In exceptionalist narratives, the problem of racism, sexism, and discrimination tend to be downplayed, if

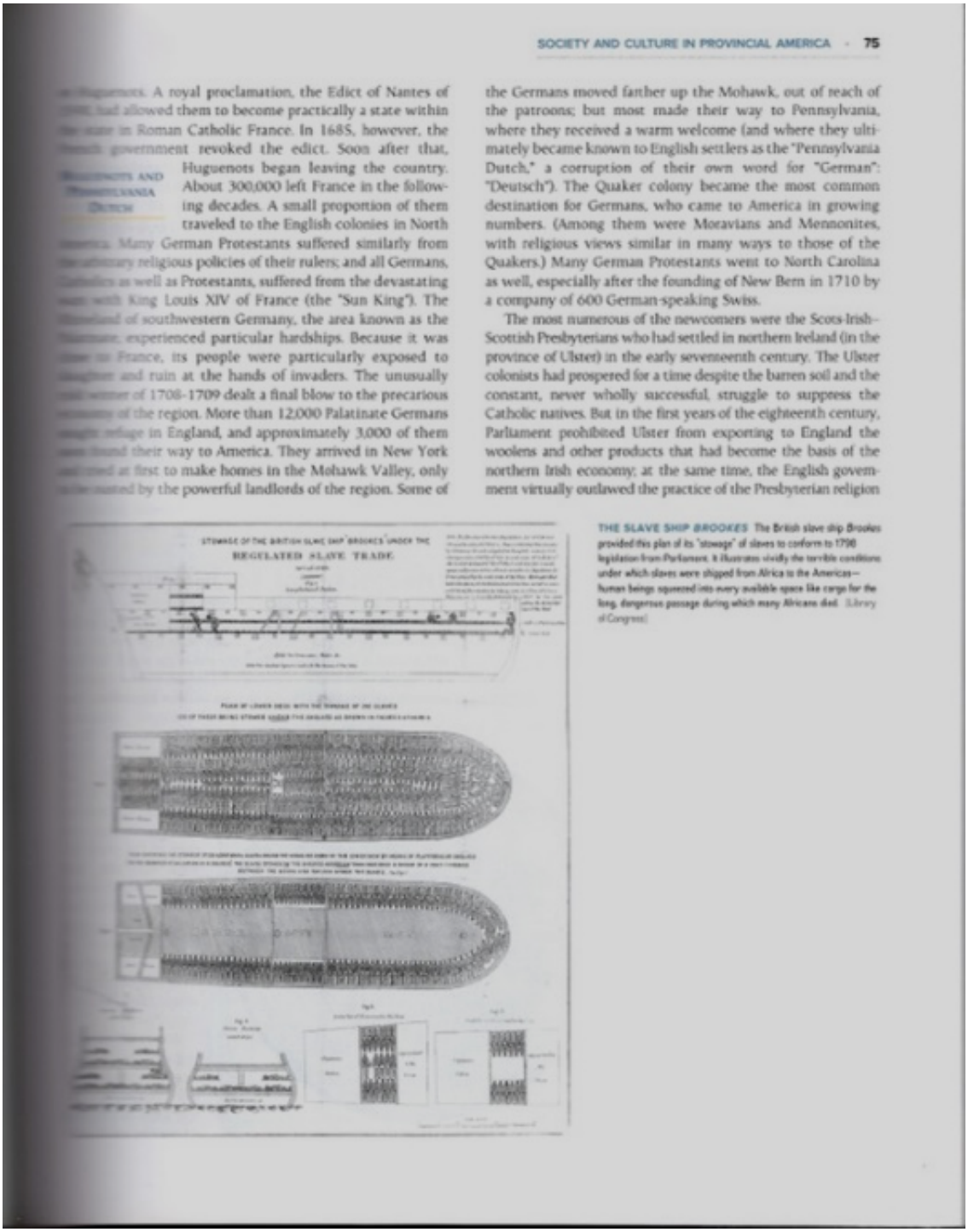
[207] Zachary Wright, "We Can't Just Teach About Heroes and Holidays and Call It Culturally Responsive," *Education Post*, October 3, 2019. https://educationpost.org/we-cant-just-teach-about-heroes-and-holidays-and-call-it-culturally-responsive/

not overlooked entirely."[208] These exceptionalist narratives can lead students to believe we live in a post-racial society and downplay the linkages—or continuum—between the slave trade, slavery, and racism.

One of the most powerful primary sources that helps to illustrate the experience of the slave trade is the relatively commonly used diagram of the slave ship *Brookes* that shows the stowage of slaves. It shows how close each person was to another—shoulder to shoulder lying flat, and the ship's decks so close that they did not give them enough headspace to fully sit up. The diagram is very detailed and delicate, which means the magnitude can only be fully discerned if one can look at a larger reprinting.

Of the six books researched, only four use this diagram. *American History* prints it at 24.75 square inches; *The Americans* prints it at 18 square inches; *The American Pageant* prints it at 11.375 square inches, and *The American Journey* prints it at a mere 3.94 square inches—hardly large enough to discern what it is, let alone grasp the severity of the conditions it is meant to depict. Figures 1-a, 1-b, 1-c, and -d show the page from each of four books that use the slave-ship diagram.

[208] Margaret Crocco, "Texas, Textbooks, and the Politics of History Standards," Michigan State University College of Education, November 26, 2014), https://education.msu.edu/green-and-write/2014/texas-textbooks-and-the-politics-of-history-standards/



SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN PROVINCIAL AMERICA · 75

...Huguenots. A royal proclamation, the Edict of Nantes of ... had allowed them to become practically a state within the state in Roman Catholic France. In 1685, however, the French government revoked the edict. Soon after that, Huguenots began leaving the country. About 300,000 left France in the following decades. A small proportion of them traveled to the English colonies in North America. Many German Protestants suffered similarly from the arbitrary religious policies of their rulers; and all Germans, Catholics as well as Protestants, suffered from the devastating wars with King Louis XIV of France (the "Sun King"). The Rhineland of southwestern Germany, the area known as the Palatinate, experienced particular hardships. Because it was close to France, its people were particularly exposed to slaughter and ruin at the hands of invaders. The unusually cold winter of 1708–1709 dealt a final blow to the precarious economy of the region. More than 12,000 Palatinate Germans sought refuge in England, and approximately 3,000 of them soon found their way to America. They arrived in New York and tried at first to make homes in the Mohawk Valley, only to be ousted by the powerful landlords of the region. Some of the Germans moved farther up the Mohawk, out of reach of the patroons; but most made their way to Pennsylvania, where they received a warm welcome (and where they ultimately became known to English settlers as the "Pennsylvania Dutch," a corruption of their own word for "German": "Deutsch"). The Quaker colony became the most common destination for Germans, who came to America in growing numbers. (Among them were Moravians and Mennonites, with religious views similar in many ways to those of the Quakers.) Many German Protestants went to North Carolina as well, especially after the founding of New Bern in 1710 by a company of 600 German-speaking Swiss.

HUGUENOTS AND PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH

The most numerous of the newcomers were the Scots-Irish—Scottish Presbyterians who had settled in northern Ireland (in the province of Ulster) in the early seventeenth century. The Ulster colonists had prospered for a time despite the barren soil and the constant, never wholly successful, struggle to suppress the Catholic natives. But in the first years of the eighteenth century, Parliament prohibited Ulster from exporting to England the woolens and other products that had become the basis of the northern Irish economy; at the same time, the English government virtually outlawed the practice of the Presbyterian religion

STOWAGE OF THE BRITISH SLAVE SHIP 'BROOKES' UNDER THE REGULATED SLAVE TRADE.

THE SLAVE SHIP *BROOKES* The British slave ship *Brookes* provided this plan of its "stowage" of slaves to conform to 1790 legislation from Parliament. It illustrates vividly the terrible conditions under which slaves were shipped from Africa to the Americas—human beings squeezed into every available space like cargo for the long, dangerous passage during which many Africans died. (Library of Congress)

Figure 1-a. Diagram of the slave ship *Brookes*, as used in *American History.*

Source: *American History*, 75.



60,000—three times the white population.

During the 17th century, Africans had become part of a transatlantic trading network described as the **triangular trade.** This term referred to a three-way trading process: merchants carried rum and other goods from New England to Africa; in Africa they traded their merchandise for enslaved people, whom they transported to the West Indies and sold for sugar and molasses; these goods were then shipped to New England to be distilled into rum. The "triangular" trade, in fact, encompassed a network of trade routes criss-crossing the Northern and Southern colonies, the West Indies, England, Europe, and Africa. The network carried an array of traded goods, from furs and fruit to tar and tobacco, as well as African people. 5

MAIN IDEA

Developing Historical Perspective

5 What parts of the world were involved in the triangular trade?

▲ This plan and section of the British slave ship "Brookes" was published in London around 1790 by a leading British antislavery advocate named Thomas Clarkson. The image effectively conveys the degradation and inhumanity of the slave trade, which reduced human beings to the level of merchandise.

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE The voyage that brought Africans to the West Indies and later to North America was known as the **middle passage,** because it was considered the middle leg of the transatlantic trade triangle. Sickening cruelty characterized this journey. In the bustling ports along West Africa, European traders branded Africans with red-hot irons for identification purposes and packed them into the dark holds of large ships. On board a slave ship, Africans fell victim to whippings and beatings from slavers as well as diseases that swept through the vessel. The smell of blood, sweat, and excrement filled the hold, as the African passengers lived in their own vomit and waste. One African, Olaudah Equiano, recalled the inhumane conditions on his trip from West Africa to the West Indies in 1756 when he was 11 years old.

hmhsocialstudies.com

INTERACTIVE MAP

Learn more about the triangular trade.

A Personal Voice OLAUDAH EQUIANO

"The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died . . . ."

—*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

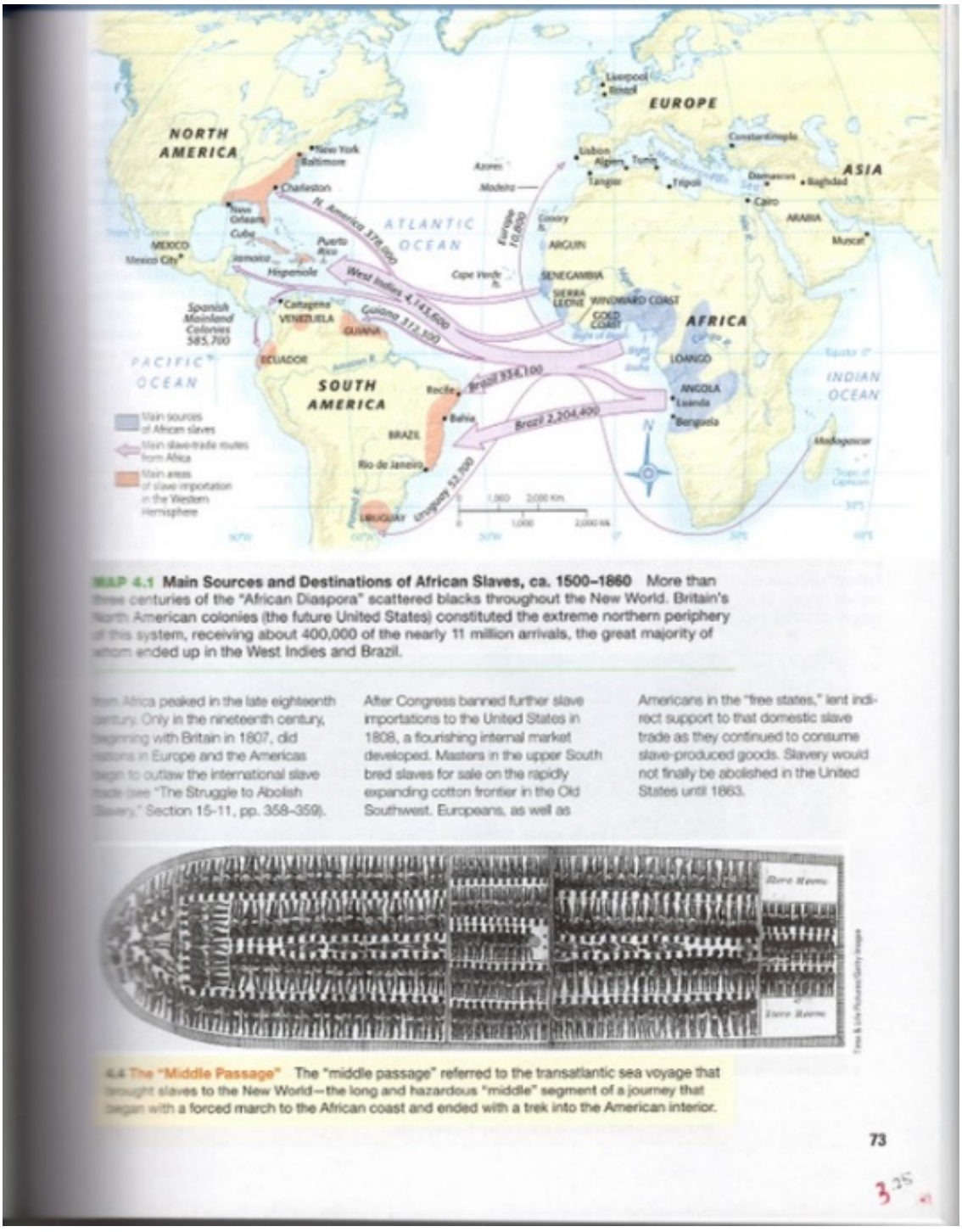
Whether they died from disease or from cruel treatment by merchants, or whether they committed suicide, as many did by plunging into the ocean, up to 20 percent or more of the Africans aboard each slave ship perished during the trip to the New World.

▲ Olaudah Equiano was kidnapped from Africa and sold to a succession of owners before buying his freedom.

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Figure 1-b. Diagram of the slave ship *Brookes*, as used in *The Americans.*

Source: *The Americans*, 76.



MAP 4.1 Main Sources and Destinations of African Slaves, ca. 1500–1860 More than three centuries of the "African Diaspora" scattered blacks throughout the New World. Britain's North American colonies (the future United States) constituted the extreme northern periphery of this system, receiving about 400,000 of the nearly 11 million arrivals, the great majority of whom ended up in the West Indies and Brazil.

from Africa peaked in the late eighteenth century. Only in the nineteenth century, beginning with Britain in 1807, did nations in Europe and the Americas begin to outlaw the international slave trade (see "The Struggle to Abolish Slavery," Section 15-11, pp. 358–359).

