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The Benefits of Supplementing the Eighth Grade American History Curriculum with Historical and Realistic Fiction Novels

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**The Benefits of Supplementing the Eighth Grade
American History Curriculum with Historical and Realistic
Fiction Novels**

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Final Project
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

Skidmore College

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Abstract

As the textbook remains the driving force of instructional methodology in the secondary history curriculum, student enthusiasm and achievement in the discipline continue to decline. Textbooks, which fail to tell the complete story of the American experience, are not just shortchanging history, they are ill-suited to the developmental requirements of the adolescent learner. Through personal classroom experience, literature review, and a one-year site-based study, the evidence compiled in this study endorses the integration of social studies trade books, in particular historical and realistic fiction novels, as a prescription for diminishing, if not turning around, the discouraging trend in middle school social studies.

Introduction

In my dual role as classroom teacher and researcher, I seek to understand the attributes of historical fiction and the way in which those qualities relate to adolescents and their understanding of American history. I do not expect to discover, nor do I intend to prove that teaching historical fiction is the panacea for all the ills that have beset eighth grade American history students. However, with a minimal amount of cost and preparation, it is certainly one of the best ways to bring forth the affective link which engages students in reading and enhances their historical understanding.

I do believe that flexibility and openness are necessary in teaching as well as in learning. An understanding of what to teach and how to teach in history is complicated by the great dissension that this question brings from philosophically oppositional camps. On the one hand, most will agree that the subject many students thought most boring and least significant in school is history. Some say more needs to be done to increase the depth of the study, to make the subject personally relevant and compelling. On the other hand, state standards set an unrealistic demand on teachers to cover a vast scope and sequence, especially given the amount of time afforded history in the curricular schedule. As secondary teachers, the argument can rightfully be made that there is not enough time to cover the curriculum as it is. How can anything else be squeezed in? Consequently, even the best teachers may come to rely on the textbook and its accompanying skills, drills, and testing as *the* standard and as an instructional lifeline. It *is* a complete package. But is it the best plan by which to engage the adolescent in the investigation of and interest in American history? Adolescents, influenced by mercurial moods and erratic behaviors, can barely sit still. Nancie Atwell, author and middle school teacher, states, "All I can predict with any certainty about any group of kids is a crazy range of abilities, problems, attitudes, and levels of

maturity” (1998, p. 56). As adolescents generate such varied responses during this unique period of development, we as educators must look to innovative and varied approaches of instruction, if we are to relate at all. No matter how frustrating or time-consuming, we serve adolescents best when we help them find ways to channel their energy productively. An analogy might be made to exercise. Many of us are quick to argue that we have no time in our daily schedule for a fitness regimen. Yet, as most of us know, physical exercise enhances performance, energy, and longevity. As with the addition of exercise into life, can it also be said that historical fiction added to the history curriculum is indeed another case in which the end justifies the means? How does historical fiction help address the unique developmental requirements of the adolescent, so that the experience of learning history becomes more meaningful?

Regarding the layout of the study, I open the paper with a personal narrative. I thought it important for readers to know, in somewhat of a testimonial account, that historical and realistic fiction, with its story narrative, and the potential that it has for enhancing middle school American history instruction, took me completely by surprise. I implemented it experimentally, as a last-ditch effort with a challenging group of high school students. The outcome of that experience inspired me to conduct this inquiry. Beyond the personal narrative, the study is divided into five main sections. In Section One, brain-based research sheds light on the developing emotional and intellectual needs of the adolescent. Upon reading the psychological and sociological particulars of the developing adolescent, it should be clear that the flat and impersonal narrative of the history textbook, for the most part, will not engage adolescent learners. Conversely, the narrative structure of stories, and the affective links that story narratives bring to learning and motivation are better suited. In Section Two, the purpose is to expose readers to the dilemmas of the text dominant environment in the typical middle school classroom. The reasons why

history is taught this way and the consequences of that instruction for adolescents are discussed. Section Three defines historical and realistic fiction and looks at the reasons why appropriate novels are appealing to adolescents. Historians and education specialists identify ways in which historical fiction is consistent with the objectives of the national history standards. Case studies integrating novels into history class instruction are examined. In Section Four, the results of a year-long, site-based study, are discussed. The study compares two classes, one which relied completely on the textbook, and another, which incrementally increased the supplementation of historical fiction to teach the same American history content and themes. The closing, Section Five, summarizes the advantages and encumbrances of integrating historical and realistic fiction novels. Suggestions are included for selecting quality novels and creating historical fiction units.

Speaking as a professional educator, I have come to accept the fact that I feel like a missionary of sorts. Teaching is more than a job, it is a major part of my life, and I am convinced that it is a calling. Sometimes I wonder, as I believe many teachers have, if this is the best profession for me. The university theorists and state policy makers always know a better way that I should teach. They visit our classrooms and borrow time with our students and our minds. Their published work affects life in our classrooms. Psychologists and curriculum specialists demand modifications for students with special needs. Parents and students want individual attention. The administration expects my documented contribution to the School Improvement Plan. Yet, after seventeen years of classroom experience, I am still passionate about teaching. Each day, approximately 180 students are ushered into my temporary care, and I know that I could have done more to help them. Certainly, there were better ways that I could have taught the lessons. Some e-mails and calls were neglected. However, as I walk out the door at the end of the day, I know that I could not have given any more of myself to the day. As the

saying goes, “a diamond is a chunk of coal made good under pressure” (author unknown). As a teacher, I, likewise, face pressure, and I certainly do not have the time that nature needs to transform coal into a diamond. Therefore, I have a greater responsibility to be attentive to the gifts of the profession, those which divert my focus from the pressure and the critics, and serve to improve me in the art and soul of my passion, teaching. Historical fiction is but one gift that has come my way. I hope that this study provides sufficient research, evidence, and logical support to warrant others’ careful consideration of these issues in the teaching of middle school social studies.

Personal narrative:

How I came to know the power of a story.

By the close of the 1993-94 school year, I had completed ten years of teaching at the same public school, a traditional middle school with a six period day, and class sizes of 35-38 students per period. No matter how creative I tried to be, I remained dissatisfied with shepherding vast numbers of students through two-hundred years of people, ideas, and events in American history. I never really felt like I had done either history or my students justice. As luck would have it, an alternative high school advertised an opening for a social studies teacher just as I decided that it was time for a change.

The high school offered features, the likes of which I had never seen in my ten years of teaching experience. Most noteworthy, class size was capped at sixteen students per teacher. The classrooms were designed with a business office atmosphere in mind. One computer work station for every two students bordered the class perimeter. A conference table in the center of the room completed the setting.

As teachers, we endured intensive educational workshops throughout the summer and during the year. In addition to the daily planning period, we were all required to meet routinely after school for collaboration with the school faculty, staff, and outside experts. The school had a decent library, and even the classrooms had plenty of assorted references. One instructional “regular” was missing. There were no class sets of textbooks. The curriculum called for interdisciplinary, thematic units. Assorted textbooks, teacher editions and student editions would serve only a minor role. They would be used by all of us, teachers and students, simply as references.

Just before opening day, a colleague quipped, “You know they (school district administrators) don’t assign an FTE (student-to-teacher) ratio of 16:1 for no

reason. You need to be aware, these are complex and difficult kids that are coming." My excitement was too great to fully understand that warning at the time. And so, on the first day of school, and for some time thereafter, I was in shock. As the students plodded into the class, I made first impression notations of the great diversity among them. A country boy from the farmland was followed by the zoot-suited intellectual and world traveler, who was followed by a girl almost completely hidden within her clothing, followed by another female who barely clothed herself at all, followed by the fisherman from one of the barrier islands, assorted others, and then finally a last group of stragglers who appeared to be high (under the influence of some mind-altering substance), and pretty much everyone needed way too many bathroom breaks in need of finding somewhere at some moment to relieve their nicotine addiction. They did have one characteristic in common. There was a united front to avoid coalescing into any form of community, and the conference table might as well have been located in Turkmenistan.

We contrived our way through the first elaborately detailed unit, ironically entitled "Community" but I was beside myself with the lack of it. The students in my class were as the blues vocalist, Keb Mo sings, "prisoners of their own design, lost in a world of confusion" (*The Door*). In a brief few weeks, I had already exhausted my treasure of teacher ideas trying to save them. They were far more adept at resistance than I was at rescue. In spite of all the training and all the features this school had to offer, the learning was stifled. Imagine then, the surprise I felt as I witnessed many of the same students in their afternoon science class at the conference table locked in attention listening to Laura, their teacher. Her secret? Laura, part Native American, integrates stories into her lessons. Stories? At the time, my paradigm of stories relegated fictional reading and storytelling to the elementary years of school or to recreational reading outside of school. In a secondary school setting, I believed that stories belonged in the language arts,

reading, or literature classes, certainly not in social studies or science. In addition, I was quite certain that storytelling was an art which could not be acquired in some quick study. Ultimately, the language arts teacher and I decided to go in search of a story that we could *read* to our students.

Our first selection, actually a nonfiction book, which traced the history of the deadly, Ebola virus, Richard Preston's The Hot Zone, proved to be a winner. From around the room, opinions burst forth.

"That can't be true."

"Does anyone remember *Ebola* in the news?"

"No mother should ever be allowed to work as a biohazard lab scientist."

Students had a lot to say about fear, risk, and government bureaucracy. The second selection, an historical fiction novel by Patrick Smith, A Land Remembered, recounted several generations of Florida history. Both stories were filled with controversy and invited perspective-taking. Thoughts, once silent and distant, were captivated and stirred to expression. The story we were reading awakened the story and sense of self in each individual. In time, the atmosphere of the classroom changed. Lessons of history, economics, politics, values, and technology, in combination with the reading, were inadvertently shifting us up and down an imaginary continuum of varying perspectives, as we came to know ourselves and one another. That did not mean that we agreed with or even that we all liked each other. It meant that we valued ourselves and the integrity that is required to expose who we are and to accept honest disclosure from others. Teaching these unique and challenging students required something truly special. For the two years that I taught at this high school, stories provided the avenue by which I connected myself and the subject that I taught with my students and vice versa.

When I returned to teaching at a traditional, public middle school, I considered varying instructional options for the familiar classroom setting. At first,

and almost without thought, I straightened all the desks in the typical grid-like orderliness, and laid out the student textbooks on top of each desk. Other than a few dictionaries, textbooks were the only books in the room. In the quiet of the preschool day, an awareness intruded. What I was doing, in setting up the classroom, felt restrictive and determinative. For two years, at the alternative high school, I had grown accustomed to creative and open-ended learning. Why was I changing? An analogy came to mind. I remembered life for seven years as a vegetarian. Since meat was not a part of my diet during that time period, I became more creative in preparing meals. Colors, textures, and flavors all mattered, much more than I recalled as a meat-eater. I am no longer a vegetarian, but being a vegetarian for seven years permanently altered my cooking tastes. I began to see a parallel with teaching. The textbook, related activities and projects would play an important role. But, by supplementing these with stories, I knew I could flavor the content, to make it more palatable and more relevant.

We started with The Education of Little Tree (Carter, 1976), the story of a young Native American who learns the lessons of life from his wise grandfather, and the hurtfulness of prejudice from his community. From there, we talked about values and the rules that would govern behavior in the classroom. Now back in a traditional classroom setting for five years, realistic and historical fiction novels have served to put “heart” into history and self, mine and that of my students. In so doing, there is a connectedness that weaves all of us beneficiaries into the fabric of life.

As Palmer observes in The Courage to Teach (1998, p. 11), “The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts- meaning *heart* in the ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self.”

I had been given a gift, a revelation, while teaching at an alternative high

school. Everything that I had previously known in my teaching career failed to reach these incredibly resistant students. Literature, like water on a dried river bed, transformed the dormant seedlings (students) into a flowering oasis. I wanted to hold on to the knowledge of it, to honor it, to nurture it. First, I had to understand it. It has become my mission.

This research is based upon classroom experience, along with a personal and professional inquiry into the question: What is it about *story* that contributes so much to the service of learning and teaching?

(1) Brain-Based Research:
Connecting Learning and Emotion through Narrative

For the seventeen-plus years that I have been teaching, educational trends aimed at warming and connecting students to the institution called school have drifted in and out of distinction. Our young people truly need safe outlets for dealing with their emerging identities and personal difficulties. Socially, everything that kids do, everything that adults do, for that matter, relates to “our need to be accepted within our group so we may survive” (Hannaford, 1995). The evening news can show us the ramifications of youth, mocked, angry, and rejected by the mainstream.

In this section, as we look at the unique attributes of the adolescent, narrative structure surfaces as an important component in both learning and emotional development. The research here explores the potential that literature has for improving historical understanding, while at the same time addressing the psycho/social developmental needs of the middle school student. Most history textbooks, as the next section will discuss in detail, present a flat and impersonal, expository narrative, that, for the most part, will not engage adolescent learners. Story narratives, on the other hand, with the affective links that stories bring to learning and motivation, are better suited. Research shows that in the adolescent learning process there is a strong relationship between the cognitive and the affective domains. The way we choose to perceive an event is colored by our emotions, and that determines our response and our potential to learn from it (Hannaford, 1995, p. 54).

Middle school students, the focus of this project, comprise the school level, usually designated from sixth to eighth grade, with ages, usually, 10-14. It is a complex and fragile period of passage. Many would call the adolescent period the most awkward and uncertain stage of life. Here, students are forced to confront “life when they are most uncomfortable with their bodies and their minds” (Ricken, 1985). In this period of development everything is exaggerated. There is an endless thirst for

acceptance by peers and often a challenge to traditions and to figures of authority. An inner turmoil makes each day “seemingly a struggle between life and death” (Ricken, 1985). These years are filled with tremendous physical change, and for most, a great deal of emotional chaos. There are many biological and chemical changes taking place. The fact is, we may not be able to do much about the bio/chemical stage of development known as puberty, but we *can* act to exert positive influences on the meanings and feelings that get attached to the passage through the period in students’ lives known as adolescence. In this trek between childhood and adulthood, the adolescent will attempt to establish an identity for him/herself. It is well established that an adolescent’s transition between elementary school to high school can be considered a time of normal life crisis (Johnson, 1980). Adolescence requires adaptability and endurance. While adolescents’ bodies, minds, and relationships with parents, peers, and themselves are changing rapidly, the society in which they live is also undergoing rapid change. Little is static and predictable. This state of flux puts the adolescent at risk of not knowing how to qualify and proceed in the arenas, school being a major venue, in which he/she is expected to perform.

