

Summer 2000

## **Designing A United States History Curriculum: A Thematic Approach**

David Paul Willecke

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/graduate\\_projects](https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/graduate_projects)



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Secondary Education Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

Designing A United States History Curriculum:

A Thematic Approach

---

Project Report

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

Master Teacher

---

By

David Paul Willecke

May, 2000

ABSTRACT

DESIGNING A UNITED STATES HISTORY CURRICULUM:  
A THEMATIC APPROACH

by

David Paul Willecke

May, 2001

A curriculum framework for a one-year eleventh grade United States History course was designed. The Framework included the development of nine themes at the unit level and one theme at the lesson level. Goals and objectives were developed at the course, unit, and lesson level. The potential for thematic instruction to improve history teaching was discussed, as well as the challenges of designing thematic curriculum.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	STATEMENT OF PROBLEM.....	1
	Introduction.....	1
	Statement Of Problem.....	4
	Limitations.....	5
	Definition Of Terms.....	5
	Overview Of Chapters.....	6
II	REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	7
	Introduction.....	7
	Literature Set One.....	8
	Literature Set Two.....	13
	Non-Applicable Literature.....	21
	Summary.....	21
	Conclusions.....	23
III	PROCEDURES OF PROJECT.....	25
	Introduction.....	25
	Procedures.....	26
IV	RESULTS OF THE PROJECT.....	1
	Table Of Contents.....	2
	Introduction.....	3
	A Note On Subjectivity.....	3
	Course Goals.....	4
	List Of Thematic Units.....	6
	Description Of Thematic Units.....	7
	Sample Unit.....	26
	Bibliography.....	63
V	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	29
	Conclusions.....	29
	Recommendations.....	36
	REFERENCE LIST.....	39

## CHAPTER 1

### Statement Of Problem

#### Introduction

It is the purpose of this project to explore the topic of thematic teaching, its applicability to a secondary level single-subject course, and to design a thematic curriculum framework around which such a course could be constructed. Specifically, the potential of thematic curriculum to improve the teaching of United States History will be examined through the construction of the curriculum framework.

The idea for this project has largely been a result of the confluence of two recent streams in education. The increasing interest in thematic instruction by educators and educational researchers has been the first stream. The second stream has been the increasing concern over the state of History in the schools, reflected largely in the standards movement, and the accompanying questions about how best to organize history instruction. It is hoped that by taking advantage of the research that has been conducted in the field of thematic instruction, this project will be able to suggest such instruction as a remedy to some of the concerns raised by critics of the current state of history in the schools.

The 1980s saw an outpouring of educational reform movements in many areas. The field of history was no exception. As with most things, this reform has deeper roots

and is best understood in historical context. As this project has been profoundly influenced by these recent calls for reform, the history behind that reform speaks to the origins of this project.

Although history goes back to the beginning of time, the academic discipline of history is relatively new. Previous to the 1880s, no American college had a department of history. The founding of the American Historical Association in 1884, however, led to an explosion of history at the college level. History entered the secondary schools even more dramatically in 1892, when the National Education Association reexamined the entire secondary school curriculum and recommended that every student take four years of history. This ushered in a roughly thirty-year period during which history occupied more of the American secondary school curriculum than it has ever since. All of this was predicated on the belief that an understanding of history was necessary for a healthy democracy. Ironically, the same concern for democracy that gave rise to history would also lead to its undoing (Jackson, 1989, pp. 3-4).

The Progressive movement, pushing for more practical approaches to the “problems of democracy,” succeeded in replacing the history curriculum with a social studies curriculum that emphasized civics, geography, and sociology. Progressives challenged the relevance of history and its ability to solve modern problems. Any sense of an essential body of historical knowledge to be learned by all was lost, as was a clear idea of history’s purpose. The result, which developed over the middle part of the 20th century, was the modern, confused, and fragmented social studies curriculum we have today. Calls for its reform have resounded ever since (Jackson, 1989, pp. 4-8).

The most recent calls of reform have their roots in the National Commission on Excellence in Education's 1983 issuing of "A Nation at Risk", which, "suggested that the very future of the Republic was threatened by the 'rising tide of mediocrity' in the high school classrooms (Jackson, 1989, p. 9)." In 1986, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), under the U.S. Department of Education, conducted the National Assessment of History and Literature, which posted dismal results (Ravitch, 1989, p. 51). The next year the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools was formed and a year later it released its report, "Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in the Schools," which called for a return to four years of history at the secondary level and for better teaching of history generally (The Bradley commission on history in schools, 1989). The 1990's saw calls for national standards in all areas, including history. The national history standards, however, put together by the National Center for History in the schools at the University of California at Los Angeles met with stiff opposition from many, especially conservatives, who saw them as leftist and revisionist. Those standards have since been rewritten and re-released in 1996 and were more well received, although much debate between politicians as well as professional historians remains (Fox-Genovese & Lasch-Quinn, 1999, Part IV). This is the situation as it stands going into the twenty-first century.

It was in light of this situation that this project was conceived. The perception is that there is too little history, that history has something to contribute that the other social studies disciplines and subjects cannot, that the history that is being taught is not being learned, that students are not engaged in history, and that there needs to be more

consensus and uniformity of goals and standards for history instruction. The standards movement is a response to some of these concerns. But what, in addition to standards and more history, can be done to improve the state of things? This is where the second stream has come into play—what does thematic teaching have to offer? Many of the advantages of thematic instruction espoused by its advocates seem to address many of the concerns voiced by critics of the current history curriculum. This project is an attempt to explore the value of a thematic approach to curriculum for improving history instruction.

#### Statement Of Problem

The intent of this project is the design of a curriculum framework for a secondary level thematic United States History course. Current educational research related to thematic instruction will be put into practice in the concrete form of an actual curriculum design. The design of that framework should provide for an evaluation of the potential of thematic teaching to address current concerns about history and to improve history instruction generally. If thematic instruction proves to have this potential, the framework will also serve as a resource that can be used by educators and designers of curriculum as a foundation or starting point for further research and design of thematic curriculum.

In order to accomplish these ends, the relevant literature on the subject of thematic instruction will be evaluated. Using this research as a base, the framework will then be constructed. The value of the framework for improving history instruction will then be assessed, as well as the value of thematic instruction generally. Finally, the



implications of the framework design process will be explored and recommendations made.

### Limitations

This project examines and evaluates thematic teaching in terms of eleventh grade high-school United States History curriculum. Although the literature reviewed often comes from outside of this limited scope, it is interpreted and applied strictly to this age group and subject. Generalizations, while possible, should be made cautiously and with these limitations in mind.

### Definition Of Terms

**Thematic:** The term “thematic” can be used in many ways. In this project, the term will be used in reference to a method of organizing a history course in which materials are grouped into related categories or “themes,” and then studied as a unit. Within these themes materials are covered in chronological order. Variances on this definition that will be used in this project include thematic approach, thematic curriculum, thematic organization, thematic instruction, thematic framework, and thematic units.

Traditional: This the term will be used in this project to refer to the standard method of organizing history courses that has generally been used in the schools. In this approach students begin the year-long course at 1492, 1607, or some other foundational date and progress more or less chronologically forward through history with the goal of arriving at modern times about the end of the school year in June. This method will also be refereed to in the project as the chronological approach, chronological framework, or traditional chronological approach.

### Overview Of Chapters

This chapter has served to identify the problem at hand and the goals for this project. In the second chapter, the literature related to thematic teaching will be reviewed. The procedures for constructing the thematic framework are detailed in the third chapter. The core of the project is chapter four, which consists of the actual curriculum framework. In the fifth and final Chapter the lessons that can be derived from this process will be discussed and recommendations will be made.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Related Literature

#### Introduction

The research base that addresses thematic organization of secondary level United States History courses is very thin. Unfortunately, the majority of the thematic curriculum research that has been conducted is focused at the elementary level. Of that which is directed at the secondary level, most deals with subject integration and integrating literature into the classroom. The research on thematic instruction that does address the topic of this project is, for the most part, either very general or only indirectly related to high school United States history. Precious little is left over regarding the thematic teaching of single subjects at the secondary level. The relevant studies that do exist are reviewed here. They have been divided into two literature sets. The first set consists of those articles which directly address the subject of thematic teaching in History. The second literature set contains important works that, while they do not specifically address thematic instruction, nevertheless have important implications for the design of thematic curriculum. Within each set the literature has been arranged chronologically. Following the literature sets are some comments regarding non-applicable literature.

Among the literature that directly addresses the topic, it is been argued that the problems with the chronological model are remedied by thematic instruction. Among the literature that indirectly addresses the topic, the incorporation of themes in some form into the traditional chronological curriculum has been seen as a way to remedy some of the ills inherent in that approach. The emphasis shared by both sets of literature has been toward greater thematic unity in the history curriculum. All of the literature seeks to maintain a balance between the ever-present problem of breadth vs. depth.

#### Articles on Thematic Instruction

Contrary to what the light volume of research might indicate, the idea of teaching a history course thematically at the secondary level has been around for quite some time. In 1975, Jesse Liles argued that history teachers were becoming “technicians” who allowed the textbook to choose the content that was to be covered in their classrooms. The result was exceedingly dull history classes that lacked depth. In addition, these classes often failed to reach contemporary history by the end of the term, which, as Liles has pointed out, is the part of history students tend to find the most relevant. One of the reasons for this, he has argued, is simply that there is much more historical information now than ever before. Not only is there more history with the passage of time, but more and more historical work is conducted every day. Liles concludes that all important and relevant historical information simply cannot be covered in any meaningful way in one year. Liles proposes *thematic teaching* as a solution to this problem.

The major problem that confronts all history teachers, according to Liles (1975), is how to choose what to include and what to leave out when designing a course. He proposes using themes as a guide to making those difficult decisions. Because the number of legitimate themes is huge, he has argued that every teacher can compile a list on their own. With that list the teacher can then design a chronological set of lessons along the traditional lines, but only include materials and topics that will develop the set of themes that he or she has chosen. Additionally, each theme can serve to suggest new lessons designed to help develop the specific ideas of that theme. This preserves the chronological sequence, which he has argued is a necessary component to understanding historical developments, but reduces the load of information to a manageable level that will allow for meaningful in-depth study. The themes chosen by Liles were *cultural change, resource exploitation, civil rights, federalism, foreign involvement, and development of new national goals*.

Another burst of research into thematic history instruction emerged twenty years after Liles, beginning with Rodney M. White (1995). White's call for *thematic teaching* has been based on perceived weaknesses in the chronological approach. However, White has begun by attempting to refute the claims that history instruction has fallen from some golden past when students learned and remembered the history they were taught. The problem, he has argued, is rather that history instruction is much the same as it has always been, and that previous generations, like today's, have known very little factual historical knowledge. He has attributed this consistent lack of knowledge over time not to a change in history teaching, but in a failure to change it. What needs to change is the

continued attempt to “teach everything from the Big Bang to yesterday” (White, 1995, p. 160). White has argued that there is more content than can possibly be taught and still maintain the depth needed for learning to occur. Instead, what has happened is that history teachers confuse covering content with learning and students become passive receivers of a hopeless barrage of information.

The way out of this situation, White (1995) has argued, is thematic instruction. Thematic instruction “forces the teacher and student to identify fundamental ideas within a subject (White, 1995, p. 161).” Content is abandoned for depth. To illustrate the problem encountered with chronological instruction, White has considered how students encounter the topic of religion in a traditional World History course. He has noted that, “Judaism and the rise of Christianity typically are discussed briefly early in the book; then a few chapters later the rise of Islam is discussed. Somewhere in this mix, a chapter on the Eastern religions may be included. Several chapters later students encounter religion again in the context of the Reformation or the Enlightenment (White, 1995, p. 161).” The space between these main events in the topic of religion is long and the pieces become too distant to put together. White has proposed teaching a course on a series of themes, in which one theme is being worked chronologically, then the class switches to a new theme and works it chronologically, and so on. The themes essentially become the units of the course. Some possible themes he has identified for world history are *Circles of Faith*, *National identity and diversity*, *Other lands and other cultures*, and *The rise and fall of empires*.