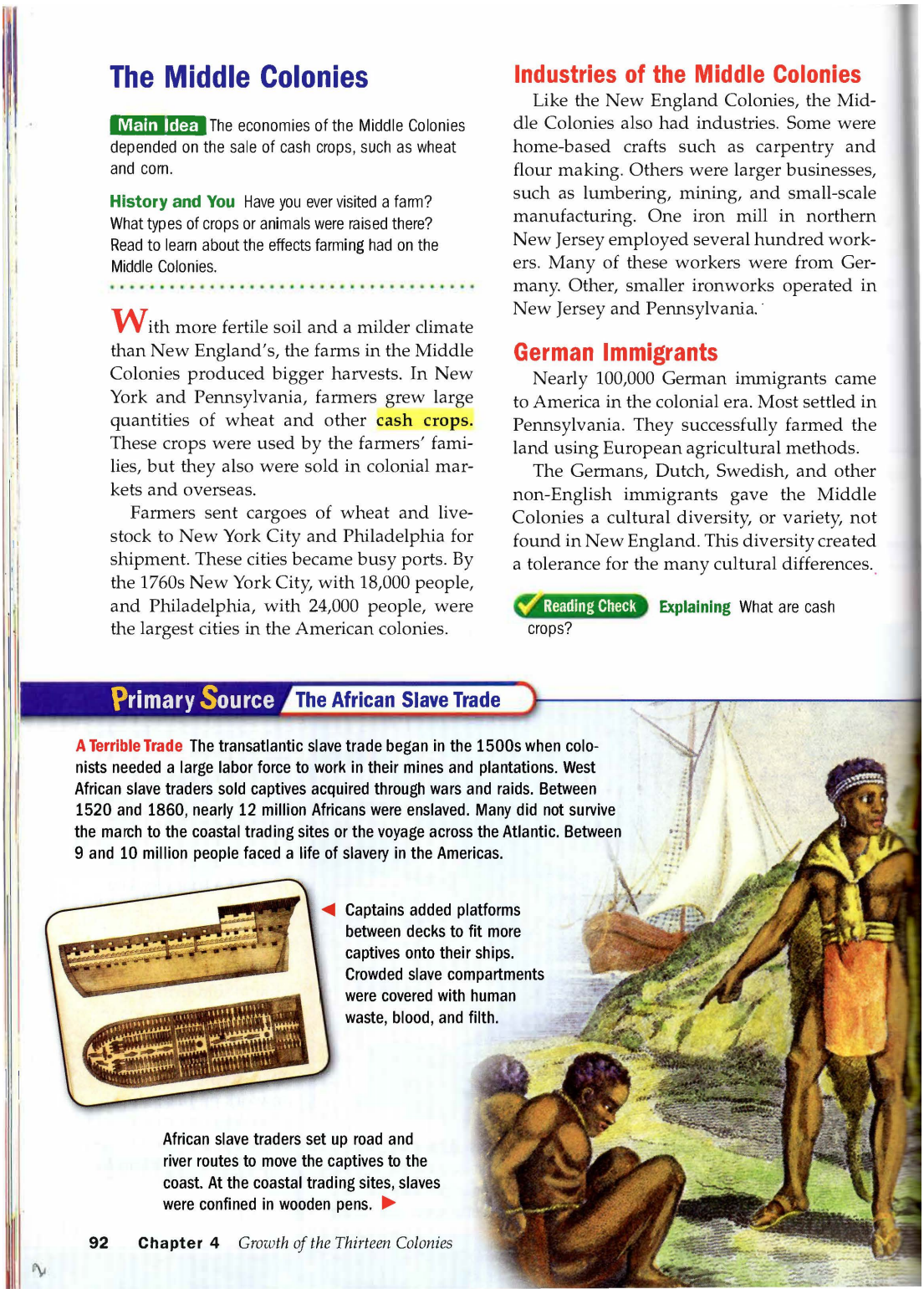
After Congress banned further slave importations to the United States in 1808, a flourishing internal market developed. Masters in the upper South bred slaves for sale on the rapidly expanding cotton frontier in the Old Southwest. Europeans, as well as Americans in the "free states," lent indirect support to that domestic slave trade as they continued to consume slave-produced goods. Slavery would not finally be abolished in the United States until 1863.

4.4 The "Middle Passage" The "middle passage" referred to the transatlantic sea voyage that brought slaves to the New World—the long and hazardous "middle" segment of a journey that began with a forced march to the African coast and ended with a trek into the American interior.

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Figure 1-c. Diagram of the slave ship *Brookes*, as used in *American Pageant*.

Source: *American Pageant*, 73.



The Middle Colonies

Main Idea The economies of the Middle Colonies depended on the sale of cash crops, such as wheat and corn.

History and You Have you ever visited a farm? What types of crops or animals were raised there? Read to learn about the effects farming had on the Middle Colonies.

With more fertile soil and a milder climate than New England's, the farms in the Middle Colonies produced bigger harvests. In New York and Pennsylvania, farmers grew large quantities of wheat and other **cash crops.** These crops were used by the farmers' families, but they also were sold in colonial markets and overseas.

Farmers sent cargoes of wheat and livestock to New York City and Philadelphia for shipment. These cities became busy ports. By the 1760s New York City, with 18,000 people, and Philadelphia, with 24,000 people, were the largest cities in the American colonies.

Industries of the Middle Colonies

Like the New England Colonies, the Middle Colonies also had industries. Some were home-based crafts such as carpentry and flour making. Others were larger businesses, such as lumbering, mining, and small-scale manufacturing. One iron mill in northern New Jersey employed several hundred workers. Many of these workers were from Germany. Other, smaller ironworks operated in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

German Immigrants

Nearly 100,000 German immigrants came to America in the colonial era. Most settled in Pennsylvania. They successfully farmed the land using European agricultural methods.

The Germans, Dutch, Swedish, and other non-English immigrants gave the Middle Colonies a cultural diversity, or variety, not found in New England. This diversity created a tolerance for the many cultural differences.

Reading Check **Explaining** What are cash crops?

Primary Source **The African Slave Trade**

A Terrible Trade The transatlantic slave trade began in the 1500s when colonists needed a large labor force to work in their mines and plantations. West African slave traders sold captives acquired through wars and raids. Between 1520 and 1860, nearly 12 million Africans were enslaved. Many did not survive the march to the coastal trading sites or the voyage across the Atlantic. Between 9 and 10 million people faced a life of slavery in the Americas.

Captains added platforms between decks to fit more captives onto their ships. Crowded slave compartments were covered with human waste, blood, and filth.

African slave traders set up road and river routes to move the captives to the coast. At the coastal trading sites, slaves were confined in wooden pens.

Figure 1-d. Diagram of the slave ship *Brookes*, as used in *American Journey*.

Source: *American Journey*, 92.

The origin of slavery, namely the transatlantic slave trade, is the starting place of anti-Black racism. Scholars such as Angelique M. Davis,[209] Locksley Edmondson,[210] Ahmet Gencturk,[211] David Olusoga,[212] Jemima Pierre,[213] and others each state unequivocally that the legacy of the slave trade is the idea of race and modern-day racism. The justifications that were created in the 15th century to enslave those of African descent proliferated and became so deeply embedded in Western cultures that they continued to evolve and become entrenched throughout history.[214] Olusoga states: "The men who set out to defend slavery assembled a vast arsenal of new claims and old theories about black people, which they then codified, refined and disseminated through books, pamphlets, cartoons and speeches."[215] And yet, these direct connections from the slave trade and its justifications to racism are not created in history textbooks.

The new Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama, created by the Equal Justice Initiative, tells the story of the legacy of the "slave trade and how it affected every region

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[209] Angelique M. Davis, "Apologies, Reparations, and the Continuing Legacy of the European Slave Trade in the United States," *Journal of Black Studies* 45, no. 4 (2014): 271–286. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934714529794

[210] Locksley Edmondson, "Trans-Atlantic Slavery and the Internationalization of Race," *Caribbean Quarterly* 22, no. 2-3 (1976): 5–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/00086495.1976.11671898

[211] Ahmet Gencturk, "Opinion—Transatlantic Slave Trade: Legacy of Entangled Affair between Imperialism, Racism, Slavery," Anadolu Agency, July 23, 2021. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/opinion-transatlantic-slave-trade-legacy-of-entangled-affair-between-imperialism-racism-slavery/2312043

[212] David Olusoga, "The Roots of European Racism Lie in the Slave Trade, Colonialism—and Edward Long," *The Guardian*, September 8, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/08/european-racism-africa-slavery

[213] Jemima Pierre, "Slavery, Anthropological Knowledge, and the Racialization of Africans," *Current Anthropology* 61, no. S22 (October 2020): S220–S231. https://doi.org/10.1086/709844

[214] Olusoga, "The Roots of European Racism"; Pierre, "Slavery, Anthropological Knowledge, and the Racialization of Africans," S220.

[215] Olusoga, "The Roots of European Racism."

of early America and continues to influence the way Black Americans are treated in the justice system and in society."[216] Bryan Stevenson, the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, and author of the best-selling book *Just Mercy,* recognized the city of Montgomery's inability to reckon with its role as an epicenter of the slave trade, and it created the museum on the site of the Lehman, Curran, and Co. cotton warehouse where slave trading routinely took place. Stevenson goes further than some to link the slave trade to racism, but also to the country's mass incarceration rate and other modern problems such as racial profiling, guilt, and discomfort in conversations about race — all components of institutional racism. He says: "You can't understand civil rights or the Civil War without an appreciation of slavery and what the slave trade did."[217] Dull sees the slave trade as paramount to education that helps students better understand race-related issues in this country. She says:

> Ongoing struggles for racial justice in the United States and elsewhere, not to mention global human trafficking involving an estimated 20.9 million people, demonstrate that it may be more important than ever to teach middle school and high school students the history of the slave trade, and to do so with sensitivity, depth, and courage. In my experience, students yearn to know more about how the trade worked, why it happened, and who was involved, so as to better understand the issues of race that still haunt us.[218]

She advocates for a pluralistic approach to teaching the slave trade that not only helps students create links from the past to the present, but enables Black students to find ways

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[216] Greg Garrison, "Slave Trade to Mass Incarceration, Museum Tells Grim Truth," al, October 2, 2021, https://www.al.com/life/2021/10/slave-trade-to-mass-incarceration-museum-tells-grim-truth.html

[217] Kala Kachmar, "New Historical Markers Document Montgomery's Role in the Slave Trade," Montgomery Advertiser, December 11, 2013.

[218] Dull, "Teaching African Enslavement," 189.

to develop healthy self-identity, as it moves away from "'damage-centered' teaching that focuses primarily on the victimization of Africans.[219]

Four of the six books have a narrative that engages with the sources 50% or less of the time; similarly, four of the six books ask questions of the sources 50% or less of the time. Two books ask no questions at all. In *The American Pageant,* third-party academic books are referenced for all of the other time periods studied in a "To Learn More" pull-out. In this section, which covers the slave trade and early slavery among other topics, no books mentioning slavery or its trade are offered.

Cause of the Civil War

Bryan Stevenson said, you can't understand the Civil War without understanding the slave trade and slavery. But what is the relationship between slavery and the Civil War as it is being taught in classrooms?

Importance of Studying the Cause of the Civil War for High School American History

In 2018, the Southern Poverty Law Center published a survey of 1,000 U.S. high school seniors and more than 1,700 social studies teachers. It reported that among students, only 8% identified slavery as the main cause of the U.S. Civil War. In answer to the question, "Which was the reason the South seceded from the Union?,"[220] more students chose "to preserve states' rights," or "to protest taxes on imported goods," or "to avoid rapid industrialization," rather than "to preserve slavery." In a reviewing the

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[219] Dull, "Teaching African Enslavement," 190.

[220] Shuster, "Teaching Hard History," 19.

standards for 15 states vis-à-vis teaching U.S. history, the same report found only seven states listed slavery as a central cause of the Civil War. Alabama, for instance, lists "sectionalism, slavery, states' rights, and economic disagreements as all relevant to the cause of the Civil War."[221] Florida lists only "states' rights and sectional differences" as major causes of the war.[222] Louisiana standards "describe the election of Lincoln as one of the 'key events, ideas, and people' that led to the Civil War."[223]

Texas, as recently as 2015, created new academic standards for teaching American history, which teach "that the conflict was caused by 'sectionalism, states' rights and slavery'—written deliberately in that order to telegraph slavery's secondary role in driving the conflict, according to some members of the state board of education."[224] After receiving pushback, Texas revised its teaching standards and included slavery more prominently in the causes of the Civil War. This was implemented in 2020.[225] The Texas case has been reported so often that Texas decides to include in books and curriculums affects other states. Texas is one of the largest consumers of textbooks, therefore it can set what gets published and therefore influence what smaller states have to choose from when adopting new books. In her documentary *Civil War*,

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[221] Shuster, "Teaching Hard History." 30.

[222] Shuster, "Teaching Hard History." 31.

[223] Shuster, "Teaching Hard History." 31.

[224] Emma Brown, "Texas Officials: Schools Should Teach That Slavery Was 'Side Issue' to Civil War," *Washington Post*, July 5, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/150-years-later-schools-are-still-a-battlefield-for-interpreting-civil-war/2015/07/05/e8fbd57e-2001-11e5-bf41-c23f5d3face1_story.html

[225] Camille Phillips, "Texas Students Will Soon Learn Slavery Played a Central Role in the Civil War," National Public Radio (NPR), November 16, 2018). https://www.npr.org/2018/11/16/668557179/texas-students-will-soon-learn-slavery-played-a-central-role-in-the-civil-war.

Rachel Boynton conducted an interview with two Southern men in their sixties. They told her that teaching that the Civil War was fought over slavery is untrue. They said, "For that professor to say that economics had nothing to do with the war is totally false." They also do not call the war the Civil War, they call it the war between the states or the war of Northern aggression. "The North came down here and invaded us. We didn't go up there."[226]

Not recognizing slavery as the central cause of the Civil War makes it difficult for students to understand possible links from slavery to the war to racism. Shuster said:

> In some cases, we minimalize slavery's significance so much that we render its impact—on people and on the nation—inconsequential. As a result, students lack a basic knowledge and understanding of the institution, evidenced most glaringly by their widespread inability to identify slavery as a central cause of the Civil War.[227]

Not understanding slavery and the lengths people in the United States were willing to go to ensure its preservation, allows for false narratives that the hearts of Americans simply changed when they were shown the light by exceptional men like Abraham Lincoln or Henry Lloyd Garrison. Continuous white supremacy and the fact that secession was seen by many as traitorous are not highlighted. Rather, due to the exceptional nature of America, slavery is something that was overcome and put behind us as a nation. But without understanding lingering white supremacy and the belief in the "Lost Cause," today's racism cannot be understood.