Students need more attention at this time in their lives. They may feel like they are omniscient and omnipotent enough to go it alone, but the reality is, they need guidance. Louis Rubin (1973), in Facts and Feelings in the Classroom, addresses the injustice that the school serves upon the adolescent. “During adolescence, when the students’ search for a personal identity is most pressing, he receives the minimal degree of individual attention” (Rubin, 1973, p. 228). Middle school students graduate from one or two main elementary teachers to six or seven middle school teachers per day. Parents and teachers in middle school communicate with each other much less than parents and teachers in elementary school. Adolescents shifting about from mood to mood, alternately building confidence and then slipping in to self-doubt, will find few opportunities to commune with adults along the way. It can be lonely and difficult.

Understanding and addressing the unique nature of the adolescent can enhance school performance. Adolescents lack knowledge and experiences, but not reasoning ability (Bradford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). They reason well with the knowledge that they have. However, due to the limited experience and unpracticed systems for logical thinking, misconceptions can develop. Schools need to be aware of the ways in which adolescents' background knowledge influences understanding. Middle school teachers, in particular, must realize that the children are arriving as previously molded individuals, who are capable of making decisions and who already possess a particular way of interpreting the world around them (Johnston, 1996). New concepts to be learned should be linked to students' current understanding. With limited knowledge and practical experience, but also with a high degree of reasoning ability, adolescents benefit from critical thinking and problem solving exercises. "The greater the number of links and associations that your brain creates, the more neural territories involved and the more firmly the information is woven in neurologically" (Jensen, 1998, p. 93). Giving adolescent learners more opportunities to identify and discuss the connections of what is being learned to what they already know is what seals their understanding. You know that a student is learning when he spouts something like: "Oh, I get it; a colonist who resented paying taxes to King George was kind of like a teenager who resents having to do chores. But, the colonist still wants British trade products and protection, and the teen still wants allowance. You can't demand both independence and to be taken care of at the same time. Something's got to give."

As Jensen's findings show, all learners need opportunities to revise and improve the quality of their thinking and understanding. Gardner states that it has to be clear that a fact-based approach to learning will make even less sense in the future. A "disciplined mind" requires complete and deep immersion (Gardner, 1999). Too much teacher talking and / or skills and drills practice with a textbook, is not conducive to disciplined thinking. Another important consideration for learning history and an

antidote to students' misconceptions, according to Gardner, is regular assumptions of multiple perspectives (Gardner, 1999). Using literature as supplementation would address several of these learning objectives. Narrative is an effective way to involve a large number of learners. Stories are inviting to people of all ages, and narrative activates linguistic as well as personal intelligences (Gardner, 1999). The recommendations of Jensen (1998) concur. Jensen states that teachers should use the power of current events, family history, and stories to make learning history relevant. Both time and practice are necessary for students to link prior learning experiences. Throughout human history, stories have been fundamental to understanding and valuing the people and lessons of the past (Jensen, 1998). Certainly, some stories provide greater benefits than others, such as evoking emotion, portraying multiple perspectives, connecting prior knowledge, and / or facilitating open and lively discussion. At any rate, the lesson must get the students to think. "All those procedures of teaching, testing, and curriculum that see education as a process of accumulating knowledge and skills uninvolved with emotion, intention, and human meaning, will tend to be inadequate to do more than create conventional thinkers" (Egan, 1992, p. 51).

Jean Piaget, the Swiss developmental psychologist, contended that by age twelve, the individual develops a more logical structure to his thought process, which includes the capacity for abstract thought and reason (Inhelder & Piaget, 1962). With this stage comes an increased ability to engage in abstract thought, enabling the adolescent to examine complex issues, like politics, religion, and morality.

As reasoning abilities increase, so too evolves a developing sense of morality. Questions of right, wrong, and fairness need to be decided. Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg (1964), whose theories build upon Piaget's, write that the middle school age individual advances beyond the adult and authority constraints for determining right and wrong to that of his/her own independent thinking and peer or social network. Charlotte Huck (1997) states that experts believe individuals move from one level of

moral development to another by working through dilemmas. "Literature provides a means by which children can rehearse and negotiate situations of conflict without risk, trying out alternative stances to problems as they step into the lives and thoughts of different characters" (Huck, 1997, p. 50). During this transformative process, Huck, who co-edited the reference, Children's Literature in the Elementary School (1997), suggests using realistic fiction novels, which can challenge students to "be there" in painful empathy with a realistic character, in gut-wrenching conflict, while grappling with personal values. Nancie Atwell, a seventh and eighth grade reading, writing, and history teacher, and the author of In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning (1998), claims that she has learned to nudge students toward novels that give shape to their feelings and portray the emerging intelligences and understandings, such as- The Outsiders, or Chocolate War. To explore the state of the world in which students live, she suggests using other novels, such as- I Am the Cheese, or Nothing but the Truth (Atwell, 1998). These novels pose many questions on values that middle school students can ponder and debate. Other suggestion from these and other authorities regarding poignant reading choices can be found in either the recommendation section of this paper or in the bibliography section.

Middle School students need encouragement and acceptance to proceed in their various and ever-changing roles. Those adults, in a position of influence, should be aware of how important their acceptance is. Without such support, a negative identity, as Erikson (1956), notes could be the end result. Students might cast a definition of self that exists largely in defiance of prevailing norms and values, with no place in the larger culture for his or her strivings (Solowdo, 1999). This may be the case whereby minorities lose their voice. For example, as author Gary Soto noted in Read All About It (Trelease, 1993), "Mexican-Americans are the invisible culture in America. Everyone accepts that they are out there, but no one acknowledges it" (Trelease, 1993, p. 31). Though Latinos will soon constitute one third of the population, there are few, if any,

sitcoms, books or movies about them (Trelease, 1993). Gary Soto's book, Baseball in April (1990) is a collection of stories, highlighting Latino culture, but the plots are universal adolescent concerns: image, dating, family, friends, peer pressure, school, sports, and money.

The lost voice or lost self is an issue for adolescent girls as well. In Reviving Ophelia, author Mary Pipher documented the lament of one female student about adolescence: "Everything good in me died in junior high." Pipher claims, wholeness is shattered by the chaos of adolescence. Girls become fragmented, their selves split into mysterious contradictions (Pipher, 1994). While the number of female main characters in novels is increasing, research indicates that the stereotypical behaviors with which girls have been portrayed have not changed (Ernst, 1995). Ernst poses the obvious question: How can girls have a positive image of themselves when the stories they read reinforce passive and dependent roles?

The push on behalf of boys who struggle to exhibit an authentic self is equally compelling. It is the subject of the book, Real Boys, by William Pollack (1998, p. 146). He calls adolescence "the most perilous and confusing time in a boy's life." Boys, just as girls, have to feel cared about and need the curriculum to be relevant and appealing.

By knowing what we do about adolescent development, schools are better able to address this period of maturation and to assign appropriate modifications for the social and emotional skills of their adolescent students. "Caring is as much cognitive as it is affective" (Meier, 1995, p. 63). Solowdo (1999) asserts that virtually all behaviors in the classroom constitute emotional lessons that we teach students about the meaning of development (Solowdo, 1999). Those teachers and strategies that reach students on an emotional level are integral to helping adolescents avoid derailing during this critical period. James McGaugh at the University of California says that intense emotions trigger the release of chemicals, adrenaline, norepinephrine, and vasopressin. These chemicals signal the brain that the information is important and to hold on to it

(Hooper & Teresi, 1986). There is little doubt that emotions and meaning are linked. The systems are so interconnected that chemicals of emotion are released virtually simultaneously with cognition (LeDoux, 1996).

Imagination is an important component of emotional and cognitive growth. "The more energetic and lively the imagination, the more are facts constantly finding themselves in combinations and taking on new emotional colouring as we use them to think of possibilities, of possible worlds" (Egan, 1992, p. 50). Education, according to Egan, is much more than knowing a lot, it is "crucially about the meaning that knowledge has" on the individual.

Though good stories are often aired via television, television does not command the same level of engagement as reading. Television inhibits the reflective imagination process. Hannaford (1995) points out that television bombards viewers with a constantly changing stream of pictures, words, and movements that are too fast for the the young brain to assimilate. "The child is left passive without internal, mental, emotional, and physical involvement necessary for cognitive development" (Hannaford, 1995, p. 67). Reading relevant literature offers a different sensory experience to the learner. Readers are more actively and personally involved as they process the incoming narrative.

Social interaction connects to learning in different ways. Through communication, learners' prior knowledge intersects with the thinking of others, and new ideas are born. According to Kelly and Green (1998), the social nature of learning takes place in discourse. As individuals interact over time, they shape and are shaped by discourse. Essentially, we are social beings and our brains grow in a social environment (Kelly & Green, 1998). But we are not born with the ability to be communicative and emotionally expressive. These skills must be developed, experienced, and practiced. According to Jensen (1998), since meaning must be forged through socializing, the whole role of student-to-student discussion is vastly underused. Nancie Atwell states:

“Middle school students look for in school what matters in life; they don’t look at school as a place to *get ready* for what matters in life” (Atwell, 1998, p. 67). Learning needs to be connected to students’ interests, and students need to have opportunities to collaborate with and learn from one another. Goodlad’s study (1984) affirmed that two-thirds of students polled think the best thing about school is that it is the ideal place to meet and mix with peers. If socializing with peers is a high priority for adolescents, and as the research shows, adolescent learning is enhanced by it, why are schools restricting it? Adolescents can be active, talking and moving, and still be productively engaged in learning. There are ample, innovative strategies for the different stages of learning, opportunities and varieties of ways to discuss, present, and evaluate what is being read. For effective learning to take place, adolescents need to be more involved as participants in all of those processes. This active involvement is an important part of adolescent meaning-making. Training opportunities like these allow adolescents an apprenticeship experience into the autonomous world of adulthood.

Summary: Adolescence is a pivotal phase of human development. Schools need to design curricula that is sensitive to this stage in students’ lives. Unfortunately, in most cases, that is not the reality. Lessons that appeal to students’ emotions and imagination can enhance cognition. The research shows that adolescents have a high degree of reasoning power, and that they do benefit from activities which engage that natural attribute. Novels and activities which expose students to moral dilemmas can be instrumental in helping students shape a positive identity for themselves. Historical and realistic fiction novels provide humanistic stories which help to engage students intellectually as well as emotionally. Teachers can use stories to encourage students to be more communicative. As teachers help students attend to the experiences of a character’s quest, they are helping the student live with the character, so that they experience the essence of the character. It is in this way, that students can acquire one the greatest benefits of literature- the potential that it has for “exploration and

illumination of life that can confirm or extend one's own life's experiences." (Short & Pierce, 1996, p. 19).

(2) Examining the Textbook-Dominant History Classroom

Keep in mind the unique attributes of the adolescent learner which were detailed in the previous section as you consider the typical history middle school classroom environment. Remember, adolescents are antsy. It is hard for them to be still, to be quiet. They are looking for a challenge and an opportunity to interact, especially with their peers. They desire a chance to have a say, to claim some personal autonomy. These are priorities. Adolescents challenge traditions and authority. They want to know why they are asked to learn that which is required of them. The more disciplined individuals usually mold themselves into compliance. A few, more willful adolescents, take stock of the classroom agenda and pronounce it irrelevant and insignificant. Many of this group will end up on the academically disabled list. They become “unavailable” to learning. Their goal now is to find another, more engaging outlet for their adolescent stirrings.

Observations and conversations with social studies teachers confirm that most teachers rely heavily on the textbook. A typical middle or high school history class period begins with a set of instructions displayed on a board, an overhead projector screen, or a television monitor, such as.

Date: 4/2/01

- (1) Homework Check: Section 2 Comprehension Questions
- (2) Class work today: Section 3- Lecture and outline notes
- (3) Homework 4/2- Section 3- Review Worksheet
- (4) Chapter 5 test date- 4/21/01

Decades of studies show that entire social studies courses are organized around textbooks (Schug, Western, Enochs, 1998). All too often, the comments from American history students sound like:

“Why do we need to know this?”

“Social studies is boring.”

“Most everything I study leaves my brain right after the test.”

“There’s nothing in history that might help me in life.”

“It’s just a bunch of old, dead guys’ history.”

Most students at all grade levels reported that social studies was their most boring class (Sewell, 1988). The textbook was cited as the major cause, and recommendations were made to examine the materials used to teach history (1988).

While criticisms of textbook history abound, several resounding arguments stand out, and they will be addressed individually: (1) teachers perpetuate textbook reliance because (a) teachers lack adequate training in college to prepare for their role in the classroom, and (b) teachers are bombarded with other peripheral responsibilities like hall monitoring, advising, grading, extra-curricular activities, etc., whereby they are unable to adequately prepare for class, (2) history books are dull, voiceless, baskets of facts, devoid of conflict and emotion, (3) textbooks do little to enhance “mindfulness,” (4) textbooks are biased and flawed, and finally, (5) textbooks assume too much about students’ background knowledge

(1) Teachers perpetuate textbook reliance.