After attempting several different organizational schemes, Ellen Leader Pike (1997) has concluded that a *thematic approach* is the most effective way to organize a course in World History. In response to the observation that her students simply did not like World History, Pike first switched to an *areas study* approach in an attempt to make the subject more engaging. That approach, however, proved to be too disconnected to be of any value. Pike wanted an alternative to the chronological survey, which she has argued led to disengagement and failed to produce historical understanding, or even the retention of basic factual knowledge. This was a product of the focus on coverage and memorization that such an approach necessarily entails. Calling coverage “the greatest enemy of understanding,” Pike has argued that students are left unable to fit all of the names, dates, and details into the big picture (Pike, 1997, p. 11). The alternative that she found was thematic instruction.

The central reality behind a thematic approach, Pike (1997) has argued, is the requirement that coverage be abandoned. Included with this is the abandonment of the idea that there exists a fixed body of knowledge which much be conveyed. Pike has indicated that this was a very difficult move and that the decisions involved in designing thematic units are equally difficult. This switch from coverage to content, from breadth to depth, will, Pike has argued, result in a, “deeper understanding of the historical processes that have shaped our world (Pike, 1997, p. 17).” She has also argued that it will develop skills of historical reasoning, which are ignored in the traditional approach, and promote desirable habits of thought such as healthy skepticism and curiosity. Pike also notes that a sense of chronology should be maintained, something she intends to do

with introductory overview lectures at the start of each thematic unit. To further ameliorate the ills of the chronological survey, Pike intends to use the textbook only as a reference and focus on primary documents, research, and secondary sources other than the textbook. Pike (1997) has chosen, *Patterns of Human Organization, Systems Of Faith, Revolution, and Technology* as her themes for World History.

Mary E. Connor (1997) has been the only author to specifically address a true thematic course in U.S. History at the secondary level. While not adamantly opposed to the chronological approach, she has lamented its typical failure to reach recent history and expressed concern over its frequent failure to engage students. She has argued for the thematic approach in order to remedy these and other shortcomings of the traditional organizational scheme.

Connor (1997) has advanced several benefits of the thematic approach. First, students move quickly from the past to the present in the first unit (six weeks for her). This is motivating to students, she has argued, who in traditional courses get lost in distant events as they do not arrive at contemporary history until the end of the year. The second advantage is that this inherently motivating journey from the distant past to the present occurs more than eight times throughout the year. This, she has written, provides, “frequent opportunities for discussing contemporary issues within a historical framework (Connor, 1997, p. 204).” A third benefit is that students who do not like one theme quickly find themselves in another. With eight themes each student is likely to encounter one or more that are particularly interesting to them. A fourth benefit is tied to her last unit, which allows students to pick an area of interest of their own and explore it



in depth. This allows an important opportunity for research. Connor has proposed the following eight themes for her year-long course: *The American Character and the American Belief System; Making a New Start: The Immigrant Experience; The Struggle for Equality: Making a place for All: Women's History, African American History, Native American Studies, Chicano Studies, and Asian American Studies; Boom and Bust: Economic Development; Leadership and the Reform Tradition; American Cultural Traditions: Religion, Education, and the Arts; War and Peace; An Opportunity for Choice: Your Major in American History.*

#### Reports And Standards Relevant To Thematic Instruction

##### Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools

The Bradley Commission on History in Schools released a report in 1989 titled Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for teaching history in schools (Bradley Commission on History in Schools, 1989). The Commission and the report they issued were a product of the reform movements of the 1980s which viewed history education as being in dire straits. The report made numerous recommendations on how to revitalize the teaching of history, several of which indirectly addressed issues surrounding thematic instruction.

The aspect of the report which spoke most directly to thematic instruction was a set of “vital themes” which the commission has argued run throughout all history and are essential for students to consider. These are *civilization, cultural diffusion, and innovation; Human interaction with the environment; values, beliefs, political ideas, and*

*institutions; conflict and cooperation; comparative history of major developments; and patterns of social and political interaction.* These are not advanced as a thematic approach or as thematic units, but rather as themes to be used within a chronological framework to give significance to the historical narrative. The Commission also proposed “topics of study,” which are really just slightly more narrow versions of their “vital themes,” that apply to specific areas in history such as United States History or World History. A summary of those “topics of study” for United States History follows: the evolution of politics and government; economic development and social consequences; ethnic, religious, and cultural development; America and the world; family and local history; American tensions such as liberty and equality, region and nation, individual and society, diversity and unity; and American successes and failures at home and abroad. Again, these are intended as themes to be used with a traditional chronological approach, not as thematic units.

All of these themes, both the “vital themes” and “topics of study,” are proposed as ways to help organize a chronological approach. However, at no point does the Bradley report specifically advocate a chronological approach or attack a thematic one. Indeed, the report takes great pains to strike a balance between chronology and thematic unity. In introducing the topics of study, the Commission has written, “Chronological development is essential, but within it, major topics and questions must make clear the significance of the unfolding story (Bradley Commission, 1989, p. 28).” Later, in addressing considerations for course design, they pose several questions that should be considered. These questions reflect a concern for the breadth-depth dilemma and a willingness to

sacrifice coverage for content. One question reads, “Has the notion that ‘less is more’ been considered, as themes, topics, and questions are selected? The amount of time required to achieve student engagement and genuine comprehension of significant issues will necessitate leaving out much that is ‘covered’ by the usual text (Bradley Commission, 1989, p. 40).” Another question also suggests that teachers discuss with their students what has been left out of the course and why (Bradley Commission, 1989, p. 41). It is clear that the Bradley Commission, while maintaining the importance of chronology and assuming it as an organizational principle for history courses, supports the use of themes and shares many of the concerns that advocates of the thematic approach have about the breadth-depth dilemma.

### The National Standards For History

One manifestation of the reform efforts in the 80s and 90s was the standards movement. In the area of history, The National Council for History in the Schools, located at the University of California at Los Angeles, developed the National Standards for History. In keeping with the traditions of American federalism, which generally leaves education policy to state and local governments, the Standards serve only as a resource and set of recommendations. Nevertheless, they represent an important piece of scholarship that addresses, among other things, the organization of history courses. The assumptions behind the Standards, particularly the structure within which they were written, have implications for thematic instruction. Consequently, they are reviewed here. The Standards are divided into two sections, one which addresses K-4 education,

and one which addresses grade levels 5-12. In keeping with the limitations of this project, only the 5-12 section is reviewed here.

The National Standards do not take an explicit stance on thematic teaching. Indeed, the subject is never mentioned. However, implicit within the Standards are many statements and structures which speak indirectly to the subject. Some of those structures seem to discourage thematic instruction, while others indicate support.

The National Standards are presented in a chronological framework. One of the criteria employed for the development of standards reads, "Standards should be founded in chronology, an organizing approach that fosters appreciation of pattern and causation in history" (National Council for History in the Schools, 1996, p. 43 ). The standards are also presented within a typical chronological periodization scheme, much like one around which a traditional history curriculum would be designed. The National Standards get more specific regarding the importance of chronology in the text of the specific standards themselves. The first standard for the section on *Historical thinking* is *Chronological thinking*. The introductory statement in the overview for this standard reads:

Chronological thinking is at the heart of historical reasoning. Without a strong sense of chronology—of when events occurred and in what temporal order—it is impossible for students to examine relationships among those events or to explain historical causality. Chronology provides the mental scaffolding for organizing historical thought (National Council, 1996, p. 62)

The standard goes on to describe the specific actions which a student who thinks chronologically should be able to do. From all of this it can be seen that chronology is the central organizing principle that guides the National Standards. Because a thematic

approach is an abandonment of the traditional chronological approach, or at least a modification of it, this chronological framework can be interpreted as a barrier to thematic curriculum design.

The National Standards (1996) also contain a thematic bent. In several sections of the Standards, themes or theme-like categories are suggested as integral parts of any history curriculum. One of the criteria for the development of standards was that, “Standards in United States History...should integrate fundamental facets of human culture such as religion, science and technology, politics and government, economics, interactions with the environment, intellectual and social life, literature, and the arts (National Council, 1996, p. 44).” This is effectively a list of broad themes. The authors of the Standards are here recognizing that an understanding of the development of themes over the course of U.S. History is important. In the introduction to the section on *Historical Understanding*, the authors have made reference to five spheres of human activity, which they identify as *social history*, *political history*, *the history of science and technology*, *economic history*, and *cultural history*. These are also effectively themes, albeit very broad ones. It is recommended that these five spheres be analyzed and that students do so in the context of time and place. They are careful to stress that these spheres cannot be understood in isolation and that they interact with and change each other.

Chronological thinking, while obviously an important part of the National Standards (1996), shares the stage with other, more thematic structures. Chronological thinking is only one of five types of historical thinking identified. Students are also

supposed to develop thinking skills in *historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research, and historical issue-analysis and decision-making.*

Chronology is clearly only one aspect of history and the National Standards clearly embraces thematic structures to make sense of the historical narrative.

Finally, there are indications that the chronological structure of the Standards should not be too strictly interpreted or be seen as a completely necessary, inseparable organizational structure. In a question and answer section of the document, one of the questions asked is: “Do these standards limit the instructional approaches teachers might adopt to develop these outcomes with students?” The answer is no, with the authors noting, “These standards are intended to open possibilities, not to limit teachers options for engaging students in lively activities... (National Council, 1996, p. 54).” The authors of the Standards have taken a flexible approach to their document, which leaves room for compromise between the goals of the Standards and the creation of a thematic curriculum.

#### The Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs)

The Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), although not strictly literature related to thematic instruction, have profound implications for those attempting to design thematic curriculum in Washington State. Any curriculum in history, thematic or otherwise, must be designed with the intention of getting students to meet the requirements set forth in the EALRs. Accordingly, they will be reviewed here. Nowhere in the EALRs has the specific structure of a course been advocated or

attacked. What must be examined is between the lines, under the surface. The assumptions made in the EALRs have implications for curriculum design generally, and thematic design specifically. As with the National Standards, some of what has been written in the EALRs indicates support for more traditional curriculum organization while other parts seem to support the need for increased thematic unity.

Support for chronology is most apparent in the first section of the EALRs. In Section 1, it is stated that students will “examine and understand,” among other things, “eras, chronology, and cause-and-effect relationships (Washington State Commission On Student Learning [WSCSL], 1998, p. 85).” Section 1.1 reads, “[students will] understand historical time, chronology, and causation: how events occur in time and place, are sequenced chronologically, and impact future events (WSCSL, 1998, p. 85).” It is clear that the authors of the Essential Requirements are concerned with chronology. The relevance of this to thematic instruction could be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be seen as a challenge to it. It can be assumed that if a curriculum proceeds thematically then it does not proceed strictly chronologically and thus students are not sufficiently learning chronology. The requirements of Section 1 and 1.1 could be read as favoring or even requiring chronological instruction. Second, the requirements of these sections could be seen to dictate that the issues of chronology be addressed within a thematic curriculum.

A deeper look into the specifics of Section 1 also indicates support for a thematic approach. After all, part of Section 1 calls for students to “examine and understand....themes (WSCSL, 1998, p. 85).” In Section 1.2, under the heading of U.S.