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[226] "Civil War (or, Who Do We Think We Are), Boynton Films Production, Plan B Entertainment, 2021. https://www.peacocktv.com/watch/asset/movies/documentary/civil-war/ada45072-9ac1-386c-8d2d-b9fd05034ccb?orig_ref=https://www.google.com/

[227] Shuster, "Teaching Hard History," 5–6.

Putting the Confederate cause on a pedestal, as is often done with monuments and teaching about its leaders in textbooks, diminishes and ignores these traits—or exalts them, depending on perspective. Referring to monuments commemorating the Confederate cause and the lingering effects of slavery, a *New York Times* editorial in 2017 stated:

> The consequences of slavery continue to distort and stunt lives in America, so it's quite right that we should engage in what can be an agonizing conversation about this history. Only when our history is faced squarely can removing Confederate monuments be properly understood, as a small but significant step toward ending the celebration of treason and white supremacy, if not toward ameliorating their effects.[228]

Understanding the reasons for the rise of racial prejudice helps students understand that they themselves are not at fault.[229] So many activists today who are filling the halls of school board meetings, insisting that teaching of racial history will instill guilt in their students, misunderstand the effects of teaching the truth about prejudice. Teaching that the preservation of slavery was the primary cause of the Civil War will go a long way to help rectify this notion.

Page Selection

There are no chapters in any of the books analyzed that correlate exactly to the topic "Cause of Civil War." To ensure I examined similar materials in each book, I created a rubric. I kept to political events starting with the Compromise of 1850 up to the firing on Fort Sumter, as well as any mention of states seceding. I did not consider

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[228] "About John Kelly's Racist History Lesson," *New York Times*, November 1, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/01/opinion/kelly-racist-history-slavery-compromise.html

[229] Moore and Banfield, *Reconstruction: The Promise and Betrayal of Democracy*, 5.

popular culture issues or legal matters despite their potential influence on public sentiment.

What the Books Cover

The Americans. The pages that begin the time period of the cause of the Civil War open with a quote from and portrait of John C. Calhoun. The narrative highlights Calhoun's position that the South should be able to determine its own policies. But the text also says, "The issue of slavery had brought about a political crisis, deepening the gulf between the North and the South."[230] While this does not state that slavery was a primary cause of the Civil War, it does set the stage and alerts readers to slavery as an issue.

The book then discusses the Compromise of 1850 and the ensuing Congressional debates. In a large reproduction of a painting, it shows Henry Clay on the floor of the Congress, followed by quotes from Clay and Daniel Webster debating the compromise. The reader sees a two-page pull-out called "Tracing Themes: States' Rights" which highlights South Carolina's secession in 1860. It says, "South Carolina seceded after the election of Abraham Lincoln, whom the South perceived as anti-states' rights and antislavery."[231] A painting depicting the hanging of John Brown is shown, and students are asked to analyze it. Next, a political cartoon of the election of 1860 is shown and similarly analyzed. The narrative following this cartoon says, "Lincoln's victory convinced Southerners that they had lost their political voice in the national

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[230] Danzer, *The Americans*, 304.

[231] Danzer, *The Americans*, 323.

government."[232] A quote from William Tecumseh Sherman portrays the feelings of the South, and the narrative follows up:

> For many southern planters, the cry of "states' rights!" meant the complete independence of southern states from federal government control. Many were desperate for one last chance to preserve the slave labor system and saw secession as the only way.[233]

This billing between Lincoln's election, states' rights, and slavery seems to place slavery as the least prominent cause of secession.

Finally, the last primary sources shown are a painting of the firing on Fort Sumter and a photo of a Confederate soldier with the description: "Most Confederate soldiers fought to protect the South from northern aggression."[234]

Holt American Nation. The pages covering the cause of the Civil War in *Holt American Nation* begin with the same painting of Henry Clay on the floor of the Congress as seen in *The Americans,* urging his peers to accept a compromise that would admit slave states and free states equally to the Union, known as the Compromise of 1850. A John C. Calhoun quote on secession is printed next to another painting of Daniel Webster giving a speech in favor of Clay's compromise. Lincoln's point of view on the enduring nature of the Union from the famous Lincoln/Douglas debates are also printed. Next, John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry is introduced with a painting of Brown on his way to execution, and a quote from one of his men.

When it comes to actual secession by Southern states, the cover of a December 1860 *Harper's Weekly* shows the faces of the eight men from the South Carolina

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[232] Danzer, *The Americans*, 330.

[233] Danzer, *The Americans*, 330.

[234] Danzer, *The Americans*, 339.

delegation who opted to secede. The narrative starts the "Secession!" section with this text: "Despite Abraham Lincoln's moderate stance on slavery, many Southerners viewed his victory as a victory for abolition. Lincoln's win particularly mobilized the lower South."[235] The narrative states that the Confederate Constitution guaranteed the right to own slaves, and that each state was "sovereign and independent."[236] It also softens slightly the notion of states' rights by saying "the southern secessionists *justified* (my emphasis) their position with the doctrine of states' rights."[237] The next paragraph states, "The issue went beyond states' rights, however. Also at stake was the determination of the Southerners to protect slavery."[238]

While slavery is mentioned as a cause, the questions associated with the primary source focus on the election of Lincoln. "How did Lincoln's election as president lead to secession?" and "After Lincoln's election, delegates from South Carolina voted to secede from the Union. Why do you think a major national publication like *Harper's Weekly* would put the delegates' portraits on its cover?"[239] Further on, when talking about the Union dissolving, the narrative states the crisis came to a head with Lincoln being elected president.[240] Quotes from Robert E. Lee, Abner Doubleday, and a painting of the firing on Fort Sumter round out the pages.

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[235] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 362.

[236] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 363.

[237] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 363.

[238] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 363.

[239] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 363.

[240] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 366.

Lincoln's election weighs heavy in the narrative and in primary sources when it comes to pinpointing a cause of the Civil War. States' rights is listed as a justification, but what it justifies—slavery—is murky. No excerpts from secessionist documents or the Confederate Constitution appear, nor are there any quotes from Southerners or southern government officials on the topic of secession.

At one point in the section, a pull-out is introduced that likens slavery, and the conflicting views on it held by the population at the time, to views on pollution today:

> In the 1850s the individual states held vastly different ideas concerning the issue of slavery. No question has so strongly divided the country since. Nevertheless, problems and concerns continue to arise, and states and regions often view them in a very different light. In the 1990s, pollution was one such issue, particularly as the northeastern region of the country experienced some of its worst smog problems ever.[241]

Saying that pollution and how states deal with federal mandates and individual views are similar to slavery, seems disingenuous and lacking in empathy. It reduces the lives of those held in bondage to a simple disagreement about how to curb carbon emissions.

The American Journey. The pages from *The American Journey* that address the cause of the Civil War start with the painting of and a quote from John Brown. The next source is a quote from the newspaper, *The Charleston Mercury*, a Southern newspaper, which declared there would be no compromise (that would negate an armed conflict) after John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. Interestingly, the book shows a secession ribbon with mottoes from the American Revolution in an attempt to show how secessionists conflated their cause with that of the colonies nearly a century prior. This could be considered a linkage between time periods, but it is one that highlights American Exceptionalism, not African American experiences. A political cartoon about

[241] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 360.

secessionists follows, with three questions meant to help students analyze it. Lincoln's views on reconciliation, taken from his inaugural address, are quoted next, followed by a two-page pull-out with quotes from both Lincoln's and Jefferson Davis' inaugural addresses on their conflicting views about the South's right to secede.

The narrative states briefly that South Carolina voted to secede, and that Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas followed. The book states: "Southerners justified or found reasons to support secession with the theory of states' rights."[242] This again soft-pedals the idea of states' rights as a cause, with the words "justified" and "theory." But it does not give an alternative reason. Slavery is never mentioned in this context, just states' rights. But a state's right to do what? In fact, the essential question of the chapter posed to students is, "What role did the theory of states' rights play in the outbreak of the Civil War?" but it does not ask students to dig deeper and identify an alternative cause.

American: Pathways to the Present. The pages recounting the cause of the Civil War in *America: Pathways to the Present* start with the same painting of Henry Clay on the floor of the Congress that is used in many textbooks, as well as the ones I analyzed. It is followed by a quote from John C. Calhoun, saying he "believed from the first that . . . the subject of slavery would, if not prevented by some timely and effective measure, end in disunion [of the United States]."[243] Here is a Southerner admitting slavery is the cause of the disunion between the North and the South. However, the ensuing narrative ignores this part of the quote and focuses on Calhoun saying,

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[242] Appleby, *The American Journey*, 464.

[243] Cayton, et al., *Pathways*, 357.

> The 'great and primary' cause of the crisis . . . was that the North now had 'the exclusive power of controlling the government, which leaves the [South] without any adequate means of protecting itself against . . . encroachment and oppression.[244]

States' rights is then mentioned. The narrative itself does not mention slavery.

A full-page pull-out titled "Analyzing Political Speeches" appears next and asks students to analyze a speech by Henry Clay, giving instruction and tools on how to do so. Quotes from the Lincoln/Douglas debates come next, along with a portrait of Abraham Lincoln and a painting of the debates. Next is a photograph of and quote from John Brown. A pull-out called "Comparing Historians' Viewpoints: The Origins of the Civil War" is next, with quotes from David M. Potter and Bruce Levine. Potter argued that the Mexican War led to division, as it disrupted the slave- and free-state balance. Levine argued that the country being fueled by slave labor on one side and free labor on the other caused tensions to boil and in turn caused the destruction of "chattel slavery."[245] The description gives equal billing to both.

When it comes to secession, there are no primary sources used. The narrative states that "Southerners were outraged that a president could be elected without any Southern electoral votes."[246] and "in response to Lincoln's victory, South Carolina left the Union officially on December 20, 1860."[247] It quotes Edmund Ruffin, a known pro-slavery proponent. But it merely calls him a "secessionist" and his quote simply says the North wants to "ruin" the South, thus the South is justified in leaving. Slavery is never

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[244] Cayton, et al., *Pathways,* 357.

[245] Cayton, et al., *Pathways,* 370.

[246] Cayton, et al., *Pathways,* 370.

[247] Cayton, et al., *Pathways*, 371.

mentioned in the section called "The Lower South Secedes"[248] nor in the consequent section "The Upper South Secedes."[249] The way the North treats the South, Lincoln's election, and states' rights weighs much more heavily.

A pull-out on page 381 called "Comparing Primary Sources: The Aims of the Civil War" with a quote from Jefferson Davis and another from the Crittendon Resolution comes next. The Davis quote says the South is endeavoring to "obtain respect for the rights to which we were entitled." While the quote does not say what rights, if the full address were available a reader would see that Davis means the rights of the South to maintain "domestic institutions of the Southern States"—i.e., slavery.[250]

The American Pageant. The pages concerning the cause of the Civil War in *The American Pageant* open with the title "Testing the New Nation." From the beginning, this book treats the war differently than the previous four books. The first primary source is an image of enslaved African Americans in a field. The accompanying narrative states: "All Americans knew, said Abraham Lincoln, that 'slavery was somehow the cause of this war'"[251] and again, "the Civil War, as Lincoln observed, was assuredly about slavery."[252] These set the stage and tone for the ensuing pages.

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[248] Cayton, et al., *Pathways*, 370.

[249] Cayton, et al., *Pathways*, 373.

[250] "Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln: Dueling Inaugural Addresses," National Constitution Center, February 18, 2019. https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/jefferson-davis-and-abraham-lincoln-dueling-inaugural-addresses

[251] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 365.

[252] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 365.

Starting with laying out a specific "cause" is different as well. Other books tend to be more discreet or obfuscate when it comes to explicitly stating causes. A diary entry from Ralph Waldo Emerson, the commonly used Henry Clay painting, a political cartoon, and artistic depictions of the Lincoln/Douglas debates all follow. John Brown's raid is portrayed next, with quotes from Harriet Tubman and Abraham Lincoln lauding Brown and dismissing him in turn. A painting by Thomas Hovenden of Brown kissing an African American baby is shown next—one that other books have left out. After John Brown is discussed, a political cartoon of Lincoln's election by Currier and Ives appears, followed by a quote from South Carolina Senator James Henry Hammond proclaiming the power of the South.

An actual quote from the South Carolina secession document comes next. This is the only book that prints even one sentence of any secession document. It says, "We affirm that the ends for which this [federal] government was instituted have been defeated, and the government itself has been made destructive of them by the action of the non-slaveholding states . . ."[253] By calling the North "non-slaveholding states," the quote seems to make the distinction that secession was about slavery. However, the narrative does not engage with this source, hence it fails to describe the context of this phrase and fails to teach that slavery is mentioned 15 other times in the document. Instead, earlier in this section the narrative says: "South Carolinians rejoiced over Lincoln's victory, they now had their excuse to secede. In winning the North, the 'rail-splitter' had split off the South."[254] Later in the chapter, the narrative more closely

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[253] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 421.

[254] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 419.

suggests slavery as a cause, but still invokes Lincoln by saying, "Eleven American states, led by the rebel Jefferson Davis, were seceding from the Union and preserving their slave system by throwing off the yoke of 'King' Abraham Lincoln."[255]

More primary sources from newspapers are included in these pages to show the varying views on secession, along with political cartoons. Finally, at the end of the chapter, a pull-out called "Varying Viewpoints: The Civil War: Repressible or Irrepressible?" devotes a page to the debate about the causes of the Civil War. It opens:

> Few topics have generated as much controversy among American historians as the causes of the Civil War. Looming over the entire debate is the stark fact that the United States was the only slave owning society that had to fight a war to rid itself of slavery. The very names employed to describe the conflict— notably "Civil War" or "War Between the States" or even "War for Southern Independence" — reveal much about the various authors points of view. Interpretations of the great conflict have naturally differed according to section and have been charged with both emotional and moral fervor. Despite clear evidence in the historical record that the South's commitment to preserving slavery precipitated the Civil War, a debate over its causes was long the subject of historical scholarship, and continues to spur sharp, politically charged arguments in the public realm.[256]

Despite some conflicting passages in the narrative, this seems to put slavery front and center as the primary cause of the war. Simply addressing the debate creates clarity for students. It does give opinions from other academics, such as Mary and Charles Beard's view that "war was not fought over slavery per say, but rather was a deeply rooted economic struggle between an industrial North and agricultural South."[257] But it uses

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[255] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 423.

[256] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 424.

[257] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 424.

them as examples of the historical disagreements. The opening statement seems to give the definitive opinion.