As a secondary teacher, with seventeen years of classroom experience, I can safely say, no matter what subject, the job of a middle school teacher is rife with challenges. Most teachers are far too busy to find the time to develop their own course outlines and readings (Loewen, 1995). There should be little doubt why some teachers remain textbook reliant. As weekly fast food meals become routine to the American family, even though we recognize the social time and nutritional compromises, so too has the textbook become indispensable to the social studies

teacher. The demands upon the teacher are incredible. Here are some of the challenges facing middle school social studies teachers, and by no means is this description complete. Most teachers lack adequate time for lesson preparation. They probably did not receive quality instruction in college which balanced subject-specific knowledge with pedagogy (Loewen, 1995). Adolescents, their problems, and all the stimulus that beckons their attention away from learning require that teachers be amateur psychologists or entertainers mainly to keep the students' focus, much less, to steer them toward critical thinking. Diversely mixed classes bring together students of different backgrounds, moods, abilities, and learning styles. There are constant interruptions to the class period. The rigid six or seven period day, shuffling six to seven classes in and out, makes creative activities difficult. Administrative demands and paperwork can be a burden. With time constraints and all these demands, teachers can afford little time to review student work and reflect upon their methods of teaching and instructional activities. Nevertheless, Loewen (1995, pp. 289-290) paints an unforgiving picture in the passage below of the textbook reliant history classroom, its teacher, and the students:

Relying on textbooks makes it easier for both parties, teachers and students, to put forth minimal effort. Textbooks' innumerable lists- of main ideas, key terms, people to remember, dates, skill activities, matching, fill in the blanks, and review identifications- which appear to be the bane of students' existence, actually have positive functions. These lists make the course content look rigorous and factual, so teachers and students can imagine that they are learning something. They make the teacher appear knowledgeable, whereas freer discussion might expose gaps in his/her information or intelligence. Lastly, these lists of items give students a sense of fairness about grading: performance on "objective" exams seeking recall of specific factoids is easy to measure. Thus lists reduce uncer-

tainty by conveying to students exactly what they need to know. Fragmenting history into unconnected "facts" also guarantees, however, that students will not be able to relate many of these terms to their own lives and will retain almost none of them after the six-weeks grading period.

And this is where the role of the teacher in the text-dominant classroom rests. The textbook does serve some purpose(s). As long as the textbook continues to address the deficits of time and preparation which beset teachers, it is a simple matter of economics, teachers will not demand any more adventurous instruction (Schug, Western, Enochs, 1998).

(2) History books are dull, voiceless, baskets of facts, devoid of conflict and emotion.

The "fairly consistent level of dullness" (Fitzgerald, 1979) found in textbooks is amplified by voids in explanations of ideas and elaboration of conflict details. White (Spring, 1990) summed up ten years of research in an issue of *Theory and Research in Social Education* with the conclusion: "textbooks are biased, bland, superficial, and dull." To investigate what makes the subject and text so dull, consider the property of "interestingness." Schank (1979) cited three rules for interestingness: an inherently interesting topic, unexpectedness, and personal relatedness. Consider the two passages below, which the author included in his study, to illustrate these concepts in different types of narrative. First, one from a middle school history text and then one from an historical fiction trade book:

Textbook version:

The British lawmaking body was and still is called Parliament. The colonists were not members. The British started passing laws to tax the colonies. Britain thought the colonies should pay their share of the cost of the French and Indian War. (Silver Burdett, 1984, p. 106)

Trade book version:

England had been fighting a long and expensive war,

and when it was over, the question was how to pay the bills. Finally, a government official suggested that one way to raise money was to tax Americans.

“What a good idea!” King George said. After all, the French and Indian part of the war had been fought on American soil for the benefit of American, so why shouldn’t they help pay for it? (Jean Fritz’s- Can’t You Make Them Behave, King George? 1977, p. 30)

It is the trade book account that will help adolescents make more sense of the tensions between the British and the colonists. Impending action looms. King George’s sentiment has been expressed. Paying bills and “calling in” on a debt owed are relevant and understandable issues to adolescents.

(3) Textbooks do little to enhance “mindfulness.”

Boredom is not the only offspring of the textbook dominant classroom. As teachers become focused on coverage, connections and elaborations to the events of history are sacrificed (Tomilson & Tunnell, 1993). “So long as one is determined to get through the book, no matter what, it is virtually guaranteed that most students will not advance toward genuine understanding of the subject at hand” (Gardner, 1999, p. 122).

The question is, are students learning history, or are they simply memorizing facts? Those die-hard textbook teachers could rightly counter with the question: “What do you expect? Isn’t history a discipline based on reading, writing, and discussing text?” The expository presentation of facts in history textbooks is not natural to young readers. A review of the brain-based research of the previous section reveals that students of this age need both prior knowledge and some degree of emotional attachment in order to fully engage with a text. Before printed narratives, “stories were the primary means for the oral transmission of a

people's history and for communicating the nature of their institutional structures, cultural practices, and spirituality. History and story were one" (Common, 1986, 246).

Textbooks are also considered by critics to be voiceless. A voiceless text, says Olson (1977, 1989), makes contact impersonal. If the reader and the writer become separated, the knowledge is detached from an identifiable source, and constructing new meaning may be impossible. In addition, when students fail to recognize authorship in reading textbooks, they also fail to note the reflective or interpretive stance of the writers.

Stories and interpretations of history can help students define who they are and their place in society. This is one of the great benefits of assigning engaging literature. The disconnected, fact-based narrative of the textbook, on the other hand, does little to engage the reader. I am painfully aware that in the minds of many of today's students, there is really only one reason for most students to read the text: to find answers to questions. As students settle for getting the job done, satisfied to get what they hope is the right answer, to score well on the test, to get good grades, to please teachers and parents, graduate, and move on, they are losing one of the most essential attributes to learning, engagement. As studies show, there is a correlation between an increase in the reliance on expository text as instructional methodology and a decrease in reading engagement after about fourth grade (Foertsch, 1992). Students are recognizing that they no longer need to be engaged to manipulate the school system. Sadly, they let go of their natural curiosity, an intrinsic motivation, and settle for what gets the job done in schools' extrinsic system: answers, test scores, and grades. Those students with the most competence and confidence, showed the most marked increase in extrinsic

motivation (Guthrie, 1999). Now, there's a discouraging example of how an unappealing curriculum misguides the creative genius of the adolescent learner. They have figured out a way to get promoted in school without exercising their minds too much.

Reading offers a different kind of experience, one that encourages more patience. Compelling literature increases personal involvement, altering the emphasis of the learning experience from that of a conquest to that of a process or journey. Often, there is an enduring connection between the story and the reader. Adolescent readers, like adults, who discover the pleasures of reading, sometimes are saddened when they come to the close of a good story. Whether adolescents invite or reject reading as a personal pastime may be influenced by the reading choices they are provided in school.

(4) Textbooks are biased and flawed.

A helpful textbook is hard to find. Teachers looking for a compelling narrative to teach American history will have to look far and wide without success (Bender, 1989). Even when modern textbooks try to correct some of the flaws, new problems arise. To begin, there is a conflict about whether history concerns representation or meaning. Historians, especially since the 1960's, have tried to include women, racial and ethnic groups, religious minorities, and people of all classes and conditions. Additional problems result from this revised and inclusive version of history. Textbooks which do include women, African Americans, Native Americans, immigrant laborers, often portray them as simply victims of the more powerful members of society, which, in the long run, ultimately denies those groups their full humanity (Gagnon, 1989). That practice means that readers lack any awareness as to how the events shaped those

involved. Rarely elaborated are the facts which recount how these groups reacted and what actions were taken to affect a change in their condition. Historical fiction, on the other hand, grounds its plots around this very theme, the struggles and triumphs of humanity.

Textbooks often omit controversial issues. Textbook content reflects the marketing demands and political climate of the publication period. For example, one recently published social studies series omitted any reference to Malcolm X and allotted only one paragraph to the Holocaust (Tunnell & Ammon, 1996). As Paulo Freire put it, "It would be extremely naive to expect the dominant classes to develop a type of education that would enable subordinate classes to perceive social injustices critically" (The Politics of Education, 1985, p. 102). Much of the material which is omitted from publication is the very substance that energizes adolescents in the study of history.

(5) Textbooks assume too much about students' background.

McKeown and Beck (1994), claim that textbooks assume an unrealistic depth and variety of students' background knowledge. In considering the issue of "no taxation without representation," for example, no text attempted to explain what it means to be represented in a government body. The texts assumed that students already had a full grasp of representative government. Kinder (1992) evaluated ten, eighth grade U.S. history textbooks, with respect to readability, coherence, questioning techniques, and vocabulary development. The results showed that the texts had a mean readability of 10.9, and only 30 percent provided review of previous chapters. Learning builds upon that which is familiar and interesting. But, textbooks too often assault students with abstractions outside their range of understanding or experience.

It should be apparent that textbook reliant classrooms raise serious issues about the quality of learning in history. But, what are the alternatives? I have found that historical fiction is a step in the right direction for offsetting some of the drawbacks associated with textbook history.

Summary: There are many reasons why textbooks should not be the exclusive tool of middle school history instructors. Those involved with teaching and learning history must be aware of the deficiencies associated with the textbook dominated classroom. History textbooks, chocked full of chronologically organized information, can be useful instructional tools. Teachers certainly rely on them. However, as a steady and singular diet, textbooks obstruct thinking, understanding and the enjoyment of learning history. The kind of narrative structure greatly affects learners' ability to engage deeply and comprehend the subject matter. Good teaching requires selecting materials that students can understand. Motivating adolescents necessitates instructional opportunities for students to explore their "personal curricula in the context of the public curriculum" (Guthrie and Alvermann, 1999, p. 12). The story narrative of historical fiction offers benefits which enliven learning and interest in history. "Personal response is crucial if meaningful connections with history are to occur. Such understanding goes beyond assigned textbook readings, traditional lectures, worksheets, and standard test formats" (Fuhler, 1991, p. 235). Literature helps stimulate discovery both in and out of the classroom. History can be explained more clearly and in more detail with stories (VanMiddendorp, 1990), as will be elaborated further in the next section.

(3) Literature in the History Classroom

“The brain is a story-seeking, story-creating instrument” (Smith, 1990, p. 62). This is especially true for adolescents.

Expository text narrative is contraindicated for the social and cognitive needs of the adolescent learner. The flat and impersonal narrative of most history texts may also be a death sentence to the adolescent student’s acquiring any genuine understanding or enjoyment of history as well. In order to proceed with the argument that historical and realistic fiction stories are a healthy supplement to the ailing history classroom, let me first establish what stories are and how they work to engage and enhance learning.

Frank Smith, in his book, To Think, provides this definition: “The key elements in every story are purpose and order. By *purpose*, I mean aims and intentions, at least on the part of the author and reader, and usually on the part of characters as well. Stories do things, and things are done in stories. By order I mean coherence- the parts are interlocked, with each other and with the actual or imagined reality in which the story takes place. A story is a world that can be entered and explored; it hangs together” (Smith, 1990, p.63). McEwan and Hunter, coeditors of Narrative in Teaching, Learning, and Research, assert several applicable connections that narrative has for education, which I will summarize. Narrative is a particular form which can also be called a story. As a story, narrative tells what is known about facts, theories, hopes, and or fears, not as a chronology or a list, but rather from the perspective of someone’s life and in the context of someone’s emotions (McEwan & Egan, 1995). Narrative continues to play a vital role in teaching and learning. For adolescent readers, they can connect affectively, meaning with some emotional

attachment, to the characters, the dilemma, and the events of the narrative. From the research we know that adolescent learning experiences with affective associations render more impact and longer-lasting recall (Jensen, 1996). When this happens, readers feel the joys or pains, the successes or failures of the character, and thus, the story has a greater impact on them. A sense of personal connection to narrative engages the emotions and allows readers to see themselves in the stories of others.

Good readers actively pursue meaning. They engage in an ongoing dialogue with the writer. Their minds are better trained to reflect on and persist in attempts to understand what they are reading. Other, less capable students don't want to read because they complain that the books that they are reading are "too hard" or "too boring." Many students, who may constitute examples of what Healy (1990) terms "the two-minute mind," are unschooled in persistence or reflection. "Children are indeed more motivated by real books than by many textbooks, as shown by the success of these programs in getting disaffected students turned back on to reading" (Healy, 1990, p. 302). The kind of narrative with which adolescents are presented is critically important in that it affects both their ability to construct meaning and to maintain reading engagement. Gardner (1999) claims that people of all ages find stories inviting and that the narratives activate the linguistic as well as the personal intelligences. Narrative history, unlike a textbook, provides a story context which helps adolescent students remain engaged and remember more historical detail. According to Gagnon (1989), story narrative is also best at teaching the thinking and analytical skills of the historian: "By starting with the stories of history the teacher is assured

that there will always be something to think about, something to analyze. The story is the raw material upon which the historian practices his or her craft, and students can learn to do this too, all the while keeping the story in its proper context and related to what went before and what was to follow" (p. 291).

It is through story that we make sense of life. "It is the way we remember events: in terms of stories. Without stories, there would be no events" (Smith, 1990, p. 64). Literature fills in the details about the period and the lives of common people who lived during the historic events. To contextualize, adolescents need richer detail than textbooks can provide. Stories contextualize, providing a more complete picture of events and, as such, serve to develop students' global understanding of the environment and time period, providing an anchor for larger events (Goldstein, 1989). When students remember the human adventure of the story, they are better able to recall more of the details of the history. Also, by sticking with the stories of history, Gagnon (1989) points out, teachers, most likely, will have to cut back on the scope (reduce the breadth and the quantity of details and allow more depth and discussion). If history instruction is to become more than a survey course, adolescents need opportunities to think critically and delve deeper into events for their moral and political implications. As the research shows, in adolescence, reasoning ability blossoms, as does a developing sense of morality (Kohlberg, 1964, Huck, 1997). Pronouncing indictments on people and events in history supports this emerging adolescent trait and livens up history. Historical fiction naturally provides an humanistic slant, and thus, it is ideally suited to invite adolescent inquiry and moral posturing.

"One of the most striking features of children's response to

historical literature in each of the studies was the frequency with which they explained their interest in historical topics in terms of 'needing to know' about a topic, of 'wanting to learn the truth,' or 'what really happened' "(Levstik, 1990, p. 850). A tour through any bookstore, such as Barnes and Noble, and a look at the display tables within a month after the premiering of the movie Titanic could provide clear evidence of the "need to know" following a compelling story. While eighth grade students will question the historical accuracy of a novel, they rarely question the accuracy of a textbook. The concern is that adolescents regard textbook accounts of history as the undisputed truth.