History, are given a number of examples for topics that could be taught to achieve the goals of that section. Many of these sound much like themes. Included are *exploration*, *discovery*, *revolution*, and *industrialization* (WSCSL, 1998, p. 87). These are “thematic” in that they do not reference a specific time period or event such as World War II or Reconstruction, but rather reference themes that could occur throughout the course of U.S. History. This same section also calls for areas of “emphasis,” specifically the large scale processes of “change and continuity” under Benchmark 2, and “growth and conflict” under Benchmark 3 (WSCSL, 1998, p. 87). Section 1.3 is a direct thematic reference to culture, calling for students to “examine the influence of culture” on U.S. History (WSCSL, 1998, p. 85). It is clear that the EALRs are designed with the intent of providing connections between the past and the present, as well as following major patterns and trends throughout history. The authors were not trying to pigeonhole history as a collection of important people and events to be taught in chronological order with minimal references to connections.

Section 3 of the EALRs is also thematic in orientation. It reads: “The student understands the origin and impact of ideas and technological developments on history and social change (WSCSL, 1998, p. 86).” The impact of ideas on the history of the United States and the impact of Technology on the History of the United States both fit the definition of theme. This section is essentially saying here is one theme that is so important it must be covered as part of the curriculum.



### Non-Applicable Literature

Single-subject secondary level curriculum is the area that has been least addressed in the literature surrounding thematic instruction. Most of that research has focused on the elementary level. Themes at this level tend to be less content orientated than would be required for secondary level instruction. In some instances, the authors advocate letting the students choose the themes. In this situation the theme serves as an organizational tool around which the teacher brings to bear relevant material from a variety of subject areas, with the focus more on learning skills and interacting with others than on the content of the actual theme. The theme is not an organized set of content to be learned. In one book, themes include Friendship, Habits, and Courage (Thompson, 1991). Literature on such general themes is not able to be usefully generalized to constructing secondary level history themes. Other works aimed at Elementary Education include Allen (1995), Fredericks (1993), and Manning (1994). Included in many of these approaches is the goal of integrating literature into one subject. These may certainly be valuable books, but they do not apply to the purposes of this project.

### Summary

The general rule among all of these authors is support for thematic curriculum. This is particularly true in the first literature set where the topic has been addressed specifically. It is also true, however, in the second literature set, whose authors share some of the same criticisms of the traditional system.

In all of the works in the first literature set, thematic instruction is advanced as a solution to perceived problems in the current state of history instruction and the traditional chronological approach. A reorganization of the curriculum along thematic lines is proposed as a solution. In this regard, three central observations emerge. The most consistently repeated point has been that thematic organization helps to solve the dichotomy of coverage and content. There was strong agreement that the current curriculum is overly-focused on coverage, including the dreaded lists of names, dates, and events for which history is known. Themes were seen as a way not only to keep all of this factual data tied together and united for some purpose, but also as a way for teachers to more narrowly focus their materials and decrease the amount of coverage in their curriculums. Where there was once only breadth, themes bring depth, where only memorization, themes have brought understanding.

Related to the issue of breadth vs. depth, thematic instruction is generally agreed to be more engaging to students. This engagement is considered to have two sources. First, it comes from the increased relevance history acquires when the past-present connection is made, as well as from the organization of historical information around themes which are based to some degree on the concerns of the present. Second, engagement comes from the increased meaning that is derived when historical issues are studied in-depth.

There was also general agreement on the importance of chronology. Although all of these authors were advocating for the replacement of the chronological approach with the thematic one, none of them was willing to abandon chronology as an important

principle of historical understanding. All of them had some method for preserving chronology, typically by having the material within the themes occur chronologically.

Agreement was also the general rule in the second literature set. All of these works assumed a chronological structure to history courses while simultaneously advocating increasing thematic unity within that structure. This was the central important aspect of these works as they related to thematic instruction.

Differences emerge most clearly when comparing the two different literature sets. Most distinctly, the works in the second literature set depict the content of history as much more rigid and fixed than those of the authors in the first literature set. Only from the Bradley Commission is there anything close to the general view professed in the first set that because the number of legitimate themes are so large, as is the historical content which could be covered, that the choices teachers make in selecting themes is somewhat arbitrary. Even the Bradley Commission, however, proposed a set of universal themes that apply to all of history. While espousing the value of depth in historical study, the authors in the second set are proposing traditional models for curriculum organization that very much call for coverage. This is true of the National Standards in particular, whose set of standards would be impressive if achieved by a college history major.

### Conclusions

This research has many implications for the design of a thematic curriculum framework for secondary United States History courses. Those implications, in order that they may better function as a guide in designing the curriculum framework, have been

written as a set of goals. These goals represent what the curriculum framework hopes to achieve.

- Goal 1: Themes should serve as guides for the selection of topics and materials, thus helping to keep the lessons on track and keep the curriculum from falling victim to coverage and focused on content.
- Goal 2: Thematic Units should be long enough to give a thorough treatment of the subject, with enough depth and detail to engage students, but not so long as to lose the connection between the past and present.
- Goal 3: The thematic framework should be inherently more engaging to students than the traditional chronological one.
- Goal 4: A balance must be struck between content and coverage, breadth and depth. Students must construct an overall framework for United States History into which they can incorporate new historical information and ideas. They must also gain an understanding of the interpretive nature of history and experience immersion into at least some areas of the past.
- Goal 5: Contemporary History should be covered and the past-present connection will be specifically addressed.
- Goal 6: Chronology and the cause-and-effect relationship must be preserved within the thematic framework.

## CHAPTER 3

### Procedures Of Project

#### Introduction

The goal of this project has been to develop a framework for a thematic United States history curriculum. The core of that curriculum was to be a set of thematic units. Necessarily, the creation of that set was the first and central step in this project. The procedures undertaken toward that end are described in this chapter.

To accomplish this, research was conducted using two sources. First, existing curriculums were consulted. Second, curriculum recommendations and proposals located in education research were examined. This involved an exhaustive library research through periodical databases as well as books in the field of education. This included obtaining books not only from the libraries here at Central Washington University, but book from other Washington libraries, as well as out of state books on interlibrary loan. The ERIC database proved invaluable, as usual, in this research. The Internet was also searched, although this turned up very little useful data with the exception of lists of history courses from prominent universities. Perhaps because of the limited amount of research in this field, periodicals seemed to offer the most information. Data was gathered from these sources, categorized by the researcher, and analyzed based on the pre-selected criteria described below.

## Procedures

The research was conducted in several phases. The first step was to determine the optimum number of themes for a year-long curriculum. A range of between 6 and 9 was determined to be ideal. This figure was determined in the following manner: From the existing research and the researcher's own experience, an average of 4 to 6 weeks was allowed for each theme. Given that there are 36 weeks in the school year, simple division yields the range from 6 to 9. These numbers are, of course, approximations and are suggested as starting points for educators. The researcher has decided, in order to provide variety and flexibility for those interesting in building a curriculum similar to this, to develop 9 themes.

The second step was to collect a broad and all-encompassing set of themes. Seven samples were obtained from existing history curriculums and educational research. This sample contained 129 entrees referred to as either themes, concepts, topics, phenomena, or persistent problems, depending on the terminology employed by the source from which the data was collected.

The third step, for the purpose of making the original sample more manageable, was to narrow this sample by combining like themes and eliminating cases of overlapping or repetitive themes. To accomplish this, the original 129 entrees were grouped into similar categories, each of which was given a title. The end result was the following seven broad categories: very broad themes, economic themes, military themes, government and political themes, social themes, cultural themes, and other themes. The number of entrees in each category varied, with social

themes containing the most and other themes containing the least.

With this more manageable data set, the fourth and final phase of the research was conducted—narrowing down to 9 themes. This was done using the following set of criteria: First, breadth was required. It is not the purpose of this thematic curriculum to exclude important areas of history, only to suggest a change in the structure in which it is taught. Consequently, themes were chosen from all areas and no area was excluded. Second, importance was considered. The reoccurrence of a theme was considered an indicator of its importance. Additionally, the researcher's own knowledge of the field was used to determine importance. Finally, recognizing that the choosing of so few themes from among so many possibilities is inherently subjective, the researchers own personal preferences were used in making the final selections.

The final 9 themes that were chosen are described in Chapter 4. Following is a list of those themes with the specific title wording chosen by the researcher: *Expansion And Conquest; Big Brother Is Watching; The Search For The American Character; Religion In America; The American Art of War; America and The World; From Farm To Factory; The Struggle For Equality*, and *3000 Tyrants, 1 Mile Away*.

CHAPTER 4

Results Of The Project

A Framework For An 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Thematic United States History Curriculum



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	Introduction.....	3
II	A Note On Subjectivity.....	3
III	Course Goals.....	4
IV	List Of Thematic Units.....	6
V	Description Of Thematic Units.....	7
VI	Unit I: Expansion And Conquest.....	26
VII	Bibliography.....	63

## Introduction

This chapter, although certainly an integral part of this entire project, is also meant to stand-alone. It is a “pull-out” of sorts, the actual “curriculum framework” intended as a resource for classroom teachers and others involved in curriculum design. The curriculums’ central components are two. First is the description of the nine thematic units. Included with that description are a central theme and sub-themes that run throughout the unit to be used to keep the material tied together. Also included is a rationale, learning objectives, and sources. The second central component is a fully developed thematic unit—Expansion And Conquest. Fully developing all of the thematic units was well beyond the scope of this project. The included theme is intended to provide an example for the creation of other thematic units and implementation of the research.

## A Note On Subjectivity

The design of a curriculum, although grounded in research, is hardly objective. While research has provided direction and goals for this project, it has largely been philosophy that has guided the many decisions made concerning the specific form and content of the lessons and units. It has been mentioned in Chapter 3 that the researcher’s own personal preferences have been used in determining the final selection of themes. That is as it must be. The possible selection of valuable and appropriate themes is many times greater than the 9 which have been chosen for this curriculum. It is appropriate for the personal interests and knowledge of the instructor to influence the choices that are

made between these legitimate themes. I have chosen the nine themes described in this project, others would likely choose somewhat differently. Indeed, I suspect that as I teach this curriculum many aspects of it will change, perhaps even my choice of themes.

### Course Goals

One of the first steps in designing any course, or in this case a framework for a course, is to establish course goals. By course goals it is meant “broad statements of educational intent” about what students should learn from the course (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 32). There are many possible sources of goals and a year-long course such as the one being designed here is likely to have many goals indeed. In an attempt to keep this project focused on the thematic aspects of the course design and grounded in the related literature, the goals developed here will be those derived from the literature that speak directly to the benefits of the thematic approach.

#### Course Goals:

- For students to develop a broad framework of historical knowledge
- For students to explore at least some areas of history in great depth
- For students to feel engaged by history
- For students to make the past-present connection and understand causality and the cause-and-effect relationship in many areas of history

- For students to be able to see how contemporary issues and realities are a product of historical roots
- For students to appreciate the past as a source for understanding the present.
- For students to understand that history is an interpretation of facts and that these interpretations change over time with the introduction of new facts, information, perspectives, and ideas
- For students to gain experience in the art of “doing history” and working with documents and information, and interpreting those to create historical arguments
- For students to understand the purpose of examining history in a series of themes but also to understand that themes, like periodization, are abstract organizational tools imposed upon history by those who study it to make sense out of its chaotic reality.
- For students to discover one or more areas of history which are personally interesting to them and for students to be able to pursue study of that area as part of their participation in this course.