American History. The section on the cause of the Civil War in *American History* opens with a pull-out called "Debating the Past: The Character of Slavery." It shows an engraving of slaves in the field being overseen by a white man on a horse. Three questions accompany this pull-out and picture. After five more pages on the topic, a photograph of the Harpers Ferry arsenal takes up half a page. John Brown is described as a "zealot,"[258] but that is the least derogatory term used. The narrative also sets straight the record that Brown was funded and supported by the Republican Party [he was not]. This is followed not by any primary sources about secession, but the narrative blames both Lincoln's election and slavery:

> The election of Lincoln became the final signal to many white Southerners that their position in the union was hopeless. And within a few weeks of Lincoln's victory, the process of disunion began—a process that would quickly lead to a prolonged and bloody war between the two groups of Americans. . . . Positions on slavery continued to harden in both the North and the South, until ultimately each region came to consider the other its enemy. . . .[259]
>
> The emergence of the new Republican Party openly and centrally opposed to slavery worked to destroy the hopes for compromise and push the South towards the session.[260]

The next primary source is a painting of the firing on Fort Sumter to emphasize the failure of compromise. A few pages later, a page-and-a-half pull-out called "Debating

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[258] Brinkley, *American History*, 360.

[259] Brinkley, *American History*, 361.

[260] Brinkley, *American History*, 362.

the Past: The Causes of the Civil War" shows a painting of slaves fleeing the South to join Union forces in the North. The text opens with:

> In his second inaugural address in March 1865, Abraham Lincoln looked back at the beginning of the Civil War four years earlier. 'All knew,' he said, 'that slavery was somehow the cause of the war'". . . .[261]
>
> Few historians doubt the basic truth of Lincoln's statement, but they have disagreed sharply about whether slavery was the only, or even the principle, cause of the war.[262]

It then states the positions of historians, comparing and contrasting the causes of the war in comparison to slavery, although it states that slavery was still the root cause of these so-called "other reasons."

One thing this book does well in other places is its pull-outs called "Consider the Source" where little-known documents are displayed that help the student understand a topic, such as the "Seneca Falls Convention Declaration of Sentiments," Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," and the "Handbook to Lowell," describing textile mills' rules and regulations. This would be a good place to introduce and analyze secessionist documents.

Overview of the Cause of the Civil War

The most glaring omission from each book analyzed is original documents from Southern states explicitly stating that they left the Union in order to preserve slavery. Such documents certainly exist but are not shown or referred to, even though the secessionist document of America leaving the British Empire—the Declaration of

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[261] Brinkley, *American History*, 372.

[262] Brinkley, *American History*, 372.

Independence—is printed in every book (four in the narrative section, two in appendixes.)

One need only look to primary-source material to understand that slavery is the central cause of the Civil War. In 1860, leaders of South Carolina signed a "Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union." It stated: "An increasing hostility on the part of the non-slave holding states to the institution of slavery" and protested that Northern states had failed to "fulfill their constitutional obligations" when they interfered with the return of fugitive slaves to bondage. "Slavery, not states' rights, birthed the Civil War."[263]

In 1961, Mississippi signed its own secession document which stated: "Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery—the greatest material interest of the world."[264] So, in fact, these states were "attack[ing] such displays of states' rights. . . . South Carolina *opposed* states' rights when claimed by free states."[265]

Texas, in its secession document, "Declaration of Causes: February 2, 1861: A Declaration of the Causes Which Impel the State of Texas to Secede from the Federal Union," stated:

> We hold as undeniable truths that the governments of the various States, and of the confederacy itself, were established exclusively by the white race, for themselves and their posterity; that the African race had no agency in their establishment; that they were rightfully held and regarded

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[263] James W. Loewen, "Five Myths about Why the South Seceded," *Washington Post*, February 26, 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/five-myths-about-why-the-south-seceded/2011/01/03/ABHr6jD_story.html

[264] Loewen, "Five Myths."

[265] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 139.

> as an inferior and dependent race, and in that condition only could their existence in this country be rendered beneficial or tolerable.[266]

In 2015, Jake Flanagin, a political reporter, investigated what else the secession documents say. He corroborated the conversation about secession and the fact that the cause of the Civil War was still as salient as ever. He said:

> Of all the state governments that published "declarations of the causes of secession" like these (some published shorter "ordinances of secession"), none mentioned the ostensible injustices of America's tariff system. None complained of high taxes, or even states' rights in a general sense. All, however, passionately pontificated on the necessity of preserving an institution of slavery; and that no such preservation could be maintained within the Union as it was then organized.[267]

Very clearly, according to Flanagin, slavery was the central cause of the U.S. Civil War.

In his article "What This Cruel War Was Over," published in 2015 in *The Atlantic*, Ta-Nehisi Coates, an award winning author and prominent contemporary commentator on race, compiled an extensive list of primary-source excerpts and quotes from such wide-ranging sources as Southern state secessionist documents, speeches by Confederate leaders, Southern newspapers, Southern politicians, slave-worked plantation owners, groups such as the Daughters of the Confederacy, and more. All stated clearly that the preservation of slavery was why the South went to war with the North.[268] This compilation of primary evidence is a trove of information classrooms could employ.

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[266] "Confederate States of America - A Declaration of the Causes Which Impel the State of Texas to Secede from the Federal Union," Avalon Project. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/csa_texsec.asp

[267] Jake Flanagin, "For the Last Time, the American Civil War Was Not about States' Rights," *Quartz*, April 8, 2015. https://qz.com/378533/for-the-last-time-the-american-civil-war-was-not-about-states-rights/

[268] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "What This Cruel War Was Over," *The Atlanticm* June 10, 2021. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/what-this-cruel-war-was-over/396482/

Individual state secession documents that help crystallize the reasons for the war are nowhere to be found in textbooks. But earlier in the chronology, these same books prominently feature the secession document of the United States from Great Britain, i.e., the Declaration of Independence. It has been posited that using these documents and other primary sources can be used in lieu of, or as supplement to, textbooks. Hasan Kwame Jefferies, a professor of African American studies as Ohio State University says: "Relying on primary sources are an excellent substitute because you point to the words of the people themselves. They are clear that slavery is the central cause of the secession and the glue that is binding the states of the Confederacy."[269]

Antoinette Waters, a high school history teacher in Wakefield, Virginia, combats the idea of states' rights being the cause of the Civil War by using primary-source documents in the form of secession documents. She argues that any other cause put forth can be reduced to slavery. When arguing secession was over states' rights, she asks:

> A states' right to do what? Have slavery. Was the war about economics or the expansion of the United States? Sure, but it was the economics of slavery and whether expansion would include slavery in new territories. All of this can be found in primary sources, but not textbooks.[270]

I would argue that we could bolster textbooks by including these primary sources within them. Loewen has done many workshops with teachers on the subject of teaching the Civil War. He takes issue with their pedagogy in this realm, saying:

> Most of the teachers had been presenting an untrue version of why the South seceded . . . because they didn't know the documents. . . . These documents, which include the declarations of the 11 Confederate states

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[269] Quoted in Isaac Himmelman, "What Our Textbooks Get Wrong about Slavery," *HuffPost*, February 13, 2019. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-our-textbooks-get-wrong-about-slavery_n_5c645635e4b09e2092c2643a

[270] Quoted in Himmelman, "What Our Textbooks Get Wrong about Slavery."

> marking their departure from the Union and speeches like the one Henry Benning gave to the Virginia Convention, rarely get much, if any play, in history textbooks.[271]

Even when textbooks do get closer to narrating slavery as the cause of the Civil War, it is often talked about from the perspective of those higher on the racial hierarchy, how it effects the economic needs of the South and the North, and its role in the conflict, rather than showing the institution to be a moral scourge.

Even the textbooks that do pinpoint slavery as the cause of the Civil War often discuss the subject in purely economic terms and without any mention of the white supremacist ideologies held by both Southerners and Northerners leading up to the war. Jefferies said: "It becomes distanced. It becomes othered. If you can't accurately understand the ways in which society has been built and constructed, economically, politically and socially. Then you cannot make sense of the present."[272]

Nowhere is the Black perspective a factor. Slavery, and its legacy of mass incarceration, lower wages for African Americans, health-care inadequacies faced by many African Americans, and other inequities are nowhere to be found even when slavery is mentioned as a cause of the war. Kim Gilmore, in her article *Slavery and Prison—Understanding the Connections*, highlights this problem:

> Scholars and activists have plunged into an examination of the historical origins of racialized slavery as a coercive labor form and social system in an attempt to explain the huge increase in mass incarceration in the U.S. since the end of World War II. Drawing these links has been important in explaining the relationship between racism and criminalization after

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[271] Wong, "History Class."

[272] Himmelman, "What Our Textbooks Get Wrong about Slavery."

> emancipation, and in connecting the rise of industrial and mechanized labor to the destructive effects of deindustrialization and globalization.[273]

Others, including Aaron Gottlieb and Kalen Flynn of the University of Illinois at Chicago agree that one of the "common explanation[s] for mass incarceration is that it is the latest in a series of institutions created to enforce the racial hierarchy in the United States"[274] and they go on to list other institutions that see a large Black-White disparity such as education and health care are also subject to the legacy of slavery.[275]

John Brown is portrayed in every textbook analyzed. Loewen devotes an entire chapter in his book *Lies My Teacher Told Me* to Brown and the changing portrayals of him in history textbooks over time. He argues:

> From 1892 to about 1970, John Brown was insane. Before 1890, he was perfectly sane, and after 1970 he has slowly been regaining his sanity. . . . I had imagined that [new textbooks from 2006-2007] would maintain this trend, portraying Brown's actions so as to render them at least intelligible if not intelligent. In their treatment of Brown, however, the new textbooks don't differ much from those of the 1980s. . . . Since Brown himself did not change after his death—except to molder more—his mental health in our textbooks provides an inadvertent index of the level of white racism in our society.[276]

The 2006 edition of *The American Pageant* that Loewen reviews contains a paragraph about John Brown that describes him as being "wrongheaded" for fighting for Black equality and being a deranged criminal.[277] That same paragraph appears word for

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[273] Kim Gilmore, "Slavery and Prison—Understanding the Connections," *Social Justice* 27, no. 3 (2000): 195–205, 195.

[274] Aaron Gottlieb and Kalen Flynn, "The Legacy of Slavery and Mass Incarceration: Evidence from Felony Case Outcomes," *Social Service Review* 95, no. 1 (March 2021): 3–35. https://doi.org/10.1086/713922, 3.

[275] Gottlieb and Flynn, "The Legacy of Slavery," 5–6.

[276] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 173.

[277] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 173.

word in the 2018 edition (2020 printing), which I reviewed. In *Pathways to the Present*, Brown is described as "stern," "brutal," "murderous," and violent. It dismisses him as "believ[ing] he was God's chosen instrument."[278] *The Americans* describes him as "God's Angry Man,"[279] "set on revenge," as someone who "hacked," "stabbed," and then "fled."[280] *The American Journey* is the most neutral, as it omits descriptors like this. It portrays two sides more accurately by depicting an African American who wrote a letter thanking Brown next to a Southern newspaper who decried him as a traitor.[281]

When discussing Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry and the contributions from African Americans, *Pageant* says, "slaves . . . failed to rise"[282]; *Holt American Nation* says, "no slaves came to aid the group"[283]; *The Americans* states, "Sixty of the town's prominent citizens were held hostage by Brown who hoped that their slaves would then join the insurrection. No slaves came forward."[284] Loewen argues that these types of claims, which are devoid of context and portray African Americans as having "no interest in freedom," are "bad history."[285] He believes "Hannah Geffert and Jean Libby have

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[278] Cayton, et al., *America: Pathways to the Present*, 364.

[279] Danzer, *The Americans*, 327.

[280] Danzer, *The Americans*, 316.

[281] Danzer, *The Americans*, 457.

[282] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 416.

[283] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 361.

[284] Danzer, *The Americans*, 327.

[285] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 175.

shown that Brown drew considerable support from enslaved African Americans around Harper's Ferry."[286]

These negative portrayals of John Brown are likely gathered from white accounts of the day. Loewen states:

> No Black person who met john Brown thought him crazy. Many Black leaders of the day—Marin Delaney, Henry Highland Garnet, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and others—knew and respected Brown. Only illness kept Tubman from joining him at Harpers Ferry. The day of his execution black-owned businesses closed in mourning across the North.[287]

Of all the books analyzed, only *The American Pageant* and *The American Journey* give any space to African Americans at the time and their opinions of Brown. Even then, they are countered with white sources saying the opposite. Most of the questions surrounding Brown ask students to question his heroism and whether his raid helped or hurt the country. John Brown was a strident abolitionist who believed with every fiber of his being that slavery was wrong. He believed only a large anti-slavery action—like his raid, which in the end failed to be quite as large as he hoped but nonetheless caused considerable reaction—would cause the nation to awaken to slavery's ills.

Reconstruction

The historiography of Reconstruction has been a topic pursued by many historians and academics. It is a period in history that allows us to see the potential of a future with equality for all, independent of race. But it is often left out of classrooms or rushed through due to its ultimate failure.

Importance of Studying Reconstruction for High School American History

Reconstruction is still widely misunderstood or poorly understood. This is not by accident, and the legacies of this misunderstanding lie in the "Lost Cause" myth in books

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[286] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 176.

[287] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 180.

and the false scholarship that came out of the Dunning School in the 20th century. Named after William Archibald Dunning (1857–1922), this school of thought portrayed Reconstruction as a time of intense political corruption where "ignorant" Black people were manipulated by dishonest Northern "carpetbaggers" and Southern "scallywags." Dunning infused his writing with racist interpretations of the period under the guise of historical empiricism and objectivity. Dunning and his students sought to lend academic credibility to what were actually white supremacist distortions of the Reconstruction era.[288]

The academic research from the Dunning school was widely followed, adopted, and integrated into textbooks. How Reconstruction—more specifically the backlash to Black advancement during Reconstruction—is taught in high school classrooms and history textbooks has been revised many times over many decades, and some of the Dunning thought has been mitigated.[289] Trudy Fredericks found:

> Two significant shifts in presentations of Reconstruction moved from a white supremacist explanation to one focused more on the democratic accomplishments of the time; the second shift in presentation appeared in the early 1980s when black agency appeared in the textbooks.[290]

Further, Eric Foner, a premiere historian of the Reconstruction era, states:

> For no other period of American history does so wide a gap exist between current scholarship and popular historic understanding, which judging from references to Reconstruction in recent newspaper articles, films,

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[288] Rosado, et al., "Erasing the Black Freedom Struggle."

[289] Trudy Fredericks, "Patterns and Missing Pieces in Reconstruction History: A Look at Twenty American High School Textbooks," PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 2001, 29–55.