As noted earlier in this study, students at all grade levels reported that social studies was their most boring class. The textbook was cited as a major cause, and recommendations were made to examine the materials used to teach history. Many reading researchers "staked a claim" (Van-Sledright & Franks, 1998, p. 130) that historical fiction and nonfiction trade books were the answer. Research observations and classroom experiments confirm the affective rewards of using literature to support curricular studies (Guzzetti, 1992, Calfee, 1987).

What is historical fiction?

"In historical fiction worthy of the name, facts will serve the stories and the stories, if valid as fiction, will establish human and social circumstances in which the interaction of historical forces may be known, felt, and observed" (Blos, 1993, p. 13). Historical fiction is not intended to teach only the historical facts, but it can provide students with palatable aspects of the historical experience. Through story, adolescents have a better chance of constructing cause and effect markers, of getting a handle on who did what to whom. With expository history texts, students can

confirm the accuracy of a story and extend their understanding of the history with greater detail. Both textbooks and historical fiction serve a purpose in the teaching and learning of history. The either/or mentality, Blos (1993) states, is what gets educators into trouble. It is not recommended that all facts and memorization be taught without a contextual framework. Neither is it valuable to study the human experience through literature without factual support.

Theoretical claims supported by research:

There is a correlation between an increase in the reliance on expository text as instructional methodology and a decrease in reading engagement after about fourth grade (Foertsch, 1992). Historical fiction has the potential to offset this downward slide in reading engagement (Coffey & Howard, 1997). Great literature evokes emotions, such as fondness, sadness, and anger, which helps to foster reader engagement. While the history text details significant information, carefully selected, powerful historical fiction novels often provide gut-wrenching, heart pounding, throat-tightening, soul-aching engagement (Sledright & Frankes, 1998).

Empathy-

Students of history need to be able to perceive the past as those who lived during that time period. Studies by Downey and Levstik (1988) show that given good narrative, even young children can access this sense. However, another study by Levstik (1986) revealed that one group of sixth grade students identified so strongly with the story characters that students' ability to critically question the characters' behavior was impaired. A worthy antidote was observed by Ellis (1990), who reported in a similar study that assigning students to discussion groups helped to

encourage positive and productive discussion about what was read and what was important to learn from the reading.

In depth-

Studies by Monson, Howe, and Greenlee (1989) reported that novels provided more depth and offered students better answers to questions about how people lived than history texts. Smith (1993) compared the conceptual understanding of upper elementary students in an experimental literature-based social studies classroom to that of students using only the social studies text. According to the study, students in the experimental group could recall about 60 percent more information (Smith, 1993).

Making connections-

Beck and McKeown (1991) found that quality trade books supply adequate details for learners to make causal connections to sequence important ideas. Harms and Lettow (1993) state that children extend their grasp of the personalities and events that have shaped the world as they read engaging literary accounts presented from multiple perspectives. "By plunging vicariously into the experiences of fictional young people—building a sod house on the Nebraska prairie, following the North Star with a bold band of escaping slaves, traveling in steerage from rural Russia to urban America, or parachuting into enemy territory after a B-17 has been shot down, students will find history coming to life" (Coffey & Howard, 1997, p. xiv). From this vantage point, teachers can lead students to the critical inquiry necessary for historical understanding, to help them make connections between the past and present, and to invite the airing of personal perspectives with regard to the pros, cons, responsibilities, and consequences of choices for themselves and others. Adolescents get

to see how characters deal with personal values and institutions, and how they relate with others in similar situations. One of the most important connections that adolescent students must make and a social studies standard is that students be able to identify the past's shaping influence on the present. Stories of the past help define who we are, how we came to be, and what we believe in. They give us a sense of where we belong. These stories help us understand "the ideas that have molded us, and the ideals that have mattered to us," functioning as a "civic glue"(Cheney, 1987). The connection to the lives of characters in stories gives adolescents a better sense that they are a part of a country's past.

Citizenship skill building.

Historical and realistic fiction novels can be a natural source to convey the tools of citizenship to adolescents. Readers can see how characters confront choices that affect the welfare of others. The characters are concerned about and involved in their society. The issues of the twenty-first century are disturbing: poverty, racism, violence, and hostility. Washington State University Professor, Eileen Oliver (1995) believes that we can do something about the disturbing state of affairs that affects our nation, and that "we can do it, in part, through the voices that emerge through literary texts" (Oliver, 1995, p. 49). She believes that we use stories with lessons from the past to bring about a better future.

If experts use it, literature may make young readers more expert.

Obviously, students will have to read more to advance their reading and thinking capability. Experts become good at what they do by repeatedly challenging themselves (Bereiter & Scardemalia, 1993). Pressley and Afferbach (1995) extended this argument to the area of reading. When readers are pushed to read increasingly difficult material,

there is an increase in the level of historical competence, motivation to learn, and reading engagement (Pressley and Afferbach, 1995).

Understanding diversity-

Historical and realistic fiction stories offer lessons about people from various time periods and diverse cultural backgrounds. Norton (1990) found that students who read multicultural literature demonstrate an elevated sense of social sensitivity and awareness to the needs of others. Harris (1997) praises multicultural literature for its five benefits.

Literature can:

- (1) provide knowledge or information,
- (2) change the way students look at their world,
- (3) promote or develop an appreciation for diversity,
- (4) give rise to critical inquiry, and

(5) for its own sake, furnish enjoyment and illuminate the human experience (Harris, 1997, pp. 4-5). Ceprano and English (1990) noted that young people go through a process of relating to story characters. They first identify with, then internalize and empathize with, the main characters and ultimately with real people as they try to cope with cultural differences and resolve the dilemmas forced upon the characters.

Research evidence:

Jones, Coombs, and McKinney (1994) studied two sixth grade classes for two weeks. Both classes were taught a unit about Mexico. One class relied strictly on the school text. The other class incorporated nonfiction literature. Pretest, post test, and attitude assessments were employed. The literature-enhanced class study included collaborative group discussions and project presentations. Results (Jones et al., 1994) indicated significant gains in achievement and attitude by the literature-

enhanced class.

In a similar study, again with sixth graders, Guzzetti, Kowalinski, and McGowan (1992), in a five week project on the topic of China, compared two classes, one text-based, the other incorporating 42 trade books, fiction and nonfiction. The trade books were selected on the basis of appeal, unit theme, and correlation to the district standards. Students were allowed to choose which books they wanted to read. Activities and discussions in the literature-based class reinforced important concepts and skills to be learned. Results demonstrated comparatively higher gains in content and skills acquisition in the literature-based class. The authors were surprised however, to note a lack of improvement in the students' attitude toward social studies. Subsequent interviews with student participants in the group revealed that students did not see the unit as social studies since a traditional text was not used.

VanSledright and Kelly (1998) examined the way one fifth grade teacher made use of a standard American history text along with varieties of other literature. For six months, observations were noted as students considered what sources to use in preparation for a research project. Among the findings of that study, two are important to note. First, adolescent learners, if given a choice will select narratives other than textbooks. Second, unless guided otherwise, students rarely question sources used by an author or author perspective. The authors of this study concluded that students need explicit teacher instruction as to how to read different texts (VanSledright & Kelly, 1998).

Political correctness:

Historical accuracy is not the only issue in using historical novels. Gender and cultural authenticity also matter. Even the most conscientious

teachers may find that putting together a fair and culturally representative, historical library is a tough task. For example, Ernst, (1995) in a review of the Horn Book Guides for 1992-1993, found that boys were represented 640 times, whereas girls were represented 354. Girls are still more likely to be stereotyped as passive, naive, cute, princesses, or spinsters (Ernst, 1995, p. 70). Regarding multiculturalism, Bishop (1997) advises teachers to select works that reflect diversity: "prompt students to ask questions about who we are now as a society and how we arrived at our present state, and to inspire them [students] to actions that will create and maintain social justice" (p. 19).

Summary:

There are variables affecting the efficacy of the literature / history integration. Some researchers resist literature as a cure for the ills that plague the social studies curriculum. Hellenbrand (1988) expressed reservations about using literature to *liven up* the study of history. Using literature in this way demeans or trivializes an artistic work. On the other hand, Alleman and Brophy (1994) pointed out that without giving students a clear understanding of what historical literacy entails, teachers inadvertently trivialize the standards and purposes of social studies.

Students will need help sorting out fact-based accounts from fictionalized versions. Skeptics of literature/ social studies integrative programs point to the potential that literature has for creating wholly inaccurate illusions about history. Proponents of the integration are enthusiastic that great stories will lead to essential skills of historical inquiry. Students, the proponents agree, will ask *why* and *want to know more*. Investigators will find evidence for both arguments. Teacher mediation and related class activities significantly contribute to the

outcome.

At present, there is a need for more empirical evidence of research integrating literature into the social studies curriculum at the secondary level. Social studies teachers will pay greater attention to research studies that originate from the social sciences, as opposed to reading and language specialists. They worry about the limited amount of time given to history in the curricular schedule. Squeezing in any new instructional model may be a hard sell, unless the results from successful programs of implementation are documented and shared. Considering the studies which do exist, the number of convincing arguments for literature-based social studies instruction far outweighs the research to the contrary. In the meantime, careful instructional planning and mediation by teachers can be the deciding effectiveness factor. Oliver (1995) notes that it is the teachers' responsibility to offer students the best literature possible, so that students will have a rich experience and "find a way to identify with the cultural models they read about, and will learn about the lives of others through the vicarious experience that reading provides" (p. 50).

(4.0) Quantitative Research Study

(4.1) Background Demographics

(4.2) Problem Statement and Target Group Identification

(4.3) Methods

(4.4) Results, Data, Discussion

What are the benefits of supplementing the eighth grade American History curriculum with historical and realistic fiction books? Would literature supplementation enhance adolescent interest in history, aid in the retention of historical detail or help students develop historical empathy? Would students be able to see connections between the past and the present? These skills are identified as historical understandings, habits of historical thinking, and perspectives that prepare students for the challenges of active citizenship in the future (Crabtree & Nash, 1992). Those same skills are included in the standards set by the National Council for the Social Studies. Logically, these were the questions investigated in the quantitative research study which follows. Two, similar, year-long, eighth grade American history classes were surveyed, tested, and compared, in order to determine the effect of supplementing the history textbook with historical and realistic fiction literature.

(4.1) Background Demographics

The research site is located in Southwest Florida. The community has a population of 357,550, as of 1993. Population growth between 1980 and 1990 was 63.3% (ranking tenth in the nation). The geographic area of the region is 804 square miles. The county has 238 square miles of water.

In 1993, 63% of the population lived in unincorporated areas. In 1993, 92% of the county population was white and 8% was nonwhite. In 1990, 76.9% of the county were high school graduates, and 16.4% had completed four or more years of college. The median household income in 1987 was \$28,000. In 1989, 6.1% had incomes below the poverty level. In 1992, the greatest number of persons employed in this community were employed in the retail trade, services, and government sectors. In 1992, there were 517 farms, totaling 106,721 acres (21% of the land in the county).

At present, there are a total of sixty-eight schools in the county. Seven are high schools, twelve are middle schools, and twenty-eight are elementary schools. Other schools include nine district magnet schools, seven special centers, two high tech centers, three K-8 grade schools and one 6-12 grade school. The total student enrollment for the 1999-2000 school year was 56,919. Total female population for K-12 is 27,197. Total male population equals 28,875. The breakdown by race is white- 37,751, black- 8,793, Hispanic- 8,034, Asian- 603, Indian- 165, and multiracial- 726.

Students attending schools in this community come from diverse backgrounds. Some reside in areas of high income, barrier island, security gated neighborhoods, some are from communities of modest or moderate income, and some reside in project apartments, or migrant worker, transient communities. The school district has in place a policy of

school choice. In February, parents make application to the school district for placement in the school of choice for their child. Students whose families did not make application are assigned to the school in their geographic area.

The project site is a public middle school with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade levels. Students attend according to residence (48%) in the assigned geographic area or apply by choice. Fifty-two percent of the school is designated as a magnet school with a focus on the performing and creative arts. Each year, students try out for placement in either the beginning, intermediate, or advanced levels of the magnet program. The magnet program consists of dance, band, orchestra, drama, art, and video-technology programs. For the past four years, this school has had to place students on an enrollment waiting list. The total population for the year 1999-2000 was 1048, with equal population divisions at each of the three grade levels. Minority populations were 28.2%. Students on free and reduced lunch totaled 37%. Six percent of the students were classified as limited English proficient (LEP). There are sixty-two faculty members teaching full-time. Ten percent of the faculty are minority and ninety percent are white. Twenty-four percent of the project site faculty is male, and seventy-six percent is female.

Due to the magnet focus and mixed-ability / mixed-grade-level integration of students in the magnet classes, block scheduling is not possible. Each school day consists of six, fifty-five minute classes. Students take a core group of four academic classes and two elective classes. Language arts, science, math, and social studies form the academic core. Physical education, health, dance, art, music, drama, home economics, audio-visual, and technology classes comprise the elective

options. Remedial reading students forgo one of the elective options, and in some cases social studies is also eliminated to add a second hour to remedial reading instruction. Low level readers are required to take one or two-hour blocks of remedial reading until achievement test scores improve. Students in the gifted program receive one class period of gifted instruction through social studies.

The sample groups for this study consisted of two, eighth-grade American history classes. American history, which lasts the entire year, is taught daily and is fifty-five minutes in length. Both classes are made up of heterogeneously mixed eighth-graders. Neither class contained any students in the remedial reading or gifted programs, as described in the preceding paragraph. Further details about each class will be described in the next section.

The researcher has been a social studies teacher at the project site since 1996. An additional assignment includes serving as Social Studies Academic Coach for the middle school. All sixteen years of teaching experience have been in the county, at the secondary level, in either social studies or science. Three years were spent teaching high school social studies, and thirteen years of experience came from the middle school level. A Bachelor of Arts degree was earned from a mid-western university, with a major in political science and a minor in adolescent psychology. Secondary social studies teaching certification was achieved through a southwestern Florida university. This research project is the crux and final product of a Master of Arts degree program offered through Skidmore College, a liberal arts college in the northeastern United States.