## List Of Thematic Units

1. Expansion And Conquest
2. Big Brother Is Watching
3. The Search For The American Character
4. Religion In America
5. The American Art Of War
6. America And The World
7. From Farm To Factory
8. The Struggle For Equality
9. 300 tyrants, 1 Mile Away

## Description Of Thematic Units

Following is a description of the nine thematic units chosen for this curriculum framework. Included with each is, first, a description of the contents of the theme. Next, a central theme is identified around which all the materials and subject matter is to be organized. Next are a set of sub-themes that represent various issues and developments that run throughout our history as related to the theme. A Rationale is also included, explaining why the subject matter deserved to be considered together as a theme and why studying that theme is important. A set of unit objectives is included, citing specific learning outcomes which the lessons of the unit should lead students to be able to know and do. Finally, a list of sources that were consulted in the design of each theme has been included.

## **THEME 1: EXPANSION AND CONQUEST**

**DESCRIPTION:** A look at the process of expansion and conquest of the lands and peoples of what has become the boundaries of the United States. It deals heavily with Native Americans and American Indian Policy. It also deals with how Americans have thought about and used the land and the environment. This theme explores the process of expansion, and of the frontier, with an emphasis on the continuity of those processes and the legacy which they have left us.

**CENTRAL THEME:** The process of expansion and conquest by which we as a nation have grown has involved interaction with, and often conquest of, Native peoples and the natural world. That process has left us both a legacy of prosperity and problems and has had adverse effects on the original inhabitants and land.

**SUB-THEMES:**

- How conquest has shaped the lives of the people involved and changed the land
- How the conquered people and land have shaped who we are as a society
- What new lands have meant to America culturally, including the relationship between the frontier and freedom (both political and economic)
- How the ways in which we have chosen to pursue subsistence have dictated the way we interact with our environment and with the Natives.

**RATIONALE:** The process of expansion and conquest by which this nation was built has had profound effects on the land and peoples who were conquered, as well as on ourselves and who we are as a Nation. Understanding this process, why and how it was undertaken, and its legacy to all of those involved, is to better understand who we are. It also provides us with the knowledge needed to deal with the legacy of that process.

## THEME 1: EXPANSION AND CONQUEST (Continued)

### OBJECTIVES:

- Students Will Be Able To (SWBAT) explain the differences between Indian ways of subsistence and European/Colonial methods of subsistence, and how those differences led to conflict
- SWBAT explain the current state of Native American issues in historical context, as well as draw upon that history for an understanding of the present
- SWBAT explain the major events and changes throughout U.S. History that have led to the development of the modern environmental movement.
- SWBAT identify the central events in American expansion, such as the Louisiana Purchase, Gold Rush, Mexican War, etc.
- SWBAT explain the shift of the Federal Government from acquiring land, to distributing land, to managing the land.
- Students will evaluate the process of conquest and form an argument about how to deal with its legacy that is grounded in the history of that process

### SOURCES:

Nature's Nation, Opie

The Legacy Of Conquest, Limerick

"It's Your Misfortune And None Of My Own," White

Changes In The Land, Cronon

Wilderness In The American Mind, Nash



## **THEME 2: BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING**

**DESCRIPTION:** This theme tells the story of the increasing power and scope of the Federal government. This change will be related to foundational philosophy and developments in American political thought since that time. The institutional and structural changes in the government that are a result of this change will also be discussed. The question of whether this growth has produced greater tyranny or better secured the blessings of liberty will be addressed. Topics will include the conflict between Federalists and Republicans, the building of a National infrastructure, the Civil War, the growth and regulation of big business, Progressive Era regulation, the New Deal, the Military Industrial Complex, McCarthyism, The Great Society, the Cold War, Reagan and deregulation, and the Sagebrush rebellion, among others.

**CENTRAL THEME:** The size and scope of Federal Government in America has been continuously increasing

### **SUB-THEMES**

- The foundational philosophy that advocated for a small federal government and the philosophical challenges that have accompanied the growth of government
- The structural and institutional changes that have accompanied the growth of government
- The shifting balance of power between the three branches of government that has accompanied its growth
- The changes in the American situation that have driven the increases in the size and scope of the Federal Government, including expansion, economic growth, and the need for infrastructure

**RATIONALE:** One of the oldest debates in American politics, and arguably the most central issue involving government, has been over the role of the Federal Government in relationship to the states and individuals. The choices we have made in this debate are some of the most profound decisions regarding the future of the Nation and the lives of those who belong to it.

OBJECTIVES:

- SWBAT identify the major periods of growth of the size and scope of the Federal Government
- SWBAT identify the historical situation which prompted these periods of growth
- Students will form an argument, based on historical evidence, regarding the effects of the growth of government
- Students will examine at least one current issue in the context of this historical debate

SOURCES:

The Unfinished Nation, Brinkley

“It’s Your Misfortune And None Of My Own,” White

### THEME 3: THE SEARCH FOR THE AMERICAN CHARACTER

**DESCRIPTION:** This is the story of a self-conscious nation which has, from the beginning, been in search of its own meaning. The attempts to do this by intellectuals, politicians, and others are the substance for this theme. Questions such as *What is an American* and *What does America stand for* will be examined. This is primarily a cultural and intellectual history of the United States. The question of the existence of American uniqueness will be considered.

**CENTRAL THEME:** America is a self-conscious nation that has always been in search of itself, struggling to define what is unique about itself, what “America” means, and what it means to be an American.

**SUB-THEMES:**

- American values of liberty, equality, and meritocracy, which emerge out of the Revolution as the anti-thesis to Europe and continue to be American values today
- The American values related to the Protestant Ethic, including hard work, frugality, and industry that develop and their continuity to modern times and through changing situations.
- The role of nature and wilderness in shaping the American character and the substitution of a natural history for a human history in America
- American’s unique contributions to science, literature, and the arts and how those contributions reflect the character of America
- America’s myths versus American realities

**RATIONALE:** America’s beliefs about itself determine many of the actions it takes, or does not take, politically and socially. Understanding the actions of Americans requires an understanding of what Americans consider themselves to be.

### **THEME 3: THE SEARCH FOR THE AMERICAN CHARACTER (continued)**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- SWBAT identify the major American values and their origins, including equality, liberty, meritocracy, progress, frugality, and individualism
- Students will examine in detail at least one classic American work of art or literature
- Students will evaluate the realities of America's beliefs about itself

#### **SOURCES:**

The Self-Conscious Society, Larrabee

The American Intellectual Tradition, Vol. 1 And 2, Hollinger And Capper

The Promise of America, Blum

This Almost Chosen People, Nye

Wilderness In The American Mind, Nash

## **THEME 4: RELIGION IN AMERICA**

**DESCRIPTION:** This theme will examine religion from two different angles. First, the diversity of religion in America will be explored. Second, the similarities of American religions will be explored--the ways we can talk about an American religion and the commonalities of our religious experience. Although this theme will certainly contain an examination of the many different types of religion in America it will do so in terms of the larger political and social context within which these religions arrived or came about and have changed.

**CENTRAL THEME:** The nature of religion in America has influenced and been influenced by the particular American culture in which it has existed. Religion is in many ways a cultural institution. Specifically, the diversity of religion in America, how and where it has retained diversity, how and where it has conformed, where it has flourished and where it has failed, reflect the influences of American culture. Culture and religion are intertwined.

**SUB-THEMES:**

- The diversity of religion in America
- The persistence of Protestant roots and the dominance of Protestant values as American values
- The peculiar evangelical nature of religion in America
- The appeal and success of fringe religions and cults
- The role of religious leader and church hierarchies as compared to the role of religion in the everyday lives of peoples and their communities
- The limits of religious freedom in America

**RATIONALE:** Religion has been a major force in shaping American history, including our actions, beliefs, ideologies, policies, and politics. It has also been an important factor in the daily lives of most Americans. Going into a new century, American remains one of the most religious Nations' in the world. As an integral part of culture, religion in America must be understood if we are to understand who we are.

## THEME 4: RELIGION IN AMERICA (Continued)

### OBJECTIVES:

- SWBAT identify the central principles and beliefs of each of America's major religions
- SWBAT identify the historical context of each of America's major religions
- SWBAT discuss the influence of religion of the everyday lives of Americans and their communities
- SWBAT discuss the persistence of Protestant roots and the influence of Protestant values on American values
- Students will meet people of at least several of Americans various religious faiths, with the intention that familiarity and personal contact leads to tolerance and understanding, and to gain first hand experience to which they can relate their historical knowledge. (For example, through interviews or a classroom panel).

### SOURCES:

America: Religion And Religions, Albernese

A Documentary History Of American Religion, Gaustad

"It's Your Misfortune And None Of My Own," White

## **THEME 5: THE AMERICAN ART OF WAR**

**DESCRIPTION:** Military history has traditionally focused on battle and the conduct of war—on strategy and tactics. This will be done here. Additionally, American wars will be examined in their broad political, economic, and social context. It will be, in part, a search for what is unique about American wars—both why they fight them and how. The theme will begin with the early conflicts between Indians and settlers and proceed to the present.

**CENTRAL THEME:** Wars are engaged in, fought, and resolved within the larger social, political, and economic context of the nation’s current and past experiences. Our Military is, in part, a cultural institution and a reflection of ourselves.

**SUB-THEMES:**

- The gradual subsidence of American hesitation to have a standing army at home and abroad
- How technology and industry have shaped the way Americans have fought
- America’s propensity toward total war. America’s wars have generally included her citizens as well as her soldiers, both of whom made sacrifices
- War Is Hell

**RATIONALE:** Walter Lipman once said, “War will never be abolished by people who are ignorant of war.” In studying our military history we hope to gain an understanding of the causes and, perhaps more importantly, the effects of war—an understanding that may lead us better avoid war in the future. Additionally, learning about the sacrifices made during war will hopefully compel us to better appreciate our liberty and participate in the democracy that more than one million individuals in uniform have died to protect. Additionally, in exploring the ways that our military is a reflection of our society we stand to learn much about ourselves, about why we go to war, and hopefully about when we should and shouldn’t go to war.

## THEME 5: THE AMERICAN ART OF WAR (Continued)

### OBJECTIVES:

- SWBAT identify the participants and general time period of each of the United States' major wars and conflicts
- SWBAT identify the chronology of the major events and turning points in America's wars
- SWBAT formulate a written answer to the question, "Why did we fight this war?" for each of America's major wars that takes into account the political, economic, and social context.
- SWBAT explain the effect of at least one specific technological change on the way American have fought in war
- SWBAT explain the concept of total war. SWBAT discuss how America has undertaken total war in the past.
- Students will gain a better understanding of the realities of combat and of war in order that they more fully appreciate the weight of decisions to go to war and the sacrifices made by those who fight in them

### SOURCES:

For The Common Defense, Millet  
The American Way Of War, Weigley  
The History Of American Wars, Williams



## THEME 6: AMERICA AND THE WORLD

**DESCRIPTION:** A look at the history of American foreign policy and foreign relations. Instead of concentrating only on the important figures in American foreign policy as is traditionally done, this theme will examine the context in which foreign policy is pursued, including the role of values and beliefs, as well as economic considerations. The theme will proceed chronologically through the major events in American foreign policy while examining the context in which those events take place.

**CENTRAL THEME:** The ever-present tension between isolation and involvement that has dominated America's foreign policy throughout the Nations history, with emphasis on the fact that involvement has generally been the rule.

**SUB-THEMES:**

- The Foreign Policy of American expansion, including relations with Native Americans
- The role of American beliefs and values in shaping foreign policy goals, including American uniqueness and destiny as the bringer of liberty
- The economics of foreign policy goals

**RATIONALE:** The United States has emerged from a half-century long Cold War to find itself in a unique situation in its own history—the most powerful nation in the world and without a clear enemy. The foreign policy challenges facing us are numerous and varied. A look back at our history, at where we have come from and how we got here, is more appropriate now than ever as we struggle to redefine our role in the world.