[290] Fredericks, "Patterns and Missing Pieces," 31.

> popular books, and in public monuments across the country, still bear the mark of the old Dunning school.[291]

Still, Reconstruction is misunderstood and mistaught.

While Black agency may be a place to start in teaching the Black experience during Reconstruction, how that agency was employed is important. Loewen describes his experience in teaching Reconstruction:

> My most memorable encounter with the Confederate myth of Reconstruction came during a discussion with seventeen first-year students at Tougaloo College, a predominantly black school in Mississippi, one afternoon in January 1970. I was about to launch into a unit on Reconstruction, and I needed to find out what the students already knew. "What was Reconstruction?" I asked. "What images come to your mind about the era?" The class consensus: Reconstruction was the time when African Americans took over the governing of the Southern states, including Mississippi. But they were too soon out of slavery, so they messed up and reigned corruptly, and whites had to take back control of the state governments . . . for young African Americans to believe such a hurtful myth about their past seemed tragic. . . . Yet my students had merely learned what their textbooks had taught them. Like almost all Americans who finished high school before the 1970s, they had encountered the Confederate myth of Reconstruction in their American history classes.[292]

Loewen then describes the effects of poor history teaching on students, particularly Black students. Teaching that African Americans had agency but squandered it,

> invite[s] them to doubt their own capability, since their race had "messed up" in its one appearance on American history's center stage. It also invite[s] them to conclude that it is only right that whites be always in control.[293]

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[291] Robert Kent Sutton, et al., *The Reconstruction Era* (Fort Washington, PA: Eastern National, 2016), 179.

[292] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 156–157.

[293] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 157.

Furthermore, when Reconstruction is taught in schools, it is often taught through rose-colored, politically correct glasses. Rarely is the white backlash to Black advancement, and the reasons why, covered.[294]

Thomas Holt believes textbooks have moved slightly beyond the books of pre-1970, but still fall short in the way Black agency is taught in books:

> Southern black politicians [are taught] to be generally "able and conscientious public servants." But [the books] insist that it was not really blacks, but whites who controlled reconstruction, not taking blacks very seriously as politicians, therefore, they're completely silent about the amazing black voter mobilization —led largely by African Americans themselves— that made the Southern Republican program possible.[295]

Agency is instilled, but only so far. The Zinn Education Project report goes so far as to call this the "erasure of the Black freedom struggle."[296] Imagine the effects on Loewen's Black students' identities if they were taught the positives of that agency.

Fredericks, Holt, Loewen, and Forner[297] may differ slightly on the amount of agency portrayed as being displayed by African Americans during this time, but they all argue that the way Reconstruction is taught does a poor job of establishing linkages that would help explain current-day racism. That lack has in fact helped entrench racism. Fredericks states:

> According to James D. Anderson, "As they progress through our formal education system [our citizens] acquire from textbooks a fragmented,

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[294] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 157.

[295] Thomas C. Holt, "Reconstruction in United States History Textbooks," *Journal of American History* 81, no. 4 (March 1995): 1641–1651. https://doi.org/10.2307/2081653, 1642.

[296] Rosado, et al., "Erasing the Black Freedom Struggle."

[297] Terry Gross, "Historian Eric Foner on the 'Unresolved Legacy of Reconstruction'," NPR, June 5, 2020. https://www.npr.org/2020/06/05/870459750/historian-eric-foner-on-the-unresolved-legacy-of-reconstruction

> incoherent and superficial understanding of the role of race in American history, which perpetuates the impression of race as 'a set of relatively fixed, known and self-evident categories necessitated by logic and science." He warned that this portrayal leads to the pervasive ignorance and stereotyping of race exhibited throughout the last century in America. The way in which Reconstruction has been taught has promoted the very misperceptions Anderson spoke of.[298]

Holt agrees stating:

> The traditional narrative of the Reconstruction era tends toward intellectual incoherence. That incoherence leads historians ultimately to invoke either inappropriate psychological analyses (of individuals or groups) or literary flourishes about tragic flaws in the American character— all in lieu of probing the historical forces at work. In its abbreviated form as founded, many United States history surveys that narrative conveys the sense that there were several parallel sequences of events and developments which were largely unrelated and disconnected. Some historical periods do resist the historians attempt to impose a coherent narrative because they were in fact not coherent. But given that Reconstruction America had just fought an enormous war which had focused its energies and resources in ways heretofore unimaginable, and that the forces set loose by the war continued to unfold in the post war decade, incoherence seems unlikely.[299]

In other words, the linkages are ripe for teaching, yet they are ignored, and the focus is on flaws in the American character (e.g., guilt) rather than historical forces (institutions) at work.

Finally, Loewen finds a further problem with merely giving agency to Blacks: "Today's textbooks show African Americans striving to better themselves. But authors still soft-pedal the key problem during Reconstruction—white violence."[300] Very rarely, he argues, do textbooks mention anything outside of brief Ku Klux Klan violence when in fact, ex-Confederate-run governments killed thousands of African Americans. My

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[298] Fredericks, "Patterns and Missing Pieces," 31–32.

[299] Holt, "Reconstruction in United States History Textbooks," 1641.

[300] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 158.

findings back this up. "Overall, textbook treatments of Reconstruction still miss the point: the problem of Reconstruction was integrating *Confederates*, not African Americans, into the new order."[301] Loewen quotes a student he taught: "You'll never believe all the stuff I learned in high school about Reconstruction—like it wasn't so bad, it set up school systems. Then I saw *Gone with the Wind* and learned the truth about Reconstruction!"[302] Loewen claims textbooks softened the Confederate myth of Reconstruction—that it was African Americans who failed to integrate, were poor leaders; that whites, not African Americans, set up schools and churches—but have not debunked it because countering that myth would include saying damaging things about white people and white people in power so textbook "treatments of why Reconstruction failed still lack clarity."[303]

Righting this myth would include focusing on white racism, something the narrative of American Exceptionalism does not allow for. Therefore, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments get significant exposure in textbooks, but their lack of enforcement does not. The schools being built by the Freedman's Bureau get significant space, but their lack of funding, the destruction of many of those schools, and African Americans creating their own spaces that have endured, do not. The Ku Klux Klan—an accepted negative example of white men perpetrating violence—gets a couple of paragraphs, but legitimate governments executing violence on African Americans and failing to punish

[301] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 160.

[302] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 161.

[303] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 160.

white perpetrators do not. The terms "scallywag" and "carpetbaggers" are still on "terms to learn" lists in textbooks, but rarely recognized for their derogatory nature.[304]

Primary source documents from African Americans in the South, testimonies from members of the Freedman's Bureau and African American legislators, legal documents and actual ordinances passed to enforce Black Codes, child apprenticeship laws, newspaper reports on white violence and Jim Crow laws, and others could be helpful in better painting the picture and making the missing connections between time periods. The attempts and failures to redistribute land, combat exploitation of labor, and establish equal rights, are rarely in the narrative and could be introduced with letters, diary entries, local government minutes, etc. Loewen agrees that textbooks fail to make these connections and states why they are important: "The authors make no connection between the failure of the United States to guarantee black Civil Rights in 1877 and the need for a Civil Rights movement a century later. Nothing ever causes anything. Things just happen."[305]

Page Selection

All of the books analyzed covered Reconstruction, but each broke down that section differently. Therefore, to ensure that each book was analyzed equally, I included all pages in which the book dealt with Reconstruction. This made for longer sections than other historical periods analyzed, but similar-sized sections from book to book.

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[304] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 199–200.

[305] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 162.

What the Books Cover

The Americans. The chapter in *The Americans* that covers Reconstruction is broken into three sections: "The Politics of Reconstruction," "Reconstructing Society," and "The Collapse of Reconstruction." Presidential Reconstruction is the beginning topic, where the policies of Presidents Lincoln and Johnson are discussed. A portrait of Lincoln, a photograph of former Confederate officers in 1865, a quote from an African American newspaper decrying Johnson's actions, and a photo of a Freedman's school are the primary sources accompanying this section.

The second section begins with a portrait of and quote from Robert Fitzgerald, a Northern freed African American who went south via the Freedman's Bureau to teach. A political cartoon of a "carpetbagger"—paired with questions asking students to analyze the cartoon—is also in this section. The narrative does note the term "carpetbagger" as negative; it says that even though some felt a "moral duty to help former slaves, . . . others truly were the dishonest businesspeople whom the Southerners scorned." The accompanying question says: "What were some of the similarities in the goals of . . . carpetbaggers and African Americans?"[306] seeming to imply that these two groups of people belonged in the same negative context. A woodcut from a newspaper showing free men voting appears next, along with a photograph of a family chart many former slaves used to help in family reunification.

The third section begins with a quote from and portrait of Henry M. Turner, an African American man elected to the Georgia house of representatives. He voices the outrage many African American legislators felt at being expelled after their initial term.

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[306] Danzer, *The Americans*, 385.

A painting of Ku Klux Klan members and a quote on Klan violence come next. Two political cartoons about the Grant administration are next, followed by a quote from an African American veteran and legislator regarding the legacy of Reconstruction, then an image of Black students at Howard University (a historically black university) established during Reconstruction.

Hold American Nation. The part of *Holt American Nation* that covers Reconstruction is similarly split into three sections: "Presidential Reconstruction," "Congressional Reconstruction," and "Reconstruction in the South." The pages open with contrasting primary sources: a quote from a Southern woman decrying rejoining the union, and a painting of a jubilant emancipation parade. A pull-out on the next page, called "Skill Building: Strategies Comparing Points of View." It asks questions of students about to two quotes with opposite ideas on how the Union should treat the South after the war. A painting of former Confederate soldiers wearing their uniforms while "conducting political business"[307] and a photo of former slaves working on plantations come next.

The second section begins with a quote from and portrait of Thaddeus Stevens urging Congress to use Reconstruction to change the "whole fabric of Southern society."[308] Next is the same photo of a family record registry as *The Americans* used, followed by a quote from John C. Pierce on the exploitation of African Americans' desire for land, which never materialized under Reconstruction. A lithograph of the Freedmen's Bureau and a painting of African Americans are shown on the following page,

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[307] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 405.

[308] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 407.

accompanied by the description, "Southern African Americans struggled to improve their lives after the Civil War."[309] A poster mocking the effectiveness of the Civil Rights Act is followed by a painting of race riots and a painting of Johnson's impeachment.

The third section begins with a cover of *Harper's Weekly* showing African Americans voting. A political cartoon depicting carpetbaggers comes next. Then a section on the Ku Klux Klan with a photo of a Klan member followed by a quote from a freedman about how he was told to behave around white people. Here, a sidebar by Otis Scruggs, a Black professor of American history, interprets Reconstruction and explains that the traditional interpretations blaming failure of Reconstruction on African Americans have given way to interpretations where Blacks are given agency and other factors are introduced to explain Reconstruction's failure. He says the Dunning School interpretation is on the way out.

The American Journey. The chapter dealing with Reconstruction in *The American Journey* has three sections titled "Reconstruction Plans," "Radicals in Control," and "The South During Reconstruction." The first section opens with Lincoln's assassination and funeral, which introduce his Reconstruction plans. An introduction of the Freedmen's Bureau—including a photo of a Freedmen's school, a quote from a teacher and a painting of a classroom—follow.

Section two starts with a brief first-hand account of the white violence experienced by African Americans as their churches, schools, and homes are burned. A painting of a Freedmen's school follows. The next primary source is a two-sentence excerpt from the 14th Amendment, which gave African Americans citizenship. A quote

[309] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 409.

from Union General Philip Sheridan about helping freed slaves secure their rights follows, and the section ends with a portrait of President Johnson to illustrate his impeachment.

Section three starts with a quote from a former enslaved man turned Mississippi state legislator talking about the Republican victories in post-war political campaigns. The next page features quotes from two other African American elected officials, Blanche K. Bruce and Hiram Revels. The pages dealing with Reconstruction end with a quote from Adelbert Ames, Governor of Mississippi in 1875, imploring federal troops to leave as he believed them to be the cause of violence in his state. It illustrates this quote from the narrative: "Northerners began losing interest in Reconstruction. Many believed it was time for the South to solve its own problems."[310]

Pathways to the Present. The chapter dealing with Reconstruction in *Pathways to the Present* is broken down into four sections: "Presidential Reconstruction," "Congressional Reconstruction," "Birth of the 'New South'," and "The End of Reconstruction." The first section starts with a photograph of Southerners digging graves and clearing battlefields. The narrative on that page states: "The postwar South was made up of three major groups of people. Each group faced its own hardships and fears."[311] It goes on to list Black Southerners, Plantation Owners, and Poor White Southerners. Under Black Southerners it says: "As slaves, they had received food and shelter, however inadequate. Now, after a lifetime of forced labor, many found themselves homeless, jobless, and hungry."[312] It is

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[310] Appleby, *American Journey,* 535.

[311] Cayton, et al., *America: Pathways to the Present*, 425.

[312] Cayton, et al., *America: Pathways to the Present*, 425.

not clear if the author thinks African Americans were better off under slavery or as free people. It goes on to list the hardships facing Plantation Owners bemoans the "problems raised by the Civil War."[313] The next primary sources are a photo of the ruins of Richmond, Virginia, following the war, and a quote from Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. The final two pages of this first section focus on the education and opportunities of freed people with a photo of a Freedmen's school, a photo of a Black student, a quote from a teacher at a Freedmen's school, and a poster urging freed slaves to head to Kansas.

The second section begins with a quote from a sympathetic white Georgian explaining how hard it was for freed people to gain upward mobility. The following page quotes the 14th Amendment. Photographs of Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens are next, along with a pull-out titled "Comparing Primary Sources: Voting Rights for African Americans" with a quote from Stevens supporting voting rights and a quote from a white South Carolina planter opposing them.

The third section begins with a quote from a Black Union soldier writing to a South Carolina newspaper requesting opportunities. Images of sharecroppers follow.

The fourth section begins with a photo of Ku Klux Klan members, and the narrative says the goal of the Klan was to "eliminate the Republican Party in the South," and "keep African Americans in the role of submissive laborers."[314] It explains that Klan members were seeking revenge for their loss in the war—making their actions seem almost worthy—and only briefly mentions the violence perpetrated by the group. The

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[313] Cayton et al., America: Pathways to the Present, 425.

[314] Cayton et al., America: Pathways to the Present, 442.

section finishes with a political cartoon of President Rutherford Hayes "rototilling" Reconstruction policies.