(4.2) Problem Statement And Target Group Identification

A discrepancy gap exists between what students know about history and what researchers have established as essential understandings that all students should possess. Diane Ravitch, Paul Gagnon, and the authors of the Bradley Commission on History in Schools, conducted research which (a) identified weaknesses in the instruction and learning of history, and (b) discussed the natural interdependence of literature and history to foster historical and cultural literacy.

The two classes of the study are identified as **Class WW**-without supplementation of historical or realistic fiction novels and **Class HF**- with historical fiction supplementation. Both classes met five days per week for fifty-five minute periods each day. Both classes were year-long classes. Neither class contained any students in the Gifted program or the Remedial Reading program. Both classes used the same text, The Story of America (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1991). The teacher in class WW has ten years of classroom experience. The teacher in Class HF has sixteen years of experience. Both teachers are veterans in the field of social studies at the secondary level. Table 1 shows the comparison in class size, minority, and free/reduced lunch data of the target groups.

Table 4.1

A Comparison of Racial Backgrounds of Students at the Research Site

	WW	HF
Total # of students	28	30
Total # of minority	25%	27%
Students on Free/ Reduced Lunch	14%	20%

Class WW had a ratio of 15 females to 13 males. Class HF had a ratio of 14 females to 16 males. Table 2 shows the grade point average for each of the two classes. Five students in Class WW had grade point averages (GPA) at or above 3.5. Four students in Class WW had GPA's below 2.0. The average GPA for Class WW was 2.62. Five students in Class HF had GPA's at 3.5 or higher. Six students in Class HF had GPA's of less than 2.0. The average GPA for Class HF was 2.55.

Table 4.2

Distribution and Comparison of Grade Point Averages

	WW	HF
GPA at or above 3.5	14%	14%
Average GPA	2.62	2.55
GPA below 2.0	14%	20%

In addition to grade point averages, the project site participates voluntarily in Grade Level Testing for reading and math, and mandatorily in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for reading, writing, and math. The Level Test provides comparison data for the project site with national averages. The FCAT compares students of the project site with other students at the same level within Florida. Tables 3 and 4 reflect that information for the reading results of each test.

Table 4.3
Grade 8 Level Test for Reading- 2000

	WW	HF
Level 1 0-25%	0	0
Level 2 25-75%	79%	80%
Level 3 75-100	21%	20%

Note that the majority (approximately 80%) in both WW Class and in HF Class scored in the Level 2 range, at 25-75% of the national average for reading. On the FCAT, for the reading test section, the majority of students in both target groups scored in the Level 3 range, at the 30-70% ranking with students in the state of Florida. An equal number of students in each of the target groups scored in the 70-90% range on the FCAT reading section.

Table 4.4
Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)
for 8th Grade Reading

	WW	HF
Level 1 0-10%	0	0
Level 2 10-30%	0	0
Level 3 30-70%	79%	77%
Level 4 70-90%	21%	20%
Level 5 90-100%	0	3%

Both classes were given a pretest at the beginning of the school year. On that seventeen-question test, which covered questions relating to the pre-colonial period through the period of reconstruction, Class WW out

scored Class HF by an average of ten percent. Six questions on the test queried the historical attitudes of students. Table 5 displays the average scores on the pretest (shown as a percent) along with the results of the historical attitudes questions.

Table 4.5

Results:

American History Pretest and Attitude Survey

	WW	HF
# of historical fiction books read last year	0-1	0-1
Pretest knowledge avg.	45%	36%
Believed past did not connect to present or future	71%	77%
Could not relate to the plight of others (historical empathy)	57%	63%
Prefer history as a story	86%	80%
Confident as problem solver (examples: racism, poverty)	75%	80%

(4.3) Methods

The teachers of the two American history classes met to construct a multiple choice, knowledge and attitude assessment instrument. See Appendix C: *American History Survey and Questionnaire*, which was utilized as the pretest. What Do Our Seventeen Year-Olds Know?, the study by Ravitch and Finn (1987), served as a guide in the creation of the American history content questions. The Ravitch and Finn study cites some of its test questions. The answer choices for the test questions, however, are not included. Therefore, a decision was made by the instructors of this study to vary the degree of difficulty in each question through the multiple choice answer options. Approximately one-half of the questions were at the level of literal comprehension or recall of basic facts (e.g., Who was the commander of the American army in the American Revolution?). The remainder of the questions required higher order thinking (e.g., analogies and *all of the above/none of the above* type questions). The tests were scored and set aside. There was no discussion with the students about their scores or right or wrong answers on this pre-study assessment. The same instrument was administered at end of the study as the post test.

Attitude:

In addition to determining the total number of historical fiction books that students had read the preceding year, five questions at the end of the content assessment survey addressed students' perceptions about history, narrative, and confidence as problem-solvers attending to social issues. All of the questions attempted to measure students' responses on an interval level. Three of the questions were Likert-like (i.e., strongly

agree to strongly disagree) and two were semantic differential (i.e., very empathetic to none at all).

The instructional strategy for Class WW, the control or text-based class, was to adhere as closely as possible to the plan laid out by the teacher's manual of the school-adopted text. Readings, lesson activities, assignments, and chapter exams originated from the teacher's manual and other supplementary teacher materials included with the text instructional packaging. The instructor of Class WW was enthusiastic about his inclusion in this study. He stated that he was comfortable with his level of knowledge and interest in the subject of American history. The instructor of Class WW admitted that he rarely utilized cooperative group activities in his class, citing class management as the concern. However, he often allowed students to work in pairs and welcomed large group discussions. These discussions regularly invited students to become aware of the past's shaping influence on students' own lives and on society. Students in this class had to complete two major projects: (1) a History Day project in the first semester and (2) a biography reading, accompanied by an in-character role play presentation for the second semester.

It was agreed that both classes in the study would submit to impromptu observations conducted by either a student, a faculty member, or an administrator. The observer was to record the class activity, general student response to the activity, and the number of times students were observed off-task.

Class HF, supplementing the curriculum with historical fiction novels, followed the teacher manual format for the school-adopted text with several modifications. Instructional time was split between allotments for historical fiction reading and related activities and time

given to the text content. Of the approximately 250 minutes of total weekly instructional time permitted, 100 minutes in Class HF were reserved for historical fiction. Much of the text content was periodically delivered in summarized notes, visually, via overhead projection, and orally in a story-like narrative by the HF teacher. Students in the HF setting took the text-based chapter tests.

In the selection of the historical fiction novels, the teacher of Class HF followed the approach by Reutzell and Cooter (1992) for conducting a Themed Literature Unit (TLU). Four themed units, one for each quarter of the school year, were identified using the reference, America as Story (Coffey & Howard, 1997) and correlated to the major units of study in the text: (1) Colonial America, (2) The American Revolution and the New Nation, (3) The Civil War and Reconstruction, (4) Westward Expansion and the Native American Response. At the beginning of each nine-week quarter, students received a book list noting the title, reading level, number of pages and a brief synopsis of the plot of each book. On a written prompt, they were advised to rank order their top three book preferences. From the student responses, groups were established ranging in size from three to seven. In the first two units (corresponding to quarter one and quarter two), students read their books independently. With the exception of a few students, the 3 sessions of 20 minutes (each) per week permitted adequate time for students to complete the required reading assignments within the nine-week quarter. The instructor reviewed procedures for cooperative group work. Students met once per week in their respective book groups for 30 minutes. Groups collaborated to identify and share with one another those events in the novel which reflected actual and significant events in American

history, and those events which they believed had relevance to the present. Often this required substantiation with the text and other references. Periodically, as an accountability check, book quizzes were given. Sometimes these were taken independently; sometimes they were taken collaboratively as a group. At the conclusion of the reading, students were required to make a class presentation that incorporated the skills and content learned. The manner of presentation was the decision of the group. Some groups used panel discussions/ talk shows, dramatic performance, and some used posters, charts, and lecture. Three-panel project backboards, accompanied by models were also popular. Some groups created video documentaries. All group presentations had to meet the instructors' three specifications for the presentation: (1) each group member had to demonstrate active participation, (2) the highlights of the plot had to be revealed, and (3) evidence of supplementary research, with primary and secondary sources cited, had to be provided. This format was followed for three quarters. In quarters three and four, groups and the students in the groups, took turns reading aloud to one another. During the second semester, the amount of time allotted to historical fiction study increased. In the third quarter, the 100 minutes of instructional time was increased to 125 minutes, and in the fourth quarter, the time allotted for historical fiction was increased to 150 minutes. For the fourth quarter exhibition, the collaborative historical fiction book groups were required to create their own historical fiction stories and share those with the class.

Class HF also completed a History Day project for the first semester.*

*Information regarding History Day can be found on the internet at: <http://thehistorynet.com/NationalHistoryDay/2000>

(4.4) Results, Data, Discussion

Class HF (supplementing with historical fiction) and Class WW (text-based group -without historical fiction) took the same unit tests, covering chapters 1-17 in the school adopted American history text. Four unit tests, covering approximately four chapters each were given, at the end of each quarter. Table 4.6 displays a comparison of the quarterly class test averages.

Table 4.6

Results:

Comparison of the class averages for unit test scores per quarter

	WW	HF
Quarter 1 (Chpt.'s 1-4)	79%	84%
Quarter 2 (Chpt.'s 5-8)	81%	83%
Quarter 3 (Chpt.'s 9-12)	80%	84%
Quarter 4 (Chpt.'s 13-17)	83%	85%

Though the amount of instructional time allotted for text-based study in the historical fiction class was substantially less than that which was provided in the text-based class, the students in the historical fiction class consistently outscored the students in the text-based class on the unit tests.

The observations and anecdotal records revealed several distinctions between the two classes. The historical fiction class exhibited much less dependence on teacher direction. The teacher had greater flexibility to engage informally in small group discussions with the cooperative book groups. The atmosphere of the historical fiction class was termed more active and engaging. Two of the school's

administrators who periodically visited both classes documented that there was less *off-task* behavior with the historical fiction class. Objections were voiced by a few students in the historical fiction class as to why their class had to read more than the WW class. A few parents complained about the supplemental reading obligation in the HF class. The teacher of the HF class assuaged those concerned with the reminder that some of the text reading had been summarized into mini lectures, therefore, the amount of time spent reading in each of the classes was about equal. On the other hand, some students in the historical fiction class seemed to enjoy the historical fiction reading enough to ask the teacher and/or the school librarian for suggestions for future, independent reading. Students regularly signed out historical novels for weekends, vacations and as a personal choice during silent reading periods in other subject classes. Table 4.7 depicts the content knowledge and attitudinal comparatives for the pretest and post test assessments of the two groups.

Table 4.7

Comparatives: Pre and post test assessment for attitude and content

Class WW (without supplementation)		Class HF (with historical fiction)	
Pretest score	Post test score	Pretest score	Post test score
Recognizes the past connection to the present. Checked	strongly agree.		
29%	7%	23%	47%
Percent of students who lacked empathy for the plights of others.			
57%	50%	63%	20%
Content assessment			
45%	64%	36%	73%

The class (WW), without historical fiction supplementation, demonstrated a decline with regard to seeing the connection of the past's shaping influence on the present. The class supplementing with historical fiction demonstrated a 43% increase in an ability to empathize with the condition and plight of others. Content knowledge gains were also more significant with the historical fiction class. Nine percentage points separate the two classes in the post test: however, also noteworthy is the increase from pretest to post test. The historical fiction class rose 37%, whereas the class without supplementation rose only 19%. The post test scores were somewhat disappointing. Subsequent interviews with five students randomly selected from each of the classes revealed that students found the answer options of the test questions too difficult to differentiate. Yet most students could provide pertinent details to the test question which was missed. Interesting differences were detected in students' manner of response. To demonstrate this point, consider one of the questions on which most students erred. The instructional differences between the two classes were reflected in the individual responses. The following is an apt example from the pretest/ post test (question #7).

“Checks and balances:”

- a. are a major focus of the Articles of Confederation
- b. divide powers among the branches of the federal government
- c. are covered in Article I, II, and III of the United States Constitution
- d. B and C

Most students in both classes knew that “checks and balances” had something to do with the different branches of government maintaining a check on one another. They also recalled that the Articles of Confederation were too weak. The interviewees of the text-based class could identify certain features found in Articles I, II, and III of the United

States Constitution. But, they did not see those details as applicable to “checks and balances.” Some of the interviewees of the historical fiction group were fuzzy on the details contained in the articles, but they knew that the three articles together defined the governmental procedures of the United States. Additionally, the students from the historical fiction class were hard-pressed to recount background anecdotes related to the Constitutional Convention. Regarding the Constitutional Convention, Lauren, a student from the historical fiction class recalled the details in the passage included below. Lauren had read the historical fiction, 1787 (Anderson, 1987) and sounded like an insider as she spoke:

Benjamin Franklin was so revered that even though he was ill and old, he was *carried* in to the daily meetings. Not all of the states were represented. Rhode Island boycotted. Bad weather forced several states’ delegates to arrive as much as two weeks late. That allowed those that arrived on time to rally support for their plans. The issue of states’ rights almost caused a civil war before the constitution was ever ratified.

To single out historical fiction is not to say that other genres do not have the same potential to enhance content acquisition and affectively connect students to the disciplined study of history. Nonfiction, biographies, poetry, even picture books, can all contribute to purposeful study. Nor is this study intended to persuade teachers to eliminate the textbook. The textbook is a viable instructional component of the American history curriculum. Historical fiction as a genre proved to be the most prudent first step intervention into the textbook-dominated classroom. The historical fiction novels selected for this study were easily blanketed within the NCSS standards and the unit themes. The stories, all about the same number of pages in length, captivated the interest of most of the students and enticed them to question and confirm the veracity of the details. With historical fiction, students could possess a sense of “being

there.”