## **THEME 6: AMERICA AND THE WORLD (Continued)**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- SWBAT identify the general issues involved in each of America's major foreign policy events
- SWBAT identify the major values and beliefs that have driven American foreign policy
- SWBAT discuss American foreign policy in terms of expansion and Indian relations
- SWBAT compare American foreign policy with Native Americans to that with European Nations
- Students will evaluate Americas success at spreading liberty to the continent and the world

### **SOURCES:**

American Foreign Policy: A History to 1914, Patterson

American Foreign Policy: A History since 1900, Patterson

Major Problems In American Foreign Relations, Vol. 2: Since 1914, Patterson And Merrill

Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938, Ambrose

## **THEME 7: FROM FARM TO FACTORY**

**DESCRIPTION:** In this theme the changing ways in which Americans have worked throughout history will be explored, as well as the process of technological innovation and adaptation that has driven those changes. The central development in this theme will be the change from a rural lifestyle and way of subsistence (farms) to an urban lifestyle and industrial way of subsistence (factories), and in modern times, the shift to a suburban lifestyle and the technological pursuit of subsistence in office buildings. These changes are the most profound changes experienced by people and affect, in the most direct way, how they live out their daily lives. Consequently, these changes have had a profound influence on American politics, society, and values. This theme is largely a socio-economic history of America.

**CENTRAL THEME:** The shift from an agrarian to an industrial and technological society, as well as the shift from a rural to an urban and suburban society, has changed the everyday lives of Americans by changing where and how they work and live.

### **SUB-THEMES**

- The increasing specialization of labor and the increased choices and options that come with specialization, as well as the increased need for education and training
- The increasing mechanization of labor and disconnection of the worker from work.
- The development of American capitalism and big business
- The development of the labor movement and subsequent changes in that movement
- The role of government in fostering growth and regulating business and labor
- The process of invention, innovation, and technological change

**RATIONALE:** The shift from a rural agricultural society to an urban industrial one is one of the most profound shifts in American history in terms of changing the everyday lives of Americans. In a world of rapid change that is only accelerating, a look at the roots of change and what it has meant can provide an anchor of understanding.

## **THEME 7: FROM FARM TO FACTORY (Continued)**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- SWBAT identify the major innovations and inventions that have driven the change from farm to factory
- SWBAT identify the major developments in the rise of capitalism and big business
- SWBAT identify the major changes in politics and government, including the development of new institutions, in response to the changing economic situation in America
- SWBAT compare issues of specialization, choice, job security, monotony, seasonal variation, educational and proficiency requirements, and living situations, in order to evaluate work in America at different times in history
- Students will evaluate the life available to Americans at different time in history, taking into account standards of living, income, quality of life, job security, choice, and educational and technological requirements. Students will make an argument for which one of these was/is the best

### **SOURCES:**

Major Problems In The History Of American Workers, Lichtenstein

Industrialization And The American Worker, 1865-1920, Dubosky

Laboring For Freedom: A New Look At The History Of Labor In America, Jabocy

Who Built America, Vol. 1 & 2, Gutman

Working In America: An Eyewitness History, Reef

## THEME 8: THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

**DESCRIPTION:** Chronicles the continuous struggle to expand the definition of “men” in the phrase “all men are created equal.” Looks at blacks, women, and other minorities in particular. Native Americans are also a part of this story, although much of their struggle is addressed in the theme on Expansion and Conquest (The struggle of poor and working class Americans is told primarily in the theme on From Farm To Factory, and not so much here). Topics include Slavery, Indentured Servitude, The Civil War & Reconstruction, The Temperance Movement, Jim Crow Laws, the Separate But Equal doctrine, The Civil Rights Movement, and much more.

**CENTRAL THEME:** The continuous struggle to expand the definition of “men” in the phrase “all men are created equal.”

### SUB-THEMES:

- The incredible gains toward equality that we have made as a society
- The distances we still have to go if we are truly to be an “empire of liberty”
- The continued dependence on foundational principles and documents by minorities in their calls for equality
- The role of protest in achieving equality and the tensions between liberty and order
- The role of law and the Constitution in providing/preventing equality and the frequent failure to change people’s hearts and minds through political action.
- The role of propaganda in advancing the causes both of oppression and equality

**RATIONALE:** The extension of the blessings of liberty to people of all backgrounds has been one of the more difficult struggles our nation has undergone, is certainly one of the most important, and its rewards have been some of the greatest. Although the process seems slow to those who are involved in it, putting the struggle in historical perspective serves to highlight the amazing turn of events and consequent gains that have been achieved in a short amount of time. This is a hopeful story. In the history of that struggle is also to be found lessons for its continued success.

## THEME 8: THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY (Continued)

### OBJECTIVES:

- SWBAT compare the situation of equality in American at the time of its founding and before to the situation now in order to demonstrate the incredible gains made since that time
- SWBAT compare the rhetoric of the Revolution, abolitionists, feminists, and proponents of equal rights and equality throughout our history to our current situation in order to demonstrate how far we still have to go to achieve the level of equality envisioned
- Students will be able to discuss the ways in which change was achieved, both through protest, war, political action, and the courts.
- Students will examine at least one exemplary leader in detail and evaluate the ability of one person to affect historical change, including the importance of the context in which such a person is working.
- Students will take at least one contemporary struggle for equality and write an argumentative essay on that subject, drawing on this history in making their argument.

### SOURCES:

A People's History Of The United States, Zinn  
Born For Liberty, Evans  
African Americans And Civil Rights, Levine  
My Soul Is Rested, Raines

## THEME 9: 3000 TYRANTS, 1 MILE AWAY

**DESCRIPTION:** A look at political action and involvement in American history, with the central organizing story being the increasing democratization of America. This theme will examine the philosophical thought regarding democracy, the various forms of democratic political action in America, and the institutional changes produced by those thoughts and actions. Topics will include the Foundational Documents, the battle between Federalists and Republicans, Andrew Jackson and mass politics, the power of big business, the labor movement, the Populist movement, the top-down reform of the Progressives, the expansion of the electorate, 1920s radicalism, McCarthyism, mass resistance and the Civil Rights Movement, decentralization, modern grass-roots politics, and the explosion of ballot initiatives.

**CENTRAL THEME:** The ongoing tension between republican (small “r”) values and democratic (small “d”) values.

### SUB-THEMES

- The philosophy behind both Whig/republican values and democratic values and the continual conflict over those values throughout American History
- How changes in political participation in America are reflected in changes in the structure and institutions of American government
- The generally increasing move toward more democratic values throughout American history

**RATIONALE:** Few issues are more central to democracy than how citizens participate in that democracy. Understanding the various ways in which Americans have participated in their government, as well as the related philosophical and institutional changes, are critical if one is to understand the current state of that democracy and its institutions.

OBJECTIVES:

- SWBAT identify the differences between a republic and a democracy
- SWBAT identify the key ways in which the nation has become more democratic
- SWBAT identify some key challenges to increasing democracy in America
- Students will evaluate the merits of republican values and democratic values

SOURCES:

The Radicalism Of The American Revolution, Wood

The Legacy Of Andrew Jackson, Remini

The Unfinished Nation, Brinkley



**UNIT 1: THE EMPIRE OF LIBERTY: EXPANSION AND CONQUEST**

## UNIT OUTLINE

### Introductory Lesson

1. Salmon: The Legacy Of Conquest Over Native Lands And Native Peoples
2. Columbus As Hero, Columbus As Villain, And The Role Of Cultural Relativism  
In Historical Interpretation

### The Colonial Period and Before

3. Native Peoples, Native Subsistence, and Native Land
4. European Peoples, European Subsistence, and Nature in the Colonial Mind
5. Conflict Over The Land: Indians, Colonists, And The Environment
6. The Role Of Nature In European Conquest: A Lecture On Alfred Crosby's  
Ecological Imperialism

### The First 100 Years (1800s)

7. Extending The Empire Of Liberty: American Expansion From Lewis And Clark  
To The Mexican War
8. Reconciling The Empire Of Liberty: Domestic Dependent Nations And Early  
U.S. Indian Policy
9. Criticizing The Empire Of Liberty: Romantic And Transcendental Nature And  
The Beginnings Of Aesthetic And Spiritual Appreciation.

10. Destroying The Empire Of Liberty: Westward Expansion And Sectional Conflict
11. Removing The Land: The Gold Rush
12. Taking The Land: Warfare, Wardship, Assimilation, And Allotment
13. Distributing The Land: Homesteads And Railroads
14. Using The Land: Farming, Ranching, Mining, And Logging

### **The Second 100 Years (1900s)**

15. Managing The Land: Progressive Conservation, Benevolent Men, And Perfect Science
16. Preserving The Land: John Muir, Hetch Hetchy, And The Beginnings Of Wilderness Preservation
17. Destroying The Land: The Dust Bowl
18. A New Deal For The Land: Damming The Rivers And Watering The Great American Desert
19. A New Deal For Native Americans: Good Intentions And Limited Results
20. A People Of Plenty: Post-War Abundance, Middle-Class Aspirations, And The Quality Of Life Movement
21. Beyond Wilderness Preservation: Ecology, Health, And The Creation Of The Modern Environmental Movement
22. Destroying The Land Part II: Stumps, Some Salmon, And The Failure Of Management In The Forests And Rivers
23. Fighting Back: Indian Civil Rights

**Into The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

24. The Legacy Of Conquest: Saving The Land

## **Lesson 1: Salmon: The Legacy Of Conquest Over Native Lands And Native Peoples**

**Description:** This lesson will explore the issue of Salmon in the Northwest. The focus will be on the current affairs aspect of the issue, as found in newspaper and magazine articles or the position statements of the interests involved, especially with regard to the role of Native Americans.

**Rationale:** As the introductory lesson for this unit, this lesson is intended to get students to consider the contemporary issues which are a product of expansion and conquest and to start them in asking questions about where these issues come from. By starting in the present, this lesson is leading students to establish the past-present connection and begin to look to history for an understanding of the present. This issue of Salmon has been chosen for several reasons. First and foremost, the Salmon issue concerns the two principle targets of conquest—the Land and Native Americans. All of these things are united in this issue. Second, Salmon is a local issue of critical importance to Washington State. Students should be somewhat familiar with the issue and may have already developed strong concerns or opinions about it.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** This lesson introduces the central theme of the unit—the legacy of conquest. It also addresses most of the sub-themes, including the importance of subsistence in peoples relationship with the environment and the ways in which conquest has effected the lives of those involved.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will examine the current issues surround salmon in the Northwest
- Students will examine the connection between issues surrounding salmon and Native Americans
- Students will research this issue through the news media, specifically magazine and newspapers
- Students will begin to look to history to explain the present.

Sources:

Organic Machine, White

## **Lesson 2: Columbus As Hero, Columbus As Villain, And The Role Of Cultural Relativism In Historical Interpretation**

**Description:** This lesson explores the actions and motivations of Christopher Columbus for the purpose of raising the issues and problems that surround the evaluation and judgment of history, specifically those concerning cultural relativism. Questions that will be addressed include: Was Columbus a great man? Does his treatment of Native's disqualify him from recognition in other areas? Does his initiation of the process of conquest disqualify him from recognition in other areas? What is the value of evaluating Columbus on the terms of his own culture and his own time? How can we best understand Columbus? What does this exercise tell us about culture as a lens through which we see our world?