The American Pageant. The chapter that covers Reconstruction in *The American Pageant* is titled "The Ordeal of Reconstruction," and it is not broken down into sections. It starts with the oft-used quote from Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address that begins "with malice toward none, with charity for all. . . ."[315] One of the headings in the chapter is called "The Problems of Peace" and begins with a large photo of the ruins of Charleston, South Carolina. It is followed by a photo of a Freedmen's school and joyous quotes from freed people. The next primary source appears within a full-page pull-out called "Examining the Evidence: Letter From a Freeman to His Old Master, 1865." It is an account of the African American experience. A political cartoon of Johnson's impeachment is the next printed source. Black codes and a quote from an 1866 Congressman illustrating their harshness come next. The narratives states that under Black Codes "former slaves slipped into the status of sharecropper farmers . . . luckless sharecroppers gradually sank into a morass of virtual peonage and remained there for generations."[316] This would be a prime place to continue to make more clear connections from past circumstances to future and present ones as it comes close but falls short.

Next is a pull-out called "Contending Voices: Radical Republicans and Southern Democrats," which quotes Thaddeus Stevens' view on Black rights, as well as a conflicting opinion from newly elected South Carolina governor James Lawrence Orr about needing to continue to tie former slaves to the pre-war economic hierarchy.

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[315] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 473.

[316] Kennedy and Cohen, *The American Pageant*, 480.

Another cartoon of Johnson comes next followed by a photograph of Republicans campaigning in Louisiana, then a lithograph of African Americans voting. A portrait of newly elected Black Congressman John R. Lynch of Mississippi comes next, illustrating the fact that African Americans did gain some seats in government during this time. However, the narrative discusses Africans Americans being elected followed by political corruption in radical Republican governments. While not tying the two explicitly together, it is a tie any reader would make. The narrative does not talk about African Americans being expelled from governments, either, leading the reader to again assume they maintained those seats and thus agency in government.

White violence is addressed next with a photograph of Ku Klux Klan members and testimony to Congress from Kentucky Blacks about Klan violence. The final primary sources in the section are a quote from Black leader Frederick Douglass on the failures of Reconstruction, and a painting from Thomas Nast showing the despair many African Americans felt at the way Reconstruction ended.

American History. The chapter in *American History* teaching Reconstruction is called "Reconstruction and the New South." The first primary source is a nearly full-page lithograph depicting "Important moments in the history of African Americans in the South during Reconstruction."[317] Three questions accompany it. An image of post-war ruins from Richmond, Virginia, comes next. The text in the same spread introduces the "Myth of the 'Lost Cause'." It states:

> A cult of ritualized mourning developed throughout the region in the late 1860s. . . . White Southerners began to romanticize the "Lost Cause" and its leaders, and to look back nostalgically at the South as it had existed before the terrible disruptions of war. Such Confederate heroes as Robert

[317] Brinkley, *American History*, 399.

> E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and (later) Jefferson Davis were treated with extraordinary reverence, almost as religious figures. The tremendous sense of loss that pervaded the white South reinforces the determination of many whites to protect what remained of their now vanished world.[318]

A small photo of a Freedmen's Bureau school follows. A photograph of Lincoln taken four days before his assassination comes next, followed by a lithograph of blacks celebrating the 14th Amendment—used to illustrate the narrative depicting radical Reconstruction. The oft-used political cartoon of a carpetbagger appears a few pages further to illustrate "The South in Reconstruction." Two sources—one painting and one harsh-looking photograph—depict sharecropping.

No primary sources depict the paragraphs in the narrative on the Ku Klux Klan or white violence in the South. The next primary source comes inside a large pull-out titled "Debating the Past: Reconstruction." It is a lithograph of the Freedmen's Bureau helping African Americans. The next source is the same drawing by Thomas Nast as *Pageant* uses, showing African Americans' sorrow at the way Reconstruction ended. The final sources depict the "high level of racism" in American society as illustrated by minstrel shows. A photograph of a popular minstrel group and an advertisement of the show close out the pages depicting Reconstruction.

Overview of Reconstruction

The handling of Reconstruction by the books analyzed seems to have improved from some of the books of former decades that James Loewen and others have analyzed. There is much less emphasis on the "problem" of what to do with African Americans, which permeated previous books; freed slaves are given more agency (although as

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[318] Brinkley, *American History*, 400.

reported by the Zinn Education Project, still not enough);[319] and white violence is introduced. All books note the election of African American legislators to state congresses.

What still seems to be lacking are connections between the practices employed during and after Reconstruction to limit Black equality, equity, and advancement, and the limitations experienced today as noted by Loewen, Fredricks, and Holt. Most books highlight some of the advancements made by African Americans during this time. These tend to outweigh the negative experiences of violence and racism. Most books end their sections on Reconstruction on positive notes and move on to what came next in American history chronologically, such as the Second Industrial Revolution. Very few continue with the aftermath of the brief Reconstruction period where African American legislators were removed, disenfranchisement of African American voters was rampant, and criminalization of African Americans caused a flooding of jails and prisons.

All of these factors contributed to connections found in today's society. The Zinn Reconstruction Project highlights connections from Reconstruction to present day:

> Historical connections to Reconstruction surround us today: the growing Movement for Black Lives, rising white supremacist violence, virulent voter suppression, multiracial movements to address policing and labor, political efforts to ban controversial topics from classrooms, and racial disparities in COVID-19 mortality rates. The attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, symbolized by a Confederate flag flying in the Capitol, failed to overturn the 2020 election results; in the 1870s, white supremacist terrorists throughout the South successfully defeated democracy and equality for more than a generation.[320]

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[319] Rosado, et al., "Erasing the Black Freedom Struggle."

[320] Rosado, et al., "Erasing the Black Freedom Struggle."

Further outcomes of these Reconstruction era limitations or what they mean are not mentioned in textbooks. No linkages to the past or the future are available.

Whites are described as perpetrating violence because they wanted to "deny rights to freed men and women"[321] and to "prevent African Americans from exercising political rights."[322] *Holt American Nation* says the Klan wanted to "destroy the Republican Party to keep African Americans from voting, and to frighten African American political leaders into submission,"[323] in that order. *Pathways* states the reason for creating the Klan was due to a "blend of rage and fear over the Confederacy's defeat."[324] It gives the numbers of Republicans killed by the Klan, but does not note how many African Americans were killed.

None of the books state the "why" of these killings. *The Americans* mentions white supremacy, but the context is political rather than ideological. Nowhere is racism mentioned as a cause of this white violence. Nowhere are there links from the ideologies of Black inferiority that were used to justify the slave trade and slavery connected as the precursor to how Southern (and Northern) whites felt about African Americans and the underlying reason why this violence was perpetrated. White supremacy is never mentioned at all in *Journey* or *Holt*. Only *American History* and *Pageant* alert readers to links between the justification of slavery in the early days of the slave trade[325] and only in

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[321] Appleby, *American Journey*, 530.

[322] Danzer, *The Americans*, 394.

[323] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 416.

[324] Cayton, et al., *America: Pathways to the Present*, 442.

[325] Brinkley, American History, 20; Kennedy and Cohen, The American Pageant, 75.

the narrative. Never is there any discussion of the eugenics that were purported at the time to support this justification, which would allow for links to current-day medical disparities to be drawn.[326]

So-called "Jim Crow laws" are discussed in all the analyzed books as an outcome of failed Reconstruction, but the textbooks to not credit the Reconstruction era as being a significant period in history that tried to create a more democratic society; almost succeeded because ultimately Reconstruction failed, and that failure of democracy is not part of the American Exceptionalism narrative.

The books talk about the positive experiences African Americans may have had and some of the negative ones, but never does the reason for overarching failure—racism and its pervasiveness through time—come into play. Instead, its failure is either debated (gains were made, if even for a time, some books argue) or blamed on individuals (governors of Southern states,[327] Northerners tired of supporting Southern states,[328] elections of Democrats creating different laws,[329] or corruption at the federal level[330]).

Never is racism discussed as the reason for why people tired of Reconstruction, why they supported a shift in political party run governments, or as the cause of the great migration when African Americans fled Reconstruction violence, which spurred white racism in the North and started restrictive racial covenants and redlining.

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[326] David R. Williams and Toni D. Rucker, "Understanding and Addressing Racial Disparities in Health Care," *Health Care Finance Review* 21, no. 47 (2000): 5–90.

[327] Appleby, *American Journey,* 543; Kennedy and Cohen, *American Pageant*, 444.

[328] Kennedy and Cohen, *American Pageant*, 444.

[329] Kennedy and Cohen, *American Pageant*, 444; Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 419.

[330] Kennedy and Cohen, *American Pageant*, 443.

Richard Rothstein, in his book *The Color of Law*, links Reconstruction to the actions taken by the Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Affairs in denying loans to Black soldiers returning from World War II, while giving loans to builders who only created all-white suburbs. He notes: "A pattern emerges from these examples. Government's commitment to separating residential areas by race began nationwide following the violent suppression of Reconstruction after 1877."[331] The actual segregation statues of Black Codes and Jim Crow laws that Rothstein is referring to, which are referenced years later in redlining and restrictive covenant issues, are never printed for students to understand. Court cases that explicitly state, "housing discrimination is a badge of slavery"[332] are not addressed. As Rothstein says:

> We like to think of American history as a continuous march of progress toward greater freedom, greater equality, and greater justice. But sometimes we move backward, dramatically so. Residential integration declined steadily from 1880 to the mid-twentieth century, and it has mostly stalled since then.[333]
> . . . .
> With African Americans disenfranchised and white supremacy in control, South Carolina instituted a system of segregation and exploitation that persisted for the next century."[334]

That this system of segregation and exploitation was entrenched during Reconstruction, and subsequently led to the systematic segregation endorsed and codified by the federal government, is the entire premise of Rothstein's book. That codified practices by the FHA and VA allowed those U.S. government institutions to deny loans

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[331] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2018), 75.

[332] Rothstein, *Color of Law*, x.

[333] Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 39.

[334] Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 41.

to returning Black servicemen, which in turn caused Blacks to miss out on the single largest distribution and expansion of wealth the United States has ever seen, is his further argument—one backed up by Winling and Michney,[335] and Hatcher,[336] among others.

Reconstruction, and sharecropping practices implemented at the time, along with Black Codes and Jim Crow laws, also led to mass incarcerations that disproportionately imprisoned people of color—yet another direct link from the slave trade. Entire books have been and can be written on these links; for the purposes of this paper, it is enough to say that the laws and practices implemented during these time periods—including the 13th Amendment ending slavery for everyone but those convicted of crimes, Black Codes governing free Black people making "the criminal-justice system central to new strategies of racial control,"[337] and convict leasing laws— each and all created impossible living and financial conditions for African Americans. Many were "arrested for petty and phony offenses (like vagrancy if they came into town when off work), and when they were unable to pay the ensuing fines and court fees, wardens sometimes sold prisoners to plantations, mines, and factories."[338] These practices were the beginning of the disproportionate number of Black people in U.S. prisons, and the cycles of imprisonment are well established that allow us to see the same disproportionality today.

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[335] LaDale C. Winling and Todd M. Michney, "The Roots of Redlining: Academic, Governmental, and Professional Networks in the Making of the New Deal Lending Regime," *Journal of American History* 108, no. 1 (June 2021): 42–69. https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jaab066

[336] LaDavia S. Hatcher, "A Case for Reparations: The Plight of the African-American World War II Veteran Concerning Federal Discriminatory Housing Practices," *Modern American* 2, no. 2 (2006): 18-24.

[337] Bryan Stevenson, "Slavery Gave America a Fear of Black People and a Taste for Violent Punishment. Both Still Dine Our Criminal-Justice System," *New York Times*, August 14, 2019. https://pulitzercenter.org/sites/default/files/mass_incarceration_by_bryan_stevenson.pdf

[338] Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 154–155.

The textbooks highlight the possibilities that sharecropping offered freed Blacks. *The Americans* tells how African American farmers who "saved a little and bought their own tools" could negotiate with landowners and eventually become tenant farmers.[339] It highlights in a sidebar the rarity of this happening since debt was difficult to repay. *The American Journey* explains the system of sharecropping, making it seem beneficial to African Americans but also recognizing the economic troubles it caused. The other books are similar in their handling of sharecropping, talking about the economic position it put many African Americans into.

None of the books mention the social, cultural, and emotional repression the system placed on freed people. Landowners and whites were able to exploit workers and kept them in this negative economic cycle by cheating the scales come harvest or undercounting bales during the count, according to an in-depth investigation conducted by the Associated Press.[340] White landlords intimidated tenants and threatened them with eviction if they voted.

Little is made of this system of oppression and its sister crime, the taking away of land that African Americans managed to obtain after emancipation. Only *American History* touches on the loss of land African Americans faced between 1860 and 1890.[341] But this loss or confiscation was widespread. The Black Codes and Jim Crow laws established during and after Reconstruction allowed white people to sue, for various reasons, to obtain ownership of land near them owned by African Americans. These

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[339] Danzer, *The Americans*, 391.

[340] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/

[341] Brinkley, *American History*, 410.

cases were upheld by white judges, and white terrorism accounted for confiscation according to the Associated Press investigation.[342] They also found that non-payment of racially motivated, unfair taxes was also a widely used reason to confiscate land.[343]

All of this demonstrates that the racism that prevented wealth from being built by African Americans during and after Reconstruction is the same pattern that existed after World War II and still exists today. It is apparent in stories like one published by CBS that showcases the large gap in appraisal estimates between homes owned by people of color and those owned by whites.[344]

These are direct legacies with direct connections to Reconstruction. "As political scientist Rogers Smith detailed, in the decades that followed the destruction of Reconstruction, reactionary white people encoded gender and racial hierarchies 'in a staggering array of new laws governing naturalization, immigration deportation, voting rights, electoral institutions, judicial procedures, and economic rights.'"[345] The primary sources that show the language of these laws and statues—testimony from African Americans whose land was confiscated, transcripts from legal proceedings, and newspaper clippings from the local paper—could all help set the stage for and understanding of why that appraisal gap exists today. As Moore and Banfield say:

> Researchers studying the racial prejudice of adolescents found that when young people see racial disparities between groups, they seek and

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[342] Coates, "The Case for Reparations."

[343] Coates, "The Case for Reparations."

[344] Christopher J. Brooks, "There's a Big 'Appraisal Gap' between Black and White Homeowners," CBS News, September 24, 2021. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/freddie-mac-home-appraisal-housing-discrimination-black-homeowner/

[345] Rosado, et al., "Erasing the Black Freedom Struggle."