See Table 4.8 on page 60 for the *End of the Year Results* chart and the Appendix, pages A-D to view the summary data table and related graphs of this research. The study findings reveal the effect of historical fiction on content acquisition and students’ attitudes toward history. The text-based class (Class WW), began the study with a higher pretest score. However, in the post test results, Class WW scored ten percent below the class supplementing with historical fiction novels. Also noteworthy, Table 4.8 (page 60) clearly displays a disparity in the historical attitudes or affective connections of the groups. After a year of American History, Class WW student survey responses indicated that 50% of the students remained unable to achieve a sense of historical empathy. Only seven percent of the students in Class WW strongly agreed that the events of the past related to the present. Whereas, in the historical fiction class (Class HF), 47% of students *strongly agreed* that the past connected to the present. With regard to historical empathy, the historical fiction class demonstrated a 43% change from pretest to post test. The result is that only 20% of Class HF students stated that they were unable to empathize. Two ancillary factors were also examined and depicted in the chart. In the first case, students strongly agreed that history is more interesting when told as a story, and in the second case, students expressed confidence in their ability to address societal problems such as poverty, racism, and crime. The students’ perceptions in both classes were relatively unchanged during the year with regard to these two issues. The pretest and post test assessment results were too close to glean any substantial impact resulting from the study. Problem solving, in particular, as a learned skill, and as a benefit correlated to supplementation with historical fiction, requires further

study. Page 61 presents a chart that lists other outcomes that may or may not be a direct result of the integration of historical fiction in the HF class. Because students in the Historical Fiction Class are more accustomed to discussing narrative, they seem to be less likely to resist engaging with new material as it is presented to them. The fact that some narrative may be incomprehensible was not routinely perceived by the students in the HF class as indicative of their own deficiency or inadequacy. This was not the case with the WW class. Student success in the HF class in activities like role plays, and in particular, History Fair projects, seems to have a connection to the interest which was peaked by the particular historical fiction book that students read.

Table 4.8
End of Year Results

Comparison WW- Class without Historical Fiction to HF-Class with Historical Fiction
Supplementation

	WW	HF
Factors		
Number of students	28	30
Minority	7	8
Average GPA	2.62	2.55
Mean knowledge score	64%	73%
Median #of historical fiction books read	1-2	3-5
Recognizes past as connection to the present:		
Strongly agree	7%	47%
Probable	75%	43%
Probably not or Strongly disagree	18%	10%
Historical empathy rating:		
Strong connection	7%	30%
Somewhat concerned	43%	50%
Rarely concerned or none at all	50%	20%
Number of students who felt history would be more interesting and could be remembered better if told as a story	93% Strongly agreed or checked probably	97% Strongly agreed or checked probably
Level of confidence in problem-solving ability		
Very confident	22%	35%
Pretty sure of myself	70%	55%
Little confidence	6%	8%
None	2%	2%

Table 4.9- Additional Outcomes

Treatment	Results	Results
	Without historical fiction WW Class	With historical fiction HF Class
(1) Role play simulations: Loyalists v. Patriots (Revolutionary War) + Town Hall Meeting: Perspectives on Slavery (Civil War Simulation)	Students memorized or relied on notes to portray characters in the simulation; not much ad lib Ran out of things to say.	Character portrayals were richer. Students were more animated and true to character. Hard to wind activities to a close.
(2) History Fair Project	72% completion	97% completion: many projects related to events, themes, and/or characters from historical fictions
(3) Primary Source Readings	Disliked primary source readings Comprehension scores avg. 70% Complained that the readings were too hard.	Less resistant to readings. Enjoyed some more than others. Scores avg. 80% or higher. Students more confident about handling more difficult material, for example: The Declaration of Independence or T. Paine's <i>Common Sense</i> .
(4) Journal Writings	Not used	Students freely referred to fiction readings in reference to historic period being studied.
(5) Observations notes by administration indicate both classes are studying the same material at the same time.	More dependent on the teacher and the text. Less discussion. Slightly higher incidence of off-task behavior. Whole group instruction.	Students expressed more of their own opinions and ideas about history. Livelier, more commotion. Some variety of groups & tasks.

(5) Recommendations

First and foremost, remember the unique characteristics of adolescents. Self-discovery, challenging traditions, and debating dilemmas are trademarks of this age group. Fire it up! Relax the impulse to be in charge. With literature integration, I have found that the best strategy is sometimes to take a step back, listen, feel, and see what happens. Think more about good questions than about good answers. As Phillips (2001) claims in his intriguing new book, Socrates Cafe: "It is virtually impossible to know what we believe in daily life until we engage others in dialogue" (p. 22). What adolescents need then is to practice "mindfulness," which means "engaging deeply in what is being learned and what is being taught" (Leinhardt, 1994, p. 213). That is one of the great missing pieces in text-dominant history instruction.

The very qualities that make literature so compelling can also produce an instructional nightmare. The potential for controversy exists. Communicating to parents, students, and the administration, the research-backed rationale of supplementing the history curriculum with literature can go a long way in averting criticism and resistance. Remind those involved with curricular decisions why stories in social studies are beneficial. Common (1986, p. 246), points out that there are four reasons why stories need to be part of social studies: (1) stories give us clues as to how we should react emotionally about historical events and the people who were involved in them, (2) reality is more easily faced through stories, (3) stories have an end and therefore are innately satisfying, (4) teachers and students will have a shared experience.

Erickson and Neufeld (1996) claim that teachers rarely choose literature with social studies goals and concepts in mind. Consequently,

significant connections to a topic which could have been made are often missed. Look for instructional models that do incorporate social studies standards. Singleton (1992), lists eight social studies standards. With each standard, she pairs up appropriate novels. Ravitch & Finn (1987), in What Do Our Seventeen-Year-Olds Know, allocate at least ten pages of discussion addressing the issue of history supported by literature. Banks (1998), has put together an engaging study for secondary history students entitled, "From Hiroshima to Homer Simpson: Using Literature to Confront the Impact of Nuclear Energy." All of the realistic and historical fiction books are correlated to NCSS Standard 8: Science, Technology, and Society. Certainly the Homer Simpson connection helps to peak student interest. Likewise, Sandmann and Ahern (1997) created a social studies-literature unit based on NCSS Standard O-Civic Ideas and Practices. Fifteen historical fiction novels were selected on the basis of the NCSS Standard for the unit theme "Promoting Citizenship."

Table 5.1 on page 66 is a helpful starting point and visual for noting some of the differences between textbooks and trade books as you begin to put together a balanced expository text and literature library.

For a list of some of the latest and best historical and realistic fiction novels, the Spring issue of the National Council of Social Studies publishes in *Social Education* the titles, themes, and benefits of novels that have been recommended for social studies classes.

Choice: To make the literature integration successful, I believe "choice" is essential. Students and teachers will want to consider the length of the book, the reading level, the plot line, the literary value, and the gender of the protagonist. Be sure to consider race, religion, and ethnicity in choices for protagonists. This allows minority students an

opportunity for greater awareness of their own cultural roots (Franklin, 1990) and helps to develop an awareness and tolerance for diversity (Ehle, 1982). Have as much variety possible

For multicultural and multiethnic choices, look to authors like Gary Soto, whose book, Baseball in April (1990) is a collection of stories, highlighting Latino culture, but the plots are universal adolescent concerns: image, dating, family, friends, peer pressure, school, sports, and money. I love to read the stories out loud, and students enjoy hearing them. The Hispanic students smile when they hear the periodic integration of their Spanish language, foods, a dance, a saying. Sometimes, they will add flair to my pronunciation of the Spanish words.

Walter Dean Myers is a prolific, realistic and historical fiction writer who spotlights African-American males in moving and real life trauma.

Start small: Reading aloud is a great way to integrate literature into the history curriculum manageably. A book can be read aloud in segments over the course of several weeks. Allow students the time to respond and debrief during the reading process. Use reading journals, dialogue diaries (Dimmitt & Can Cleaf, 1992), small or whole group discussion to get kids thinking and communicating. Trelease's (1993) book is a good starting point for reading aloud.

For a next, small step, provide students with a list of titles which connect thematically with the unit being studied. Give students a start and end date for reading the book. After reading, the culminating activity can be as simple as assigning a traditional book report, as creative as including an act-it-out, or as complex as requiring a major research project. In the beginning, just observe what instructional ideas are conceived as a result of the stories read, and really notice what the presentations from students

engender. This is an easy way to get students' honest appraisal of what books they like. That is exactly what I did for a year before planning the group activities and ordering books.

Ground rules: To cultivate openness in classroom discussions, you must raise the level of comfort experienced by the stake holders. Kessler (2000) in the Soul of Education, lists the following ground rules which are actually established by her students: "respect, honesty, no put downs, no laughing at people, no interruptions, don't make judgments, keep an open mind, and respect privacy" (p. 7). These goals need to be practiced often before students get in their reading groups. Sharing responses orally to quotations and writing prompts is a good beginning. Most important, find a way to let stories work their magic. As Green expressed best, stories enable "us to become friends of one another's minds, in ever-increasing circles of inclusion" (1991, p.xi).

Join the mission: Be a voice that endorses a remarriage of literature and history. See to it that schools and community libraries provide the best possible selections of historical and realistic fiction for adolescent readers.

Table 5.1

Comparison of History Textbooks and Trade Books by Content and Writing

Feature	Textbook	Trade Books
<u>Content</u>		
Emphasis	Facts, names, dates	Human motives, solving human problems, consequences of actions
	World leaders, famous people, big events	Ordinary people, human aspects of famous people, effects of world or national events on the lives of common people
Coverage	Very broad, consequent-shallow	Single subject, treated in depth
	Essential information sometimes omitted: text is "cleansed" of controversial issues to comply with state adoption commissions	Include unpopular stances on controversial issues Many books available on most historical subjects give varying perspectives and more complete information and stimulate critical thought
<u>Writing</u>		
Form	Expository; expository with brief narrative inserts	Narrative in historical fiction; expository in historical nonfiction
Text structure	Shallow coverage and language restraints result in lack of cohesion and clarity	Connected, sequential ideas, focus on topic, and multi-idea unit sentences result in clear, cohesive passages
Style	Sentence length and vocabulary limited to comply with readability formulae	Few stylistic restraints makes rich vocabulary and varied styles possible. Space for elaboration of ideas and strong description.
Interestingness	Emphasis on facts, names, dates, lifeless people and events. Plus lack of cohesion results in loss of interestingness and diminished reader involvement and memorability.	Emphasis on human stories well told results in greater degree of interestingness, hence, greater reader involvement and memorability.

Source: (Tomilson, Tunnell, and Richgels, p. 53)

(6) Conclusion

Is war Hell?

The first bell of the day had rung, and the hall was filling with students who were charting a course toward their first period class. I was stationed just outside my classroom doorway when Tim walked briskly passed me en route to his seat.

"I hated the ending of that book," he said abruptly. Since he's usually in a good mood, his comment took me by surprise. I watched him drop off his book bag at his desk and, then he marched right back to me as I stood watching the hallway and the students entering my class.

"Are you saying that you didn't like the novel, Tim?" I asked as he neared.

My Brother Sam Is Dead (Colliers, 1976) is a popular story of the American Revolution. Most of the students who read it generally enjoy it.

"I really liked the story, but I hated the ending. I am just sick about it," he complained.

"Tim," I inquired, "*What* specifically are you so upset about? Is your objection with the military discipline policies of Revolutionary War soldiers, or is it more about the authors' telling of the story?"

"Both, he blurted. "First, the discipline policies of the period were too swift. There was little if any investigation into the facts of the supposed accusations. Washington and his commanders were more concerned with setting examples than fairness. But, I am also disappointed that the authors used *Sam* to make this fact in history known. Why couldn't the authors pick another character? Finally, Sam had come back home. After stealing the family gun, disobeying his father, and joining the Revolutionary War effort, Sam had a change of heart. He was trying to help his

family, not just *the cause*. Why did *he* have to die? Why did his little brother have to be there and witness Sam's death by firing squad for a crime he didn't commit?"

Before long, the majority of my eighth grade history students had arrived to class and were settled into their seats. Whether or not they had read that book, they had overheard enough of the ongoing discussion to have formulated some opinions. Within minutes, I had more contentious issues being aired than than I had the time or the skills to referee.

We talked about what makes a story satisfying or unsettling. I questioned whether I as their teacher had a responsibility to let them know if a novel had a sad ending, in the same way I would advise them regarding the level of violence.

We talked about the inequities of justice through time, especially how the privileged are treated versus the common man. Finally, we talked about the citizen soldiers, mainly farmers, of the Revolutionary War period. They suffered horribly from cold, lack of food, inadequate clothing and other supply shortages. The townspeople ate; the commanders did not *go without*. Yet, it was the soldiers who fought the war. In light of their sacrifices, should they be forgiven for stealing and deserting? Could we have achieved independence with fewer reprisals? As a nation, should we give special consideration to all those who fought in a war? *Is war Hell?*

The history textbook told of the causes, the battles, the shortages, and the suffering during the American Revolution. Few students in the class were affected by the information to any noticeable degree. The novels made it personal. Events which occurred in the story happened in the context of someone's life, someone familiar. That bond to the story characters lifted the adolescents' thinking to a different dimension. Even those who hadn't read *My Brother Sam is Dead* were caught up in the moral, political, and

social implications. Narrative conflict, as Rabinowitz (1987) asserts, helps readers see history as “caused.”

The union of history and literature forms a time-honored, social and educational bond, amplifying the meaning and relevance offered by each individually. However, as history has become more specialized, great stories which extol the struggles, weaknesses, and triumphs of the human spirit are often sidelined, in favor of practices which advance the demands of scope and sequence as set by the state standards. In answer to these expectations, the textbook currently assumes a preeminent presence in American history instructional methodology. My research shows that we must reintroduce stories and regain the affective, personal aspects of history that excite and touch adolescents.

Textbooks, for the most part, are not engaging. They lack vivid descriptions and limit elaboration in consideration of coverage. This is a pattern which has been shown to reduce clarity and cause students to perceive history as remote and lifeless (Tomilson, Tunnell, & Richgels, 1993). In fact, Loewen (1995), states that no textbook does a decent job.