**Rationale:** This examination of Columbus is ideal in this unit and at this time. As this is the first unit in the course, and this its second lesson, students are exposed early to this very important issue about "doing" history. This is something that students need to encounter before they are asked to think like historians. Columbus is also an ideal subject for this unit in particular as he is widely considered the first agent in this process of conquest. Addressing Columbus addresses the issue of conquest and starts students thinking about what it has meant to our Nation.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** This lesson initiates student thinking about the main concept in the units central theme—conquest.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT describe the approach of cultural relativism
- SWBAT discuss the issues surrounding cultural relativism
- Students will take a stand on how Columbus should be viewed historically

**Sources:**  
None

### Lesson 3: Native Peoples, Native Subsistence, And Native Land

**Description:** This unit will describe the environmental conditions of North America before the Indians, including global climate patterns and the geographical landscape. Indian subsistence methods will be examined with a focus on how the pursuit of that subsistence determined their interaction with, and impact upon, the environment. Indian agriculture, animal domestication, and burning practices will be discussed. The role of climate changes and the introduction of the horse in creating the unstable situation that existed within Indian cultures at the time of European contact will also be examined.

**Rationale:** One of the central misassumptions about Native American culture is that they did not impact the land on which they lived. Understanding how they modified their environment, and especially how that modification was determined by subsistence patterns, is critical to understanding how humans in general are part of the natural world, how the way we live determines our relationship with the natural world, as well as providing the groundwork for the comparison between Indian and European differences in subsistence patterns and their corresponding relationship with the land.

**Relationship To Unit Theme:** This lesson builds an understanding of the sub-theme that addresses the role of subsistence patterns in determining a people's relationship with the land.

**Lesson Objectives:**

- SWBAT explain the general environmental conditions that existed in North America before human arrival
- SWBAT explain Indian subsistence patterns and how those determined the ways in which Indians impacted their environment
- SWBAT describe the ways in which Indian's impacted and modified their environment

**Sources:**

Changes In The Land, Cronon  
Nature's Nation, John Opie



## **Lesson 4: European Peoples, European Subsistence, And Nature In The Colonial Mind**

**Description:** This lesson will look first at European subsistence patterns, almost exclusively agricultural, and the ways in which this way of life led them to interact with and modify their environment. Colonist's assumptions about the environment that were brought from their European experience will be addressed. The particular ways in which the Colonists religious and intellectual beliefs influenced their view of "wilderness," and how that impacted their approach to the environment will also be examined.

**Rationale:** Understanding how and why European colonists interacted with their environment requires understanding of their methods of subsistence as well as their values and beliefs.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** This lesson builds an understanding of the sub-theme that addresses the role of subsistence patterns in determining a people's relationship with the land.

**Lesson Objectives:**

- SWBAT describe the ways in which Europeans modified their environment in the pursuit of agricultural subsistence
- SWBAT describe Colonial attitudes toward wilderness

**References:**

Changes In The Land, Cronon

Wilderness In The American Mind, Nash

Nature's Nation, Opie

"It's Your Misfortune And None Of My Own", White

## Lesson 5: Conflict Over The Land: Indians, Colonists, And The Environment

**Description:** This lesson examines the English settlement of the Atlantic Coast as the beginning of the process of expansion. English settlement will be compared to Spanish conquest. The lesson will focus extensively on the relationships between Indians and colonists, especially those conflicts arising from English settlement of land. The British attempts to contain colonial expansion in an effort to keep the peace will also be discussed.

**Rationale:** The same recipe for conflict that was at work throughout the history of American expansion, that is, the continued taking of Indian land by settlers, is evident from these first English settlements. This is the beginning of the story of the conflict that pervaded expansion and conquest.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** This lesson speaks to the sub-theme on the importance of subsistence patterns and begins to build upon the central theme regarding the legacy of conquest by addressing the conflicts between settlers and Indians.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT compare the different motives of the Spanish and English for coming to the New World
- SWBAT describe the origin of conflict between Indians and colonists in terms of different subsistence patterns

**Sources:**

“It’s Your Misfortune And None Of My Own,” White  
Changes In The Land, Cronon  
The Unfinished Nation, Brinkley

**Lesson 6: The Role Of Nature In European Conquest: A Lecture On Alfred W. Crosby's *Ecological Imperialism***

**Description:** This lesson will explore the role of environmental factors in determining the success of European's in dominating and expanding across the globe. It will follow the argument developed by Alfred W. Crosby in his book *Ecological Imperialism*.

**Rationale:** Alfred Crosby's *Ecological Imperialism* is a unique book, and one perfect for this unit. In showing the relationship between ecological factors and the success of European Imperialism, including their success in North America, Crosby has highlighted the importance of the environment in understanding history. In this unit, his argument highlights the interconnectedness of the conquest of the land and the Natives.

**Relationship to Unit Themes:** The central theme of a legacy of conquest is part of Crosby's look at Imperialism and his arguments tell the story of the process of conquest, thus building upon the central theme. His arguments also deal heavily with subsistence patterns, a sub-theme for this unit.

**Lesson Objectives:**

- SWBAT discuss the role of the environment in the process of conquest

**Sources:**

*Ecological Imperialism*, Crosby

## **Lesson 7: Extending The Empire Of Liberty: American Expansion From Lewis And Clark To The Mexican War**

**Description:** This lesson examines the events and processes by which the United States acquired most of the lands it holds today. Topics include The Land Ordinance of 1785, The Louisiana Purchase, Lewis and Clarke, The Texas Revolt, Oregon Territory, The Mexican War, and Manifest Destiny. Jefferson's ideal of the yeoman farmer and the connection between land and freedom will also be explored.

**Rationale:** This time period and these events represent the vast majority of expansion, in terms of raw acres of land, that the United States experienced. These are the first steps in the conquest that was to come.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** This period of expansion is one of the major events in creating a legacy of conquest, the units central theme.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT answer the question: why did Jefferson feel land was connected to liberty?
- SWBAT discuss the motives for American expansion, including the belief of Manifest Destiny
- SBWAT discuss the justification for American expansion, especially Manifest Destiny

**Sources:**

Lewis And Clark Among The Indians, Rhonda

Undaunted Courage, Ambrose

"It's Your Misfortune And None Of My Own," White

The Legacy Of Conquest, Limerick

## **Lesson 8: Reconciling The Empire Of Liberty: Domestic Dependant Nations And Early U.S. Indian Policy**

**Description:** This lesson examines the haphazard assembly of early U.S. Indian Policy. Topics include Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831), The Trail of Tears, Andrew Jackson and Indian Removal, the creation of the Reservation System, and war on the plains.

**Rationale:** The Central conflict in the process of expansion has been between the Indians and the settlers. One of the clearest connections between the past and the present in this story is the persistence of those Native peoples. This lesson explores the development of actual government policy attempting to deal with that central conflict, a policy which has changed several times.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** This lesson highlights the events in the process of conquest that changed the lives of Native American so profoundly, as well as the changes these actions brought to the conquerors. This idea of changed lives is an important sub-theme to this unit.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT explain what is meant by the phrase “Domestic Dependent Nations” and what that entailed in practice.
- SWBAT explain Jackson’s justification for Indian removal in terms of his political philosophy regarding Democracy

**Sources:**

“It’s Your Misfortune And None Of My Own,” White  
The Legacy Of Andrew Jackson, Remini

## **Lesson 9: Criticizing The Empire Of Liberty: Romantic And Transcendental Nature And The Beginnings Of Aesthetic And Spiritual Appreciation**

**Description:** This lesson explores the ideas of the Romantic and Transcendentalist movements and how those ideas began an aesthetic and spiritual appreciation of nature. The writing of Emerson and Thoreau will be examined, as well as Landscape artists such as Thomas Moran and George Catlin. Also explored will be the relationship between civilization and appreciation of wilderness, specifically Roderick Nash's observation that, "civilization created wilderness."

**Rationale:** One of the legacies of the conquest of the land has been the desire to save it. The ideas presented in this lesson were the early rumblings of the present movement to save wilderness. Indeed, environmental groups and environmental literature often quote these same authors today. An understanding of our views and values today is incomplete without an understanding of these roots. Additionally, a basic understanding of Transcendentalism will be necessary for understanding John Muir in later lessons.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** Among the legacies of conquest is the appreciation of nature.

**Lesson Objectives:**

- SWBAT describe the basic aspects of the Romantic movement
- SWBAT describe the basic principles behind Transcendentalism
- SWBAT explain the role of civilization in creating wilderness
- Students will be exposed to the writing of this time period, specifically to Thoreau

**Sources:**

Nature' Nation, Opie

Wilderness In The American Mind, Nash

Walden, Thoreau

## Lesson 10: Destroying The Empire Of Liberty: Western Expansion and Sectional Conflict

**Description:** This lesson deals with the same events and processes as the expansion discussed in lesson 7. The focus here is on how those events and processes lead to the sectional crisis and the Civil War. The reasons why new western lands caused political conflict between the North and South and the attempts to resolve those conflicts will be examined. Topics include the Wilmot Proviso, Missouri Compromise, Popular Sovereignty, the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Free Soil ideology, and the Lincoln-Douglass debates.

**Rationale:** One of the more catastrophic consequences of expansion has been the re-igniting of sectional conflict that led to the Civil War. Understanding that process allows one to better understand that tragic conflict.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** The Civil War and all it has meant to this Nation is very much a legacy of conquest and thus an important aspect to this units central theme.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT explain how expansion aggravated the slavery issue
- SWBAT explain the major tenants of free-soil ideology

**Sources:**

“It’s Your Misfortune And None Of My Own,” White  
The Unfinished Nation, Brinkley

## Lesson 11: Removing The Land: The Gold Rush

**Description:** This lesson examines the role of the Gold Rush in accelerating the process of expansion and conquest, both of the land and the Natives. The ways in which it accelerated Westward expansion and growth, the effects of the different methods of removing the gold from the land (or the land and the gold simultaneously), and the way greed on the part of miners led to abuses of Native Americans and their further conquest will be explored. Time permitting this lesson may contain a gold panning demonstration.

**Rationale:** The Gold Rush was a catalyst to expansion and an environmental catastrophe. It also had profound effects on the American economy. It is an essential part of the story of expansion and necessary to understand if one is to understand what came after and the process as a whole. As an environmental event whose legacy covers the land today it deserved attention in its own right.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** The social and environmental effects of the Gold Rush are part of the legacy of conquest and the central theme of this unit.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT explain the different methods of gathering gold and the various environmental impacts of those methods
- SWBAT discuss the ways Native American and other groups were treated in the search for gold
- SWBAT explain the role of the Gold Rush in driving expansion

**Sources:**

Legacy Of Conquest, Limerick

“It’s Your Misfortune And None Of My Own,” White



## Lesson 12: Taking The Land: Warfare, Wardship, Assimilation, and Allotment

**Description:** This lesson describes the different ways the conflict between Indians, settlers, and the Federal Government played itself out in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The primary events were the wars on the plains, with such battles as Little Big Horn (1876) and Wounded Knee (1890), the ending of Indian sovereignty and the making of Indians into wards of the state, programs that attempted to assimilate Indians such as the Carlisle School; and the Allotment program instituted by the Dawes Act of 1887.

**Rationale:** These events of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century represent the high point of conflict between Indians, settlers, and the Federal Government, the establishment of the current geographical distribution of those groups on the land, and the creation of programs and attitudes that are still with us today. It would be impossible to understand our contemporary Indian issues nor the developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century without an understanding of these events.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** This lesson describes some of the most central events that have created our legacy of conquest. These same events have also been the ones that have most effected the lives of Native Americans and others involved, one of this units sub-themes.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT describe the reasons for war on the plains and the basic facts of the major battles of Little Big Horn and Wounded Knee.
- SWBAT describe the idea of Domestic Dependent Nations and what it has meant for Native Americans
- SWBAT describe reformers reasons for turning to Assimilation and Allotment and be able to discuss reasons for the failure of those programs

**Sources:**

Legacy Of Conquest, Limerick

“It’s Your Misfortune And None Of My Own,” White

## Lesson 13: Distributing The Land: Homesteads And Railroads

**Description:** This lesson will look at the philosophy and rationale behind the Federal government's distribution of its lands. It will also look at the ways in which that distribution was carried out. Topics will include The Homestead Act of 1862, the Township & Range system, Railroad Land Grants, the Desert Lands Act (1877), and John Wesley Powell.