> explanation. Too often, that explanation is a victim-blaming one. The researchers concluded that the single most important tool . . . to provide young people with "explanations that are sensitive to the historical circumstances which gave rise to group differences and that recognize the cultural, social and psychological forces which sustain them. . . . Unfortunately, young people are not given "explanations" about the "historical circumstances" of racism. The ways in which white domination helped to shape the conditions of Black people, and so much else in U.S. history, are rarely presented in schools.[346]

Analysis of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Each Book

No textbook is perfect. Even the book I chose as a model, *American History*, has significant flaws in the way it teaches Black history and the linkages between past and present. Some books do many things well, some do only a couple things well. Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses in current books will offer guidance to U.S. History textbook authors looking to help students identify connections in history.

The Americans

Overall, *The Americans* did not score particularly high on any of the variables measured. The only time period that saw the percentage of space given to sources measure above 14% was predictably in the "America Declares Independence" period. This is the only time period that saw engagement with sources rise above 40% in the book, and it is the only period when a third party is introduced. But even this time period did not see questions asked of sources in more than 54% of the cases.

The Americans comes in last on average size per source. This book overall is the smallest and shortest at 575 pages of narrative.

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[346] Moore and Banfield, *Reconstruction: The Promise and Betrayal of Democracy*, 5.

Holt American Nation

Holt excels at asking questions of students regarding primary sources and their analysis. This book comes in second only to *American History*, the model book, in this category. In the description or caption near a majority of primary sources, the heading is "Interpreting the Visual Record" followed by a description, then a question. For example, in a lithograph of Southern legislators wearing Confederate uniforms during Reconstruction, the question asks: "What message would the wearing of such uniforms convey?"[347] *Holt* is also second only to *American History* in seeing the narrative engage with the primary sources.

One of the drawbacks of this book, however, is the space given to primary sources as a total of pages on the topic discussed. *Holt* ranks fourth of the six books and only a handful of sources occupy more than 10 square inches outside of the "America Declares Independence" time period.

In fact, *Holt* ranks last in average size of source. *Holt* does, albeit extremely rarely, employ third-party experts—1.48% of the time. *Holt* has 1,117 pages of narrative.

The American Journey

American Journey suffers from the same affliction as *Holt* when it comes to the printed size of many primary sources. Of the 44 total sources examined over the four historical periods in this book, only five are over 13 square inches, and four of those occur in the "America Declares Independence" time period. This often renders the source and their importance moot. For example, the oft-used diagram of slaves packed onto the

[347] Boyer, *Holt American Nation*, 405.

slave ship *Brookes* is printed occupies only 3.937 square inches in *Journey*. Three other books use the diagram as well; the next smallest is 11.375 square inches (*Pageant*), the largest is 24.75 square inches (*American History*). *Journey* comes in third in average size of sources.

Journey comes in last of all the books when it comes to the narrative engaging with the source, and no third-party academics are ever consulted. *Journey* does, however, ask a fair number of questions relative to the sources—an average of 70% of the time—third only to *American History* at 118% and *Holt* at 85%. *Journey* has 1,011 pages of narrative.

America: Pathways to the Present

Pathways was in the middle of the pack among the books analyzed in many of the variables studied. It was third overall in its narrative engagement with sources; fourth in total questions asked; and barely second in the ratio of size of sources to section. It never employs third-party scholars. Its sources are printed very small, ranking fifth of the six books analyzed. For example, the image of African American legislators elected to Congress during Reconstruction is no larger than a postage stamp.[348]

There are worthwhile sections in the book, such as "Analyzing Political Speeches" and "Comparing Primary Sources," but they could be utilized more frequently. Roughly one in three chapters has such a section. *Pathways* has 1,155 pages of narrative.

[348] Cayton, et al., *America: Pathways to the Present*, 439.

The American Pageant

Pageant is one of only two books—along with the model book, *American History*—that does not print the Declaration of Independence in the corresponding time period in the book. Nonetheless, it ranks second at 12.79 square inches in its average size of primary source. It ranks first in total size of sources in relation to pages (16.64%), and it ranks first in third-party experts referenced. This largely comes from a list of books at the end of the chapters for "Further Reading," but they are introduced. *Pageant* frequently utilizes pull-outs that show primary sources that are often a full page or a complete spread, including "Examining the Evidence" (examples: see p. 145, p. 476), "Contending Voices" (examples: p. 396, p. 416, p. 430), and "Varying Viewpoints" (examples: p. 158, p. 424).

Where *Pageant* falls short is in the engagement with these sources. *Pageant* ranks fifth of the six books in seeing the narrative engage with the sources, and it comes in last by a wide margin when asking questions of students. *Pageant* asks questions in relation to only 15.52% of sources. The next lowest percentage is *The Americans* at 45.04%. No questions are asked in the slave trade pages. *Pageant* is 1,021 pages of narrative.

American History

American History was chosen as the model book due to its positive reviews[349] and unique approach to the narrative. Rather than classic chronological displays with traditional heroes featured prominently (although, of course, many are still taught).

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[349] David Cutler, "Down with Textbooks," *The Atlantic*, January 31, 2014. https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/01/down-with-textbooks/283507/; "The Top 10 APUSH Textbooks," *Fiveable*, December 22, 2021. https://fiveable.me/apush/-/best-ap-us-history-textbook/blog/MUH02htqBzztuzv3L4lg

American History takes a more "balanced approach to perspective and exploration of ongoing historical questions."[350] The history of "every man" is discussed at length and given importance: "Brinkley covers most of the [unorthodox historical facts Howard Zinn says are usually omitted in US History books]."[351] *American History* does its best to show the "connectedness of it all. Continuity over time."[352] "Primary sources are introduced and discussed as are historiographical debates on portraying American history."[353]

I liked it for its approach to including third-party scholars in the narrative and its many pull-out sections. Additionally, the sources are printed large and clearly.

American History is not good at everything, of course. It employs too few sources, ranking last in sources to size-of-section ratio. (If you consider only the latter three time periods and omit the benchmark case of "America Declaring Independence," then it is second only to *Pageant*.) While overall many questions are asked of sources, many sources get three or more questions while others get none. It ranks second on third-party experts employed, but the book has more than accounted for in my data. "For Further Reading" is in an appendix at the end of the book with correlating books listed by chapter. The book has 881 pages of narrative.

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[350] "American History: Connecting with the Past by Alan Brinkley," Goodreads, 2021. https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/17290069-american-history.

[351] "American History: Connecting with the Past by Alan Brinkley.".

[352] "American History: Connecting with the Past by Alan Brinkley."

[353] "American History: Connecting with the Past by Alan Brinkley."

Chapter VI

Discussion

As I have shown, each book has strengths and weaknesses, and the time periods examined varied in how books treated them. But I believe there are some stark takeaways to be found in the research.

Expectations and Surprises

In conducting this research, I hypothesized that the benchmark case, America Declaring Independence, would have more robust primary sources that made clearer the linkages and legacies from past to present. That hypothesis appears to be confirmed, or at least there seems to be correlation.

The average space given to primary sources in the six textbooks examined relative to this time period was greater than that of the other three time periods dealing with the Black experience. Some of the books surprised me in their more careful handling of the three later time periods, particularly *The American Pageant*'s inclusion of a third-party expert and its average size of source, also *Holt American Nation's* question asking and engagement with source. I was surprised with the model book's small average size of space given to sources.

Additionally, I expected less variation among the books. When reflecting on why I expected this, I realized that the "echo chamber" of media consumption that exists in partisan political content extends to the topic of history education. This echo chamber

extends—although not as deeply—to academic literature, as well. Thus far in academia, content reviews of textbooks have focused more on what textbooks get wrong than what they get right. They are also, as one would expect, a bit behind in a contemporary discussion of history education, curriculum, and textbooks. Therefore, in researching this paper and before examining the textbooks themselves, I expected more consistency in what textbooks got wrong and that they would *all* be deeply flawed and in similar ways.

One of the common calls from academics is not enough primary sources are used and used well in teaching history.[354] I hypothesized that this would hold firm in textbooks. Overall, it did when the books were averaged. The variations found were not enough to prove the hypothesis false; they simply showed that certain books were making efforts in some areas, although none in all. The American Exceptionalism that permeates the books is most evident in the benchmark time period and allows for linkages to be made clear from period to period.

Linking Results

Looking at the variables, it was clear that the benchmark case gave more space to primary sources in textbooks than the other cases pertaining to Black history. Not only was more space given to sources in the benchmark case, but the narratives of the textbooks engaged with the primary sources to a greater degree than the other three time period cases.

In five of the six textbooks, more critical thinking questions were asked of students in regard to the benchmark case than any other time period. Finally, the average

[354] Roberts, "Georgia On My Mind," 54; Masur, "Pictures," 45; Martell and Hashimoto-Martell, "Throwing Out the Textbook," 2; "History in the Raw."

size of primary source was largest among a majority of textbooks when related to the benchmark case.

With these results, it can be said that the variables correlate with my hypothesis that more weight is put on the benchmark case, as evidenced by more and more significant primary source use—the time period associated with American Exceptionalism—than the other three time periods which are associated with the Black experience.

Significance and Implications

When researching textbooks and the academic analyses conducted on the content of social studies textbooks, many authors stressed the emphasis most high school history textbooks put on the American Exceptionalism narrative. My findings agree that in cases where it is easier to stress American Exceptionalism, primary sources are utilized to a greater degree. When all books are looked at holistically, the variation is still not enough to deny this.

In the future, the literature of content review will need to find a way to account for progress in books. It does feel like small steps are being taken in some books, in some instances, particularly in the narratives. But the lack of primary sources in areas of history dealing with African American experiences—in instances where American Exceptionalism is harder to justify, where actions of America as a country were far from exceptional—use of primary sources is less. Without primary sources, as previous research shows, historical thinking—the ability to link history to the present—is

limited.[355] Thus, students' ability to link social justice issues relating to race is diminished without significant primary evidence use in textbooks,[356] but their ability to link the thread of American Exceptionalism from past to present is strong.

These findings suggest that providing more robust primary evidence to areas of history that focus on the minority experience could allow students to find connections and linkages from past experiences to present ones since we have shown that in places where primary sources are robust, linkages are more readily made. The existing research already says that primary sources are key to helping students creating historical linkages.[357]

Based on my observations of textbooks, this will be consequential to students' abilities to understanding minority experiences today. Teaching this way may go against the commonly instilled narrative of American Exceptionalism, but it will provide more insight and understanding to experiences of racism today. It will help students to see that racism is a legacy of slavery, and the many social injustices that followed thereby create an understanding that racism has been institutionalized and is part of the systemic fabric of United States' society. Rather than instill guilt in students, research has shown that understanding the institutional nature of racism helps to alleviate students of any possible

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[355] Rodeheaver, "An Analysis of U.S. History Textbooks," 6-7; VanSledright, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically," 232; "About This Program," Library of Congress; Tally and Goldenberg, "Fostering Historical Thinking."

[356] Kasey Short, "Teaching Now: Examining Social Justice through Historical, Classic and Contemporary Sources," Citizen U Primary Source Nexus, September 7, 2020. https://primarysourcenexus.org/2020/09/teaching-now-examining-justice-through-historical-classic-and-contemporary-sources/; Bentley and Waring, "What Did Pilgrims Look like?" 41.

[357] Rodeheaver, "An Analysis of U.S. History Textbooks," 6-7; VanSledright, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically," 232; "About This Program," Library of Congress; Tally and Goldenberg, "Fostering Historical Thinking."

individual guilt.[358] This freedom from individual guilt makes space for creating ideas to unwind racism's systemic nature.

When these phenomena are also understood by textbook authors, they are free to push past the culture of writing in the American Exceptionalism tradition and focus appropriately on all the truths of the American experience—positive and negative and of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds—knowing the benefits that will accrue to students.

This is a model for all time periods concerning minorities, marginalized populations, embarrassing or little-covered international policies, and other areas of history not given space within an American Exceptionalism narrative. How indigenous populations have historically been treated, the U.S. involvement, policies, and war in Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries, the U.S.-backed contras in South America, the U.S.'s relationship with Iran, among many others, are areas of history that receive little to no coverage in textbooks and even less primary-source accompaniment. If books reflected these events and time periods accurately, with primary evidence to help display truth and clarity, students would be able to more clearly make linkages and connect those events to today's immigration policies, foreign relation policies, domestic policies, social norms, and injustices. It is my belief that this thesis could be written many times over just by swapping out the historical periods that are devoid of proper coverage and primary sources causing the ensuing social injustices in this country.

Some readers may scoff at the parent at a school board meeting who approaches someone like the author of this paper with ideas about the dangers of American Exceptionalism as the primary narrative in schools and asks, "Won't my student stop

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[358] Cartwright, "Teaching Children"; Pelletiere and Kindelan, "'Children Are Not Born Racist"; Alvarez, "We Need to Teach the Truth."

being proud to be an American if we teach the way you're suggesting?" To that parent, I say that is a valid question. But I do not think teaching that America is somehow less-than in relation to other countries is the goal. Rather, all of this history is important. It is not that we should teach the minority experience more robustly in lieu of America declaring independence or the U.S. joining WWII to combat fascism. These are exceptional ideas had by Americans and acted upon that are important parts of our history. There is room for both. Just because we should teach the truth about the parts of America that are not exceptional does not mean we should not be proud of the parts that are.

In fact, my argument is that reckoning with and reflecting upon the less pride-inducing moments of history will be what creates exceptional presents and futures. Students will feel pride in the grappling and the unwinding, which in turn allows for more growth. It gives students greater ability to understand their country—and more importantly their countrymen—of all races and ethnicities. It allows for pride in communities working together to understand each other and their experiences. Rather than brush old wrongs under the rug and not examine their legacies, students can be proud of ripping the rug back and cleaning.

In his book *American Covenant*,[359] Philip Gorski explains how President Barack Obama's view of American Exceptionalism is contrary to the commonly held version of it, the one found in textbooks. Gorski argues that Obama believes in a type of American Exceptionalism that is not about being perfect or trying to remake the world in the image of the United States. Rather, there is a pride in being self-aware, dealing well with and

[359] Philip S. Gorski, *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), chapter 7.

growing out of complicated histories. Further, he says Obama would contend that the arc of the country has moved toward progress and justice, but often these covenants and ideals have been broken. Looking at why they were broken and learning from it is exceptional as well. Being self-conscious about all the glories *and* the failures of history allows more compassion and awareness of the experiences of others. This "sense of community"[360] is what constitutes collective well-being and what can come together to set America apart.

Questions and Limitations

While my findings seem to show at least correlation between the use of primary sources in historical events aligned with the American Exceptionalism narrative being more robust than those aligned with the Black experience, the certainty of these findings being the case for every student is harder to determine. The six books examined were carefully selected, but far more than six books are in circulation throughout the country. Furthermore, books are constantly being updated and revised, meaning what I found for this paper is simply a snapshot in time of what some students are experiencing. Creating more than one benchmark case may allow for a greater degree of certainty and improve the ability of the data to point to causality rather than just correlation. It would provide a case where the Declaration of Independence—arguably the greatest piece of primary evidence pointing to American Exceptionalism—was not invoked.