Adolescence, the stage of youth which Johnson (1980) termed “normal life crisis” and the text-dominated American history classroom are not compatible. Brain-based research confirms the mismatch. The lifeless drone of text chronology fails to connect with the lively egocentric imagination of middle school students. Rubin (1973) states that schools give adolescents the least amount of individual attention at a point in their lives when the quest for a personal identity is most pressing. Schools have to touch the emotional and imaginative core of kids in order to plug them into the power of learning. Caring is as much cognitive as it is affective (Meier, 1995). Literature, on the other hand, can be gripping and

is a useful support for the developing affective and cognitive demands of the adolescent. Stories engage the emotions. As Alasdair MacIntyre has argued, "man is essentially a story-telling animal." It is not merely a mode of entertainment but is complicit with how we make sense of ourselves and how we behave as social animals (MacIntyre, 1981). Students can imagine themselves endowed with great power, living the life of a famous writer, or championing the cause of the weak or the innocent. In the adolescent imagination, are born "the ideals, senses of direction, and possibilities that provide avenues for movement and action" (Egan, 1992).

Historical and realistic fiction novels support both the affective demands posed by the adolescent rite of passage and the curricular obligations of the discipline, American history. Affectively and cognitively, novels create opportunities for students to confront past and present issues of social and historical importance through characters and plots narrated in stimulating and meaningful contexts. As Levstik (1986) indicates, history and historical fiction provide a reality base for testing the possibilities of human behavior. Stories, according to McGowan (1987) and Singleton (1995) can be used to teach historical competencies. Field studies by researchers, such as: Monson, Howe, & Greenlee (1989), Smith (1993), and Guzzetti, Kowalinski, & McGowan (1992) all recorded better content acquisition results from those classes which were literature-based history classes, than from those classes which were text-based.

During a one-year site-based quantitative study, I documented results which support the thesis argument of this study. Two eighth-grade American history classes, one text-based, and the other supplementing with historical fiction, were compared. Using quarterly exam

scores, observations, and student surveys, all measures indicated slightly better results were achieved in the class that supplemented the textbook instruction with historical fiction.

Designing themed units, assigning students to groups, distributing materials, and invoking students to honor a cooperative, tolerant classroom requires great patience and vigilance. One can almost understand why so many classes are textbook dependent. There can be no denying the role of the teacher in marshaling the instructional strategies discussed in this study. However, by the second semester of using historical fiction, I found that routines and peer interactions were more productive and well-established. As the teacher, I was freer to interact in a more informal manner, as a member of a learning community

No other genre facilitates the goal of engaging the adolescent spirit as well as historical and realistic fiction novels. The novels in this genre are indexed by readability, theme, complexity, multiculturalism, male or female main character, and perspective. Many come with teacher's guides. The demand for the genre is increasing, as is the availability and variety of quality novels for adolescents. It is undoubtedly one of the best ways to bring forth the affective link to historical understanding.

Enriching the American history curriculum with literature is an investment that pays lucratively. It is a methodology that "uses subject matter to clarify feeling and emotion and, conversely, uses feeling and emotion in making the subject matter more meaningful. Neither by itself suffices as true education" (Rubin, 1973, p. 236).

In my research and through professional classroom experience, I have found the true miracle of the story is the inclusion and warmth that it brings to the classroom atmosphere, countering the malignant

disconnect that the text-dominant classroom too often allows.

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Appendix

Graphs

- A. Mean number of historical fiction books read
- B. Mean knowledge score
- C. Recognizing past as connection to the present
- D. Historical empathy

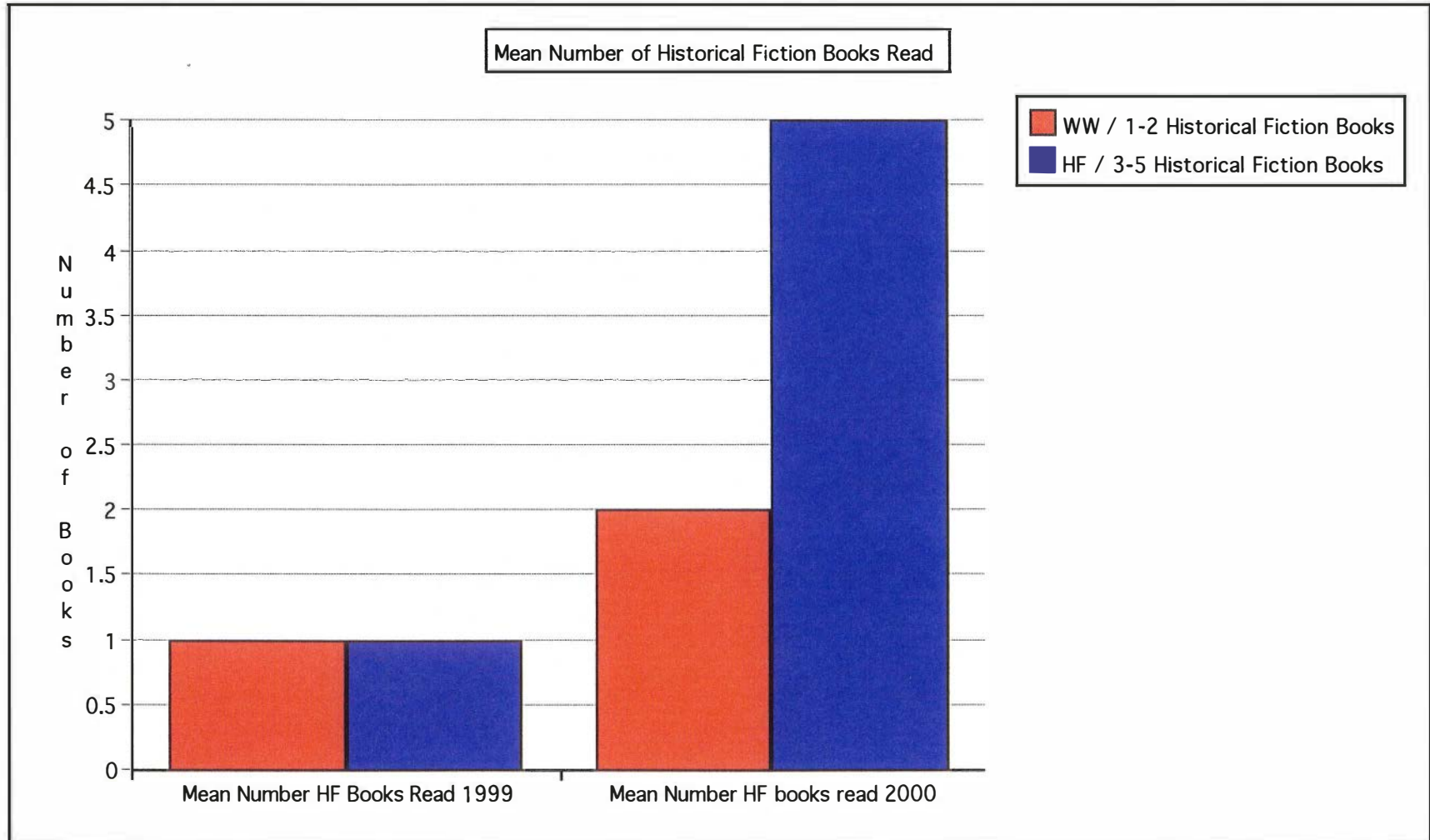
Pretest and Post test

- E. Eighth Grade American History Survey and Questionnaire

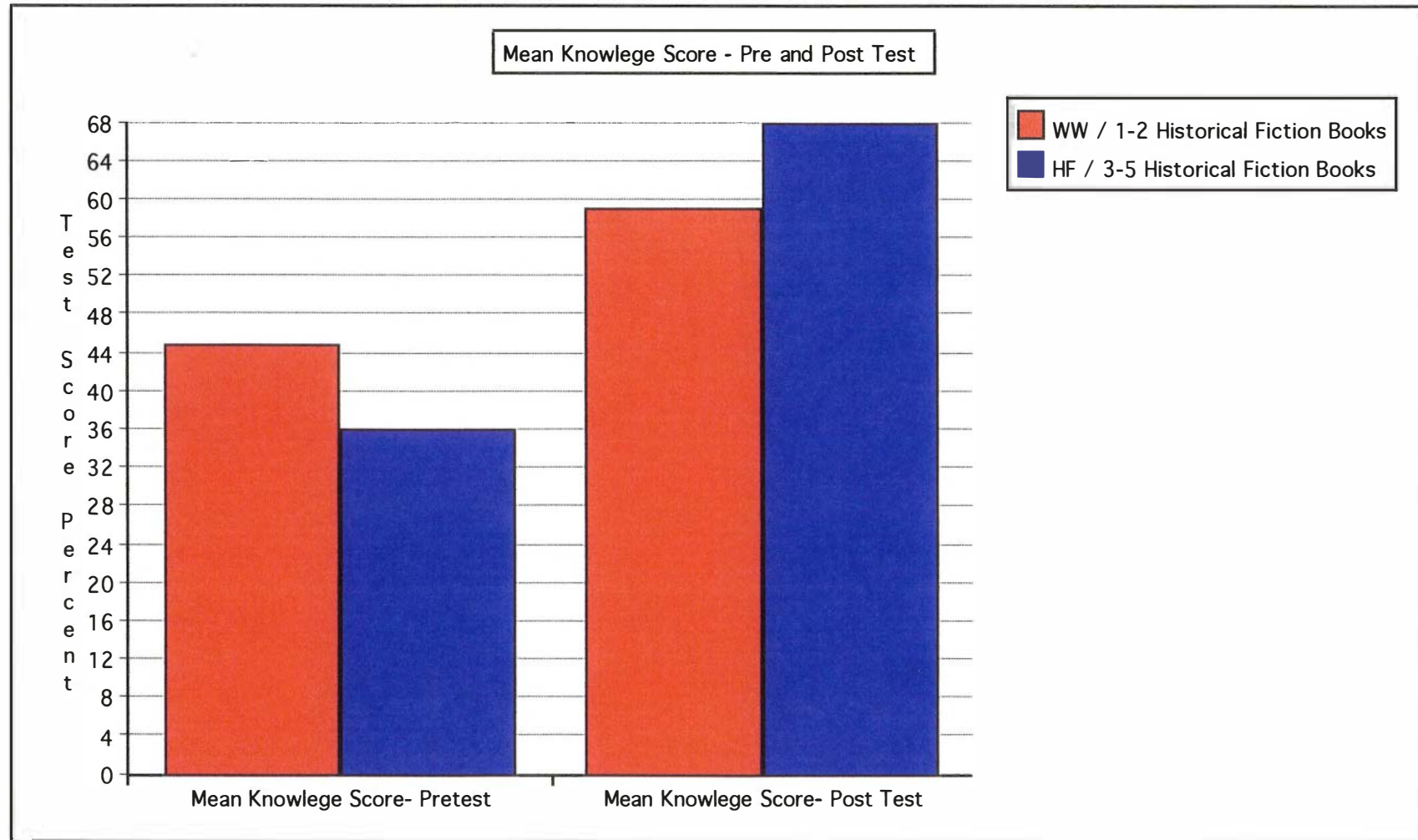
Data comparatives

- F. Class WW- text-based study
- G. Class HF- supplementing with historical fiction