**Rationale:** Taking the land was only the first step in expansion and conquest. Distributing the land was the second step. Understanding the conflicts and issues of expansion and conquest requires an understanding of this step. It is also necessary if one is to understand the later step of managing the land and the changes to that land that followed.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** The process by which the Federal Government transferred the lands it acquired in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century from public to private hands is an important aspect of expansion and conquest and one of its important legacies.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT explain the reasons the Federal Government had for distributing the land as quickly as possible
- Students will make arguments based on evidence that evaluate the effectiveness of that process
- SWBAT explain the connection between that process and current land holding and use patterns in America, including the role of railroads and homesteads

**Sources:**

Legacy Of Conquest, Limerick

"It's Your Misfortune And None Of My Own," White

## Lesson 14: Using The Land: Farming, Ranching, Mining, And Logging

**Description:** This lesson will examine the economic uses of the conquered lands. The agricultural industries of farming and ranching are central to this story, as are the extractive industries of mining and logging. This lesson will focus on how these primary sector industries have led to desire for expansion and conquest. The role of these resources in strengthening America and the effects of resource extraction on the land will also be examined.

**Rationale:** The strongest motivators for Westward expansion have always been economic. In order to properly understand the process of expansion one must understand the economic motives behind it. The effects of primary sector resource extraction on the land, as well as the prosperity created by that process, are still with us.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** The economic benefits that have come from the use of our natural resources, as well as the environmental problems of their extraction, are important aspects of the legacy of conquest. How we have carried out those economic pursuits has also affected the lives of all of those involved, a unit sub-theme.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT identify the basic realities of life for those involved in each of the industries of farming, ranching, mining, and logging
- SWBAT discuss the contribution of these industries to the economic growth of the Nation
- SWBAT identify the impact on the environment on each of the industries of farming, ranching, mining, and logging.
- Students will make an argument based on evidence regarding the costs and benefits of economic development of the new lands

**Sources:**

Legacy Of Conquest, Limerick

“It’s Your Misfortune And None Of My Own,” White

Nature’s Nation, Opie

## **Lesson 15: Managing The Land: Progressive Conservation, Benevolent Men, and Perfect Science**

**Description:** This lesson examines the philosophy of progressive conservationists such as Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchott, as well as the application of that philosophy and evaluations of its successes and failures. This will include examining the reasons for the change in role of the Federal Government from distributed of the land to manager of it. The idea of “the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run,” will be discussed. The introduction of science into environmental and resource issues will be a key topic, as well as the Newlands Act and the Antiquities Act of 1906.

**Rationale:** Much of our Nation’s environmental actions and policy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century were dominated by the thinking of Progressive Conservationists like Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchott. Indeed, the “wise-use” and utilitarian view of nature that dominated that line of thinking is alive and well today, sometimes standing opposed to the modern environmental movement. Understanding this view, as well as the opposition too it, are essential to understanding the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century environmental history and provides the context for many of our modern issues and concerns. Understanding the ideas of the Conservationists is also essential in understanding the critiques of Preservationists that soon followed.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** Much of our current environmental legacy, both good and bad, comes out of the management and thinking of this time period. Management itself is one legacy of conquest.

Lesson Objectives:

- SWBAT describe the reasons for the Federal Governments changing role from the distributor of lands to the manager of lands.
- SWBAT describe the basic tenants of Progressivism and Conservationsists

Sources:

Nature's Nation, Opie

Saving The Planet, Rothman

A Conspiracy of Optimism, Hirt

## **Lesson 16: Preserving The Land: John Muir, Hetch Hetchy, and the beginning of Wilderness Preservation**

**Description:** This lesson explores the conflict over the Hetch-Hetchy Dam, framing the debate in terms of Conservationists vs. Preservationists as represented by the persons of John Muir and Gifford Pinchott. It also examines in depth the person and life of John Muir and his influence on how Americans thought about wilderness and the environment.

**Rationale:** The Battle for Hetch-Hetchy was a critical moment in the creation of concern over wilderness preservation in America. The conflict between Conservationists and Preservationists remains one of the key divisions in the environmental movement.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** Concern over Wilderness preservation is an important legacy of the conquest of that wilderness. The modern environmental movement is also an important legacy of that conquest.

### **Lesson Objectives:**

- SWBAT describe the conflict over Hetch-Hetchy, including the position of both John Muir and Gifford Pinchott
- SWBAT describe the different philosophies of Conservationists and Preservationists
- Students will be exposed to the writing of John Muir

### **Sources:**

Wilderness and the American Mind, Nash  
Nature's Nation, Opie  
Saving The Planet, Rothman  
The Mountains Of California, Muir

## Lesson 17: Destroying The Land: The Dust Bowl

**Description:** This lesson examines the Dust Bowl as an ecological disaster caused, at least in part, by man. The environmental policies and agricultural practices that contributed will be explored. The questions raised by this event regarding our assumptions about how to live on the land, “normal” climate and weather patterns, and agricultural practices, will also be explored.

**Rationale:** The Dust Bowl is traditionally viewed as a great human tragedy, which it certainly was. It was also self-inflicted and a great environmental tragedy as well. This even raises important questions regarding our approach to the environment, including our farming and irrigational practices.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** This lesson speaks directly to the sub-theme on methods of subsistence and their role in determining how we interact with the environment. This is also one of the best examples of how conquest can so strongly shape the lives of many people. The Dust Bowl, and all the ways it changed our nation, is also an important legacy of conquest in and of itself.

### Lesson Objectives:

- SWBAT describe the factors, both human and environmental, that combined to create the Dust Bowl
- SWBAT discuss the lessons the Dust Bowl offers to our approach to the environment
- Students will understand the intense suffering that was endured by those who experienced the dust bowl

### Sources:

Dust Bowl, Worster  
Nature's Nation, Opie

**Lesson 18: A New Deal For The Land: Damming The Rivers And Watering The Great American Desert**

**Description:** This lesson explores the irrigation of Americas most arid parts, often referred to as the Great American Desert. The central component in that system of irrigation, the dam, is the focus of this lesson. The motivations for building dams, the success of the irrigation that resulted, as well as the importance of hydro-electric power, will be examined. The Environmental impact of the system of irrigation that was created, as well as the dams themselves, will also be an important topic of this lesson. The realities of the lands on which they were built will also be a topic, including the inherent aridity of lands west of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian.

**Rationale:** Of all the changes which Americans have made to the land, one of the most visible and longest lasting has been the great dams. They have also been some of the most important in changing the lives of Americans and the economy of the Nation. Many of today's environmental issues directly involve those dams. As such an integral part of the process of conquest they must be understood. For students in Washington State, this is also a critical piece of local history.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** The physical structure of the dams themselves, as well the environmental and economic changes they have produced, are important legacies of our conquest of the land. Regarding one of the units sub-themes, few structures have effected the lives of so many in such basic and complete ways.



Lesson Objectives:

- SWBAT discuss the motivations for building the dams, including the role of government in their construction
- SWBAT discuss the economic benefits and environmental effects of the dams
- Students will make arguments based on evidence about the costs and benefits of the dams
- Students will gain an appreciation for the ways in which the dams have affected their own lives and the lives of so many Americans

Sources:

Cadillac Desert, Reisner

An Unsettled Country, Worster

Nature's Nation, Opie

## **Lesson 19: A New Deal For Native Americans: Good Intentions And Limited Results**

**Description:** This lesson examines the changes in Indian Policy brought about by Roosevelt's New Deal. The intentions of Indian reformers like John Collier, their successes and failures, including the many cases of harmful unintended consequences in spite of well-meaning reform, will be explored. What all of these changes meant for Indians both on and off the reservation will also be explored. Topics include John Collier, The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934, and the restoration of Indian sovereignty through the Margold Opinion.

**Rationale:** The last major change that United States Indian Policy has undergone was during the New Deal. The policy we have now is a direct descendant of that time. We understand one to understand the other.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** The current Indian policy of the United States is one of the most direct legacies of conquest, and that policies most direct roots are in this time period. This lesson also contains some of the most important developments that have shaped the lives of Native Americans.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT explain the basic changes to Indian policy that were brought on by the reforms of the New Deal period, including John Collier, the IRA, and Margold Opinion.
- SWBAT discuss the reasons for the frustration of the goals of Indian reformers

**Sources:**

Legacy Of Conquest, Limerick

"It's Your Misfortune And None Of My Own," White

**Lesson 20: A People Of Plenty: Post-War Abundance, Middle-class Aspirations,  
And The Quality Of Life Movement**

**Description:** The unprecedented level of affluence experienced in the United States after WWII produced a new set of values in Americans that came to be termed “quality of life.” Whereas before people had been primarily concerned with making a living and derived their identity from the work that they did, people began to concern themselves with how to enjoy their lives and derive identities not from how they made their money, but how they spent it. This was a boon to the environmental movement, as people became concerned with the beauty and health of the natural world around them, both in the cities and the new suburbs, as well as the wild areas—where they worked and where they played. This change in values, which can be termed a change from production to consumption values, will be explored in this lesson. In addition to this positive environmentalism, which has focused on the idea that people can create a more prosperous, clearer, healthier, and leisure filled life, the development of concerns over limits will also be explored, with its basic ideas that people must make sacrifices in production and prosperity if they are to have a healthy environment.

**Rationale:** The modern environmental movement is strong today largely because of these consumption values and the tension between quality of life and limits is still a major conflict in our Nation’s environmental arena. This is contemporary history, the recent origins of our current debates.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** The concerns explored in this lesson are the direct legacies of our conquest of the land. The disputes are largely over how to live, which address the sub-themes of subsistence and how conquest has changes the daily lives of people.

Lesson Objectives:

- SWBAT describe the differences between production and consumption values
- SWBAT describe the basic philosophy of the quality of life movement and how it has impacted the modern environmental movement
- SWBAT discuss the tension between quality of life and limits

Sources:

Beauty, Health, And Permanence, Hays

Nature's Nation, Opie

Saving The Planet, Rothman

Wilderness And The American Mind, Nash

## **Lesson 21: Beyond Wilderness Preservation: Ecology, Health, And The Creation Of The Modern Environmental Movement**

**Description:** American concern over the environment moved beyond simple preservation of specific wilderness areas and species to more holistic concerns for ecosystems and health. As people came to see a connection between the health of the environment around them and their own health, everyone became an environmentalist and the modern environmental movement was born. This lesson will explore the development of the ecological perspective and concerns over environmental health. The two central topics will be Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic and Rachael Carson's Silent Spring. This broad change will be framed as a switch from Conservation or Preservation to Environmentalism.

**Rationale:** The move from concern over wilderness to health, embodied in the shift from Conservation and Preservation to Environmentalism, was the shift that gave the modern environmental movement its great political strength. Understanding the philosophical differences between these ideologies and the reasons for the shift is essential to understanding the current set of concerns we have regarding the environment.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** The modern environmental movement is one of the most direct legacies we have of the conquest of the land. Addressing the sub-themes, we have made many changes to the way we lead our daily lives in response to environmental concerns.