Furthermore, the textbooks analyzed are written by humans. As noted, authors are products of their own education and positionality. Therefore, their books are products,

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[360] Gorski, *American Covenant*, 199.

too, of this positionality. Until education changes, authors will have a hard time changing their positionality. When authors are taught as children with books that emphasize American Exceptionalism and downplay connections within the Black experience, it is hard for them to not carry this influence into their own writing of textbooks. It is a self-fulfilling cycle.

Additionally, the American Exceptionalism narrative is encouraged and even mandated by entities such as the College Board (administrators of the SAT and Advanced Placement exams[361]), think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation,[362] school boards,[363] and even former President Donald Trump.[364] With these directives, authors are tied to the American Exceptionalism narrative if they want to see their books published. While this does not negate the findings, it does express some of the "why" and bring into question the ability to act on what the findings suggest for remedy.

Finally, when it comes to the findings herein, the bias of this author must be addressed as well. I am also a product of my education and positionality. The quantifiable data, such as size of primary source and percentage of section, are not subject to bias. But what the narrative says about the sources and the effects they may have on students—the qualitative components of the research—are less rigidly tied to numbers and

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[361] James Nevius, "To Teach Only 'American Exceptionalism' is to Ignore Half the Country's Story," *The Guardian*, August 3, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/03/american-exceptionalism-ignore-slavery

[362] Mike Gonzalez and Jonathan Butcher, "Restore the Teaching of American Exceptionalism in the Classroom," Heritage Foundation, August 28, 2020. https://www.heritage.org/education/commentary/restore-the-teaching-american-exceptionalism-the-classroom

[363] Ryan Dailey, "Florida Board of Education Approves New Curriculum Touting 'American Exceptionalism'," *Orlando Weekly*, July 15, 2021. https://www.orlandoweekly.com/Blogs/archives/2021/07/15/florida-board-of-education-approves-new-curriculum-touting-american-exceptionalism

[364] Gonzalez and Butcher, "Restore the Teaching."

measurements. I tried to tie this component of my research to previous research and analysis on textbooks, and I designed the comparative framework to give concrete comparison points. Furthermore, the findings proved somewhat surprising, so my bias can hopefully be understood as minimal.

This thesis does not attempt a holistic review of every U.S. high school history textbook in use or circulation. Nor does it attempt to review every element of history that involved the Black experience. Those endeavors are too large for the scope of this undertaking.

This thesis also does not try to account for pedagogical differences among United States high school history teachers. I am certain there are many teachers in classrooms around the country utilizing primary sources in addition to textbooks to high degrees with wonderful results. This is simply a review of the inclusion of primary sources within textbooks—the most ubiquitous tool in history education.

I also did not endeavor to examine all of the additional online components these six textbooks (and others) offer that may include open-source digital content of additional primary sources in relation to the time periods (and more) under review. As the COVID-19 pandemic made clear, access to the internet and computers is not equal among K-12 students.[365] This would have added more variable with less clear outcomes than sticking solely to the printed text. Additionally, sources have made clear that printed textbooks are used more commonly than online materials due to their ease of use, availability, and their

[365] Shaibalina Choudhury, Ian Laird, and D.C. Benincasa, "During Covid-19 Pandemic, Gap in Internet Access Fuels Inequality among Students Worldwide," *Springfield News-Leader*, June 1, 2021. https://www.news-leader.com/story/news/2021/06/01/student-internet-access-inequality-worldwide-education-teaching-school-virtual-learning-covid-19/7457448002/; Suzanne Woolley, Nikitha Sattiraju, and Scott Moritz, "U.S. Schools Trying to Teach Online Highlight a Digital Divide," Bloomberg.com, March 26, 2020. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-26/covid-19-school-closures-reveal-disparity-in-access-to-internet

requiring less additional hands in the classroom to address technical troubleshooting.[366] Sticking just to printed versions of textbooks ensured equity and was true to what is more commonly used in history teaching.

Further Research

Creating more in-depth studies that utilize in-classroom research would be where I would take this research next. Conducting studies that evaluate students' abilities to create linkages, or not, from past to present, with either more or less or different primary sources included in textbooks, would allow for causality to be determined.

As part of a previous group project, myself and two peers conducted research in a classroom setting that surveyed students about their historical understanding who had been subject to a Diversity-Equity-Inclusion-Justice curriculum and alumni of the same school who were at the school prior to the advent of the new DEIJ curriculum. This DEIJ curriculum did not specifically use primary sources in its teaching, but I would recommend a similar approach with the variable being introduction of more primary sources in textbooks. This approach holds constant teachers, environment, demographic make-up of students, and other variables and makes the independent variable the different curriculum—in this case, the inclusion of more primary sources in textbooks. Creating a survey about students' and alumni ability to create linkages from past to present would validate or invalidate real-world application benefits of the research conducted for this thesis.

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[366] Joanna Petrone, "This is the Textbook's Time to Shine," *Slate*, August 17, 2020. https://slate.com/technology/2020/08/remote-learning-means-we-need-textbooks.html; Terrance F. Ross, "The Death of Textbooks," *The Atlantic*, March 8, 2015. https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/03/the-death-of-textbooks/387055/

Chapter VI

Conclusion

The purpose of the research conducted for this thesis was to show the discrepancy in primary sources used in textbooks between areas of history where America is deemed exceptional and areas of history where it is not, namely, the historical experiences of Black Americans. This quantitative data is meant to highlight the ability of students to create linkages from past to present based on historical thinking created by these primary sources.

The results show more- and better-utilized primary sources are evident in the benchmark case—American Exceptionalism—than the other three cases that deal with the Black experience. Put simply, there is an inequity in how different elements of history—all important—are taught in textbooks. The problem is two-fold: 1) students of all races are unable to make links between how past treatment of minorities have influenced and created the treatment of minorities today, and 2) it renders students of color unable to positively identify with their nation and peers. Joe Ning, a student now at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justices says:

> Growing up, a lot of what I learned in the classroom was whitewashed history, where we focused mostly on the history of America through the lens of white people who went on to become rich or successful and were able to define this history for the rest of the country… We seem to learn the same kind of Euro-Centric and American exceptionalism history, over and over again in K-12. It's the place where we learn about the first 100 to 200 years of history in this country—the founding of this nation during the 1700s, but everything else after that is rushed through. I think that's how this idea that the U.S. is this great nation, an underdog who beat a

> colonizer, was established. That was my learning experience for the most part—it was a history that focused on the success of white people who founded this country and it's been great since. But we know that's not the truth.[367]

For so long, the narrative has been controlled by white men. They focus on the good parts of history and minimize the bad parts. That essentially erases the history of so many students in this country. Ning continues:

> For me, there was one class in high school where my learning experience changed and became more inclusive, and that was when I took a world history class. My teacher was a Black woman who wasn't afraid to teach things that weren't in the pre-approved textbooks. She taught us things we hadn't learned before and I think that was indicative of how she thought about history. It was really an eye-opener for students. If you sit down and think about it, textbooks don't say which presidents were enslavers, instead the textbooks almost normalize slavery. It's the difference between teaching something versus saying something and teaching it explicitly. This teacher made sure we knew that the people we idolize in history are people who may have perpetuated systems that oppressed people of color.[368]

Primary sources have been shown to help students better make linkages from past to present. Textbooks are the most utilized tool in teaching history to K-12 students, and they already include some primary evidence. Bolstering the use of primary sources in textbooks, particularly in areas of history that relate minority experiences, will help mitigate both problem one and problem two.

History education and the ways in which it is taught have long been a source of conflict—socially, culturally, and politically—in the United States. So often, these conflicts are based on divergent ideologies, and they lack tangible, quantitative ways to

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[367] "Developing a Culturally Responsive, Inclusive, & Anti-Racist Curriculum." John Jay College of Criminal Justice. City University of New York, December 28, 2021. http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/news/developing-culturally-responsive-inclusive-anti-racist-curriculum

[368] "Developing Culturally Responsive, Inclusive, & Anti-Racist Curriculum."

change or progress pedagogy. It is my hope that the research undertaken for this thesis begins to create a path for quantitative change that all parties associated with history curricula can agree will improve students' desire to engage in history and their ability to understand the importance history bears on present circumstances as well as ways to navigate the future.

Appendix 1

Statistics Found in Research of Each Book by Time Period

America Declares Independence – *The Americans*

In total, there are 15 primary sources utilized over ten pages accounting for 39.60% of the section. The narrative engages with the sources 85.71% of the time and questions are asked of 53.33% of the sources. A third-party academic is introduced in relation to one source.

America Declares Independence – *Holt American Nation*

Overall, nine primary sources were employed over seven and a half pages, totaling 44.16% of this section. The narrative engages with the sources 77.78% of the time. And there are 13 questions asked of the nine sources. No third-party academics are introduced.

America Declares Independence – *The American Journey*

Overall, in this book, there are twelve primary sources introduced over nine pages in this section, accounting for 39.33% of the section. The narrative engages with 50% of the primary sources, and questions are asked of 58.33% of the sources. No third-party resources are introduced.

America Declares Independence – *America: Pathways to the Present*

Eleven primary sources are used over eight pages, accounting for 40% of the section. The textbook narrative engages with 54.54% of primary sources and 72.73% of the sources have accompanying questions. Third-party experts are not employed.

America Declares Independence – *The American Pageant*

Even without the printing of the Declaration of Independence, the thirteen primary sources used over twelve pages account for 20% of the entire section. The narrative engages with 53.85% of the sources and 30.77% of the sources have corresponding questions. Third-party historians are introduced in reference to 69.23% of the sources.

America Declares Independence – *American History*

This book does not print the Declaration of Independence in its entirety (it is in the back as an appendix) and only employs three primary sources over four and a half pages that deal with America declaring independence specifically. The narrative engages with two of the three sources and all sources have associated questions — one has four questions. Third-party experts are utilized to engage with 33.33% of sources.

Slave Trade – *The Americans*

Three total primary sources are used in this section. Over two and a half pages, accounting for 13.18% of the section. The textbook narrative only engaged with one source (33.33%) and no questions were asked of students in regard to the sources. No third-party academics or experts were introduced in this section.

Slave Trade – *Holt American Nation*

Six primary sources are depicted over two and a half pages, accounting for 9.42% of the slave trade pages. The textbook engages with 33.33% of the sources. Questions are asked in relation to 50% of the sources and no third-party experts are consulted.

Slave Trade – *The American Journey*

Over three and a quarter pages for primary sources are introduced accounting for 13.44% of the total slave trade section. The narrative engages with 25% of the primary sources. 25% of the sources have associated questions and no third-party experts are used.

Slave Trade – *America: Pathways to the Present*

Five primary sources — three surrounding Olaudah Equiano — are used in this book over two and three quarters pages accounting for15.94% of the salve trade pages. The narrative engages with 60% of the sources. 60% also have questions associated. No third-party experts are introduced.

Slave Trade – *The American Pageant*

Seven total pages cover the slave trade, and seven primary sources are used, accounting for 18.77% of those pages. The narrative engages with 14.29% of the sources. No questions are asked of any source and no third-party expert is utilized.

Slave Trade – *American History*

Over six pages that deal with the slave trade, five primary sources are used. This accounts for 20.5% of the pages. The textbook narrative engages with 80% of the sources. There are six questions associated with the five sources. 20% of the sources have third-party academics introduced to help tell their story.

Cause of Civil War – *The Americans*

Eighteen sources are employed over fifteen pages, accounting for 9.59% of the section. The narrative engages with 38.89% of the sources and 44.44% of the sources have corresponding questions. No third-party academic resources are introduced.

Cause of Civil War – *Holt American Nation*

Sixteen primary sources over twelve and a half pages account for 8.19% of the section. The narrative engages with 68.75% of primary sources and 93.75% of sources have corresponding questions. No third-party historians are introduced.

Cause of Civil War – *American Journey*

Eleven sources over nine and a half pages are used, accounting for 10.12% of the pages. The narrative engages with 45.45% of the sources, and questions are asked of almost all the sources — more than one in some instances — totaling 109% questions to source ratio. No third-party academics are employed.

Cause of Civil War – *America: Pathways to the Present*

Nineteen sources are employed over twelve and a half pages, accounting for 13.21% of the pages covering the cause of the Civil War. The narrative engages with 63.16% of the sources, and questions are asked corresponding to 63.16% of sources. No third-party academics are introduced.

Cause of the Civil War – *The American Pageant*

Twenty four primary sources over 20 pages, accounting for 14.3% of the pages are used in this book. The narrative engages with 41.67% of the sources and questions in relation to 12.5% of the sources are asked. A third-party academic is engaged with in relation to 50% of the primary sources.

Cause of the Civil War – *American History*

Four sources over ten and a quarter pages, accounting for 7.7% of the total pages are used in this book. The narrative engages with 50% of the sources. Six questions accompany the four sources. Third-party experts are introduced in relation to 50% of the sources.

Reconstruction – *The Americans*

Twenty-eight primary sources over 26 pages account for 9.17% of the Reconstruction chapter. The narrative engages with 32.14% of the sources and questions are asked of 46.43% of the sources. No third-party experts are employed.

Reconstruction – *Holt American Nation*

Thirty primary sources are employed over 18 pages, accounting for 9.40% of the section. The narrative engages with 53.33% of sources and questions are asked of 60% of the sources. Third party academics are introduced in relation to 3.33% of the sources.

Reconstruction – *The American Journey*

Seventeen primary sources are employed over 17 pages accounting for 7.31% of the pages that cover Reconstruction. The narrative engages with 17.65% of the sources and 64.71% of sources have corresponding questions for students. No third-party sources are used.

Reconstruction – *America: Pathways to the Present*

Twenty-four sources over 21 pages are used in this book accounting for 8.43% of the chapter. The narrative engages with 50% of the sources and corresponding questions are asked of 58.33% of the sources. No third-party experts are utilized.

Reconstruction – *The American Pageant*

Twenty-four sources are used over 20 pages accounting for 16.54% of the chapter. The narrative engages with 29.17% of the sources and questions are asked about 16.67% of sources. Third- party academics are employed in relation to 54.17% of sources.

Reconstruction – *American History*

Fourteen sources over 23 pages account for 12.05% of this historical period in this book. The narrative references 78.57% of the sources and 85.71% of the sources have accompanying questions. Third-party experts are used to address 21.43% of sources.

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