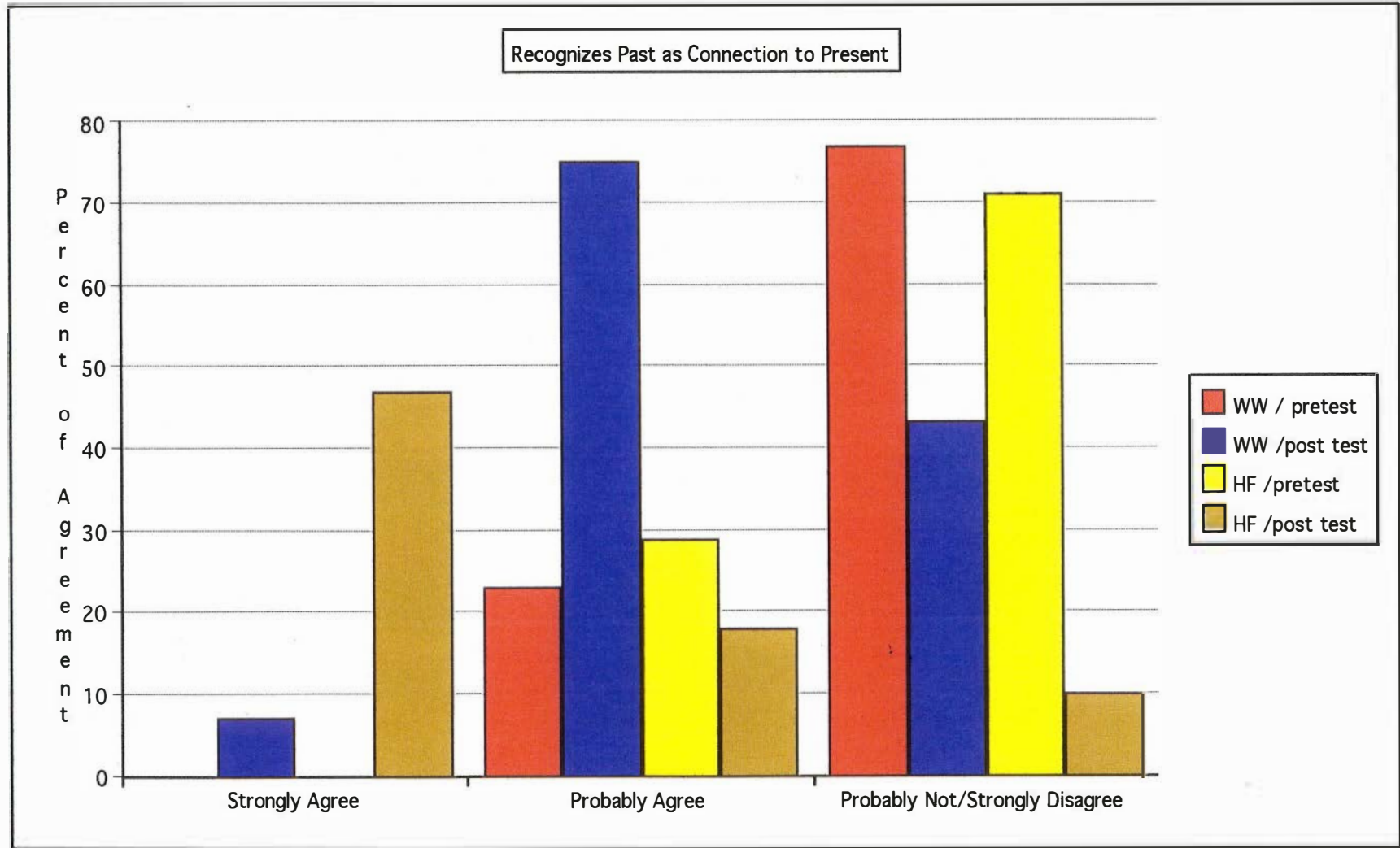
APPENDIX A



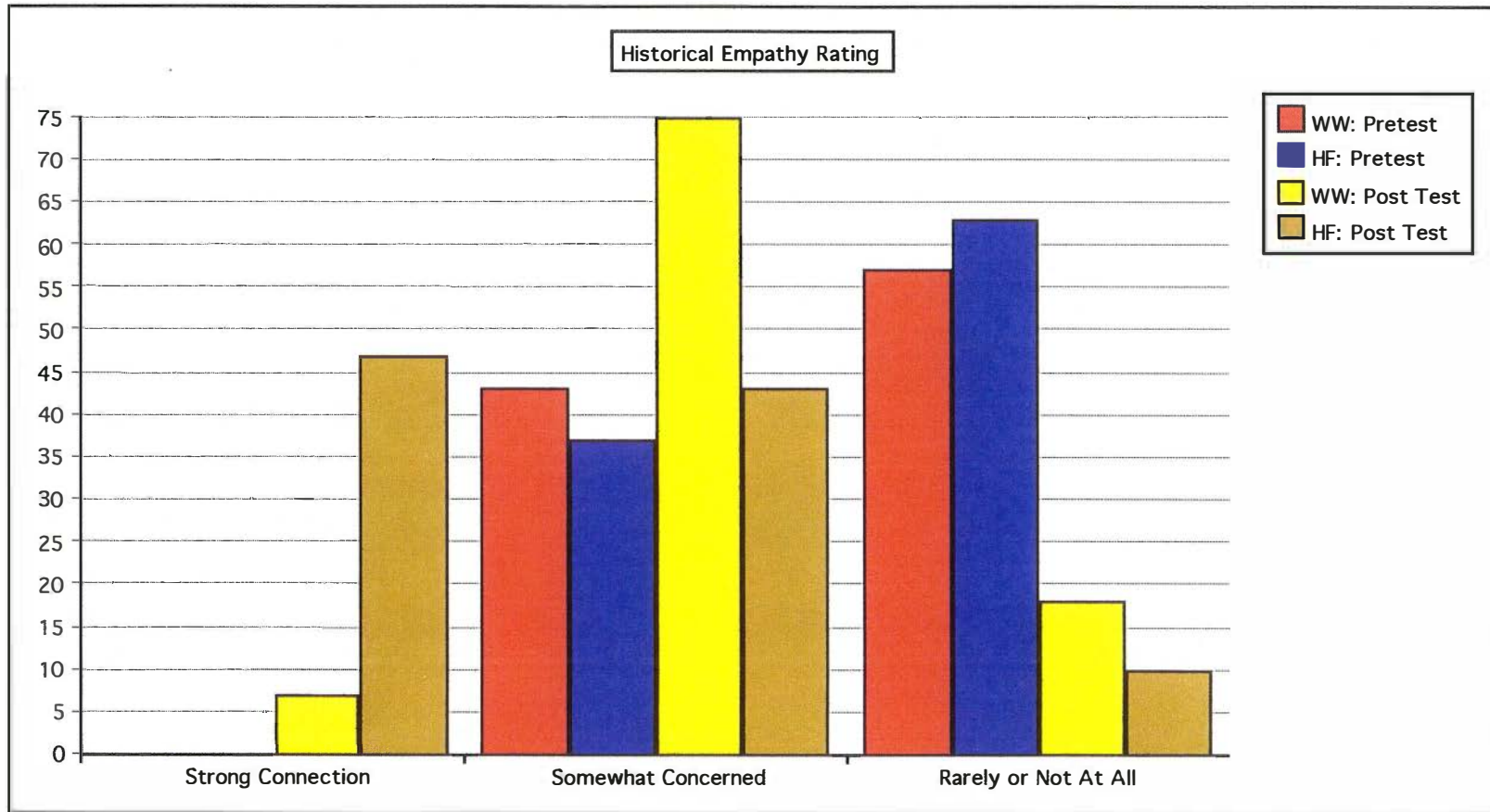
APPENDIX B



APPENDIX C



APPENDIX D



Appendix E

1999-2000 Pretest/Post test Assessment Eighth Grade American History Survey & Questionnaire

Part I

Content section: - *Prior Knowledge and Recall.*

1. Who was commander of the American army in the American Revolution?
 - a. Robert E. Lee
 - b. Paul Revere
 - c. George Washington
 - d. Benedict Arnold

2. The Boston Tea Party is a good example of what *type of event* in history?
 - a. political
 - b. artistic
 - c. social
 - d. religious

3. What is the most reasonable explanation as to why Native Americans were so devastated by European diseases?
 - a. North American continent had been isolated from Europe and epidemics
 - b. Native Americans lacked the medical advancements to cure diseases
 - c. Europeans were genetically superior
 - d. None of the above

4. Which set of words best describes *Manifest Destiny*?
 - a. naked greed
 - b. westward expansion
 - c. irresistible force
 - d. all of the above

5. Emancipation Proclamation was a decree:
 - a. issued by Lincoln that freed all slaves
 - b. issued by Washington to enlist slaves in the army
 - c. issued by U.S. Grant to enlist slaves in Union forces
 - d. issued to free slaves in Confederate states

6. Trail of Tears is to Indian Removal, as:
 - a. Cherokee is to Andrew Jackson
 - b. Abolition is to Stephen Douglas
 - c. Isolationism is to James Madison
 - d. all of the above

7. "Checks and balances" are:
 - a. a major focus of Articles of Confederation
 - b. divide powers among the branches of the federal government
 - c. covered in Article I, II, and III of the United States Constitution
 - d. B and C

8. One of the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation was:
 - a. could not raise taxes
 - b. did not have enough legislators
 - c. cruel and unusual punishment for traitors
 - d. all of the above

9. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Roger Taney said that Dred Scott was no different than:
- a common thief
 - any other Justice of the Peace
 - a mule
 - any small business
10. The national debate over the issue of (states' rights) slavery can be traced back to the:
- Gettysburg Address
 - Constitutional Convention
 - Magna Carta
 - Mayflower Compact
11. Some 500,000 sq. mi. of territory that would become the future states of: California, Nevada, Utah, most of New Mexico and Arizona and parts of Wyoming, and Colorado, as well as Texas was acquired through:
- war with Mexico
 - Treaty of Guadalupe Idalgo and 15 million dollars
 - Louisiana Purchase
 - both A and B

Part II

Student self-assessment and opinion.

Definition of historical fiction.

Historical fiction books combine fact and imagination. The story is set in a time other than the present and the characters react to the historical events of their era. Examples include: *My Brother Sam is Dead*, *Number the Stars*, *True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, *A Day No Pigs Would Die*, and *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, to name a few. Well known historical fiction authors include: Gary Paulsen, Ann Rinaldi, the Colliers, Elizabeth George Spears, Paula Fox, Mildred Taylor, and Virginia Hamilton.

1. What is the total number of historical fiction books that you have read this year (1999-2000)?
a. none b. 1-2 c. 3-5 d. 6 or more
2. Knowledge of American History (**past** people, ideas, and events) can help a person understand the present and/or prepare for the future. Agree or Disagree
a. Strongly **agree** b. probably c. probably **not** d. strongly **disagree**
3. Telling history in the context of a story helps individuals remember details of the period better. Agree or Disagree
a. Strongly **agree** b. probably c. probably **not** d. strongly disagree
4. Relating history as a story makes history more interesting? Agree or Disagree
a. Strongly **agree** b. probably c. probably **not** d. strongly **disagree**
5. How would you rate your *historical empathy* (feelings) for the challenges of others?
a. Very empathetic b. somewhat empathetic c. rarely empathetic d. none at all
6. If given a fair amount of information and time, how confident are you in your ability to offer reasonable solutions to tough problems like gun control, child labor, pollution?
a. Very confident b. pretty sure of myself c. very little confidence d. zero

Appendix F**Students in class *without* historical fiction supplementation**

Student code	Historical Knowledge Exam score	Ethnic Back-ground	Gender	Socio-economic Status	Academic achievement (GPA)	#of historical fiction books read	Historical empathy (strong, somewhat, rare)	Connects past to present
1WW	10/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	2.5	3-5	Somewhat	Probable
2WW	9/11	Caucasian	Male	Low	3.0	>6	Strong	Probable
3WW	8/11	Hispanic	Male	Average	3.0	1-2	Somewhat	Probable
4WW	8/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	3.5	1-2	Somewhat	Prob. not
5WW	7/11	Caucasian	Female	High	2.5	1-2	Somewhat	Probably
6WW	7/11	Asian	Male	Average	3.5	3-5	Strong	Strong
7WW	7/11	E. Europe	Female	Average	3.0	3-5	Somewhat	Probable
8WW	7/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	3.0	1-2	Rare	Probable
9WW	7/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	.50	1-2	Rare	Probable
10WW	8/11	Black	Male	Average	2.5	1-2	Somewhat	Probable
11WW	8/11	Caucasian	Male	High	3.5	>6	Rare	Probable
12WW	8/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	3.0	1-2	Rare	Probable
13WW	8/11	Caucasian	Female	High	4.0	3-5	Rare	Strong
14WW	7/11	Black	Male	Low	2.5	1-2	Somewhat	Probable
15WW	7/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	1.5	1-2	Rare	Probable

Appendix F

Students in class *without* historical fiction supplementation

Student code	Historical Knowledge Exam score	Ethnic Back-ground	Gender	Socio-economic Status	Academic achievement (GPA)	#of historical fiction books read	Historical empathy (strong, somewhat, rare, none)	Connects past to present
16WW	7/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	2.5	None	Rare	Probable
17WW	7/11	Caucasian	Female	High	4.0	1-2	Rare	Probable
18WW	7/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	.75	1-2	Rare	Probable
19WW	.8/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	1.0	None	Rare	Probable
20WW	.7/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	3.0	1-2	None	Probably not
21WW	.7/11	Caucasian	Female	High	2.5	1-2	Rare	Probably not
22WW	.8/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	3.0	None	Rare	Probably not
23WW	.7/11	Black	Female	Low	3.0	1-2	Somewhat	Probable
24WW	.6/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	2.5	1-2	Somewhat	Probable
25WW	6/11	Caucasian	Female	Low	3.0	None	Somewhat	Probable
26WW	6/11	Hispanic	Male	Average	2.0	1-2	Rare	Probable
27WW	6/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	2.0	1-2	Somewhat	Probably not
28WW	5/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	2.5	3-5	Somewhat	Probable

Appendix G**Students in American History class with historical fiction supplementation**

Student code	Historical Knowledge Exam score	Ethnic Back-ground	Gender	Socio-economic Status	Academic achievement (GPA)	#of historical fiction books read	Historical empathy (strong, somewhat, rare)	Connects past to present
1HF	10/11	French	Female	Average	3.0	>6	Strong	Probable
2HF	10/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	3.5	3-5	Somewhat	Probable
3HF	10/11	Japanese	Male	High	4.0	3-5	Rare	Probable
4HF	10/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	3.0	3-5	Strong	Strong
5HF	9/11	Hispanic	Female	Low	1.5	>6	Strong	Strong
6HF	9/11	Caucasian	Female	High	2.5	>6	Strong	Strong
7HF	9/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	3.0	>6	Strong	Strong
8HF	9/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	1.0	1-2	Somewhat	Prob. not
9HF	9/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	3.5	>6	Somewhat	Strong
10HF	9/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	1.5	3-5	Strong	Probable
11HF	9/11	Caucasian	Male	High	3.5	3-5	Somewhat	Probable
12HF	8/11	Caucasian	Female	High	1.5	3-5	Somewhat	Strong
13HF	8/11	Caucasian	Female	High	4.0	3-5	Strong	Strong
14HF	8/11	Caucasian	Male	High	.75	3-5	Rare	Strong
15HF	8/11	Caucasian	Female	Low	2.5	1-2	Strong	Probable

Appendix G**Students in American History class with historical fiction supplementation**

Student code	Historical Knowledge Exam score	Ethnic Back-ground	Gender	Socio-economic Status	Academic achievement (GPA)	#of historical fiction books read	Historical empathy (strong, somewhat, rare, none)	Connects past to present
16HF	8/11	Caucasian	Female	High	2.5	1-2	Rare	Probable
17HF	8/11	Caucasian	Female	Low	.75	1-2	Somewhat	Probable
18HF	8/11	Black	Female	Average	3.0	>6	Strong	Strong
19HF	8/11	Hispanic	Male	Average	2.5	3-5	Somewhat	Strong
20HF	8/11	Caucasian	Male	High	2.0	1-2	Rare	Strongly Disagree
21HF	7/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	3.0	3-5	Somewhat	Probable
22HF	7/11	Hispanic	Male	Average	2.0	3-5	Somewhat	Strong
23HF	7/11	Caucasian	Female	High	4.0	>6	Somewhat	Strong
24HF	7/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	2.5	3-5	Somewhat	Probable
25HF	7/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	3.0	3-5	Somewhat	Probable
26HF	7/11	Caucasian	Male	Average	2.0	3-5	None	Probable
27HF	7/11	Caucasian	Female	Average	2.5	3-5	Somewhat	Strong
28HF	6/11	Hispanic	Male	Average	2.5	3-5	Somewhat	Probable
29HF	6/11	Caucasian	Male	High	3.0	1-2	Rare	Probable
30HF	6/11	Black	Female	Low	2.5	3-5	Somewhat	Strong