Lesson Objectives:

- SWBAT describe the general idea behind Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic
- SWBAT describe the general content of Silent Spring, as well as explain how it affected a change in the environmental movement.
- SWBAT explain the difference between Conservation, Preservation, and Environmentalism, and explain the factors responsible for the shift.

Sources:

Silent Spring, Carson

A Sand County Almanac, Leopold

Nature' Nation, Opie

Saving The Planet, Rothman

## Lesson 22: Destroying The Land Part II: Stumps, Some Salmon, And The Failure Of Management In The Forests And Rivers

**Description:** Two pivotal environmental issues in the last half of the twentieth century have been logging and salmon. Although modern logging practices have their roots in progressive era silvic science, the post-war boom, especially in housing, led to an explosion in logging activity that collapsed in the early 1990s. Salmon issues too have roots before WWII in the New Deal heyday of dam building. Like logging, however, those issues came to a head in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This lesson examined the development of these two issues both in the context of their post-war origins and their clash with the emerging environmental movement. The issues surrounding how to deal with the current state of logging and salmon concerns will also be discussed.

**Rationale:** The development of issues regarding logs and salmon is necessary background, the most recent background, too the current state of things. And these are two issues which are very much still with us today. Additionally, these are two issues dear to this region, which contains some of the best salmon habitat in the world and the most productive forests on the Olympic Peninsula. Forks, Washington, until the recent collapse of the timber industry, was considered the logging capitol of the world. This lesson also connects to the units introductory lesson and helps students make a direct past-present connection.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** These two issues are very much the legacy of conquest that is this units central theme. These two products of conquest also have had and continue to have profound effects on the way people lead their everyday lives, including many Native Americans.

Lesson Objectives:

- SWBAT explain some of the motivation and reasons for the over-cutting of forests that occurred in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- SWBAT explain the competing values surrounding logging issues
- SWBAT explain the competing values surrounding salmon issues
- SWBAT explain the causes of decline in salmon runs

Sources:

A Conspiracy Of Optimism, Hirt

Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares, Langston

Organic Machine, White

The Final Forest, Dietrich



## Lesson 23: Fighting Back: Indian Civil Rights

**Description:** This concluding unit explores the developments in that last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding Native Americans. Topics here will include the reassertion of federal control at the expense of state control on Reservations, the Indian self-determination policy, The Indian Civil Rights Movement, the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, the Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee, and the increasing role of the courts in deciding Indian affairs.

**Rationale:** This is the latest period of significant changes in the area of Native American affairs in our history.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** These policies and events are obviously our legacy of conquest, and they are also developments that have affected many Native Americans that are alive today and will continue to effect the lives of Native Americans in the future.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT identify the major issues raised by Native American during the Civil Rights era
- SWBAT discuss the increasing role of the courts in determining issues surrounding Native Americans

**Sources:**

“It’s Your Misfortune And None Of My Own,” White  
Legacy Of Conquest, Limerick

## Lesson 24: The Legacy Of Conquest: Saving The Land

**Description:** This lesson is a concluding examination of current issues regarding the environment. Like the introductory lesson on salmon it is intended to help students make the past-present connection. Also like the introductory lesson, this lesson will rely on newspaper and magazine articles. Establishing the connection between the current issues and their past roots is the focus of this lesson.

**Rationale:** Establishing the past present connection is important for making history relevant and is one of the goals of this course.

**Relationship To Unit Themes:** This lesson addresses the most current issues that are a result of our conquest of the land.

**Learning Objectives:**

- SWBAT identify the past roots of contemporary environmental concerns

**Sources:**

None

## Unit Assessment

The following essay exam is an end of the unit assessment. Comprehensive course level assessment and detailed lesson level assessment have not been developed for the purposes of this curriculum framework. There are several reasons for this. Course level assessments, such as comprehensive tests, usually draw directly from each of the units of the course. Indeed, one simple way to assemble a comprehensive test is to take questions from each of the unit tests and put them together to form a final exam. Because only one of the nine units of this framework was developed in detail, assembling such an exam is not possible. Similarly, assessment at the lesson level often depends heavily on how the actual instruction of the lesson unfolds in the classroom. Sometimes such assessment is formal, such as a quiz or short paper. Other times it is informal, such as observing student work during the class period. Furthermore, as the lessons that accompany this unit are not developed at the Procedure or Activity level and do not include materials, designing an assessment at that level is not practical. In short, only unit level assessment fits the scope of this project.

The following essay test is intended as an example of an end of the unit test that takes full advantage of the thematic approach. It does this by asking questions that are comprehensive of the whole unit, thus requiring students to make the past-present connection in their answers and, in doing that, hopefully make the material more relevant. All of the questions in this sample assessment are based very directly on the unit's learning objectives.

Question #1:

Explain the process of conquest of the Native peoples and the Indian policy that resulted. In your answer, first discuss the conflicts between Indians and settlers that resulted from the different ways in which they pursued subsistence and viewed that land. Second, discuss the conflict that emerged out of the process of Westward Expansion, including War on the Plains OR the Gold Rush. Third, discuss the early Indian policies of wardship, assimilation, and allotment, citing one example of each from the material covered in class. Fourth, explain the changes to Indian policy brought about by the New Deal. Fifth, discuss the changes brought about by the Indian Civil Rights movement. Finally, discuss one current issue related to Native Americans and place it in historical context.

Question #2

Environmentalism is often considered to be a new movement that is the product of new concerns about the environment. However, concern over the environment has deeper historical roots. Explain those roots. In writing your answer be sure to discuss the following: the colonial view of wilderness, the origins of aesthetic appreciation, the early calls for preservation, the rise of the conservation movement and its conflict with preservationists, the importance of the ecological perspective and health, and the rise of the quality of life movement. Finally, discuss at least one modern environmental issue and explain how it is connected to these developments.

Question #3

American conquest of the land can be seen as having three phases—taking the land, distributing the land, and managing the land. Explain the development of each of these phases. For taking the land, be sure to discuss the central philosophical justification for taking the land and at least 3 of the major events in acquiring that land. For distributing the land, be sure to discuss the two central ways in which land was distributed. For managing the land, discuss the central philosophy behind management and the person who best exemplifies that view. Also discuss one of the failures of management that was covered in class.

## Bibliography

Albanese, C. L. (1992). America: Religions and religion (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Ambrose, S. E. (1993). Rise to globalism: American foreign policy since 1938. New York: Penguin Books.

Ambrose, S. E. (1996). Undaunted courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the opening of the American west. New York: Touchstone.

Blum, J. M. (1966). The promise of America: An Historical inquiry. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Brinkley, A. (1993). The unfinished nation: A concise History of the American people. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Carson, R. (1994). Silent spring. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Cronon, W. (1983). Changes in the land: Indians, colonists, and the ecology of New England. New York: Hill and Wang.

Crosby, A. W. (1986). Ecological Imperialism: The biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dietrich, W. (1992). The final forest: The battle for the last great trees of the Pacific Northwest. New York: Penguin Books.

Dubofsky, M. (1975). Industrialism and the American worker, 1865-1920. Arlington Heights: AHM Publishing Corporation.

Evans, S. M. (1989). Born for liberty: A History of women in America. New York: The Free Press.

Gaustad, E. S. (Ed.). (1993). A documentary History of religion in America since 1865. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Gaustad, E. S. (Ed.). (1993). A documentary History of religion in America to the Civil War. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Gutman, H. R. (1989). Who built America? Working people & the Nation's economy, politics, culture & society (Vol. 1-2). New York: Pantheon Books.

Hays, S. P. (1987). Beauty, health, and permanence: Environmental politics in the United States, 1955-1985. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hirt, P. W. (1994). A conspiracy of optimism: Management of the National Forests since World War Two. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Hollinger, D. A., & Capper, C. (Eds.). (1989). The American intellectual tradition: A sourcebook (Vol. 1-2). New York: Oxford University Press.

Jacoby, D. (1998). Laboring for freedom: A new look at the History of labor in America. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.

Langston, N. (1995). Forest dreams, forest nightmares: The paradox of old growth in the inland West. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Larebee, E. (1960). The self-conscious society. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Leopold, A. (1987). A Sand County almanac: And sketches here and there. New York: Oxford University Press.

Levine, M. L. (1996). African Americans and Civil Rights: From 1619 to the present. Phoenix: The Oryx Press.

Lichtenstein, B. (1991). Major problems in the History of American workers. Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company.

Limerick, P.N. (1987). The legacy of conquest: the unbroken past of the American West. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Millett, A. R., & Maslowski, P. (1984). For the common defense: A military History of the United States of America. New York: The Free Press.

Muir, J. (1985). The mountains of California. New York: Penguin Books.

Nash, R. (1967). Wilderness and the American mind (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New Haven: Yale University Press.

Nye, R. B. (1966). This almost chosen people: Essays in the History of American ideas. Michigan State University Press.

Opie, J. (1998). Nature's nation: An environmental history of the United States. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Paterson, T. G. (1983). American foreign policy: A History since 1900. Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company.

Paterson, T. G. (1983). American foreign policy: A History to 1914. Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company.

Paterson, T. G., & Merrill, D. (1995). Major problems in American foreign relations, Volume II: Since 1914. Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company.



Raines, H. (1983). My soul is rested: The story of the Civil Rights movement in the deep South. New York: Penguin Books.

Reef, C. (2000). Working in America: An eyewitness History. New York: Facts On File, Inc.

Reisner, M. (1993). Cadillac desert: The American West and its disappearing water. New York: Penguin Books.

Remini, R. V. (1988). The legacy of Andrew Jackson: Essays on democracy, Indian removal, and slavery. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Ronda, J. P. (1984). Lewis and Clark among the Indians. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Rothman, H. K. (2000). Saving the planet: The American response to the environment in the Twentieth Century. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.

Thoreau, H.D. (1971). Walden. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Weigley, R. F. (1973). The American way of war: A history of United States Military strategy and policy. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.

White, R. (1995). The organic machine: The remaking of the Columbia River. New York: Hill and Wang.

White, R. (1991). "It's your misfortune and none of my own": A new history of the American west. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Williams, H. T. (1981). The History of American wars from 1745-1918. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Wood, G. S. (1993). The radicalism of the American Revolution. New York: Vintage Books.

Worster, D. (1979). Dust bowl: The southern plains in the 1930s. New York: Oxford University Press.

Worster, D. (1994). An unsettled country: Changing landscapes of the American West. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Zinn, H. (1980). A people's History of the United States. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusions And Recommendations

#### Conclusions

It has been the purpose of this project to explore the applicability of thematic instruction to secondary level single-subject courses and to evaluate the potential of such instruction to improve the teaching of history by constructing a thematic curriculum framework. That process indicates that thematic organization is both applicable to secondary level single-subject courses and has the potential to improve history instruction. The curriculum framework in chapter four indicates several areas in which this potential exists. First, thematic organization is particularly effective in guiding history teachers' struggle with the breadth-depth dilemma and the conflict between coverage and content. This was a point stressed in the literature and one which I found to be true in designing the curriculum framework. The thematic units, with their central-themes and sub-themes, provided an invaluable guide in making decisions about what to leave in and what to leave out. The question *how does this contribute to an understanding of U.S. History* is simply more difficult to answer than *how does this contribute to an understanding of American expansion*.

Thematic organization can reconcile breadth-depth conflicts in two ways. There is the more obvious subtractive effect, in which materials that did not contribute to the themes of the unit were cut. On many occasions these were topics traditionally covered in history courses and in history textbooks, or topics of personal interest to myself. Outside of a thematic approach it is difficult to imagine cutting this subject matter. Nevertheless, in eliminating this subject matter the theme was made more coherent and unified and, as a result, history instruction would likely be improved. There was also a more subtle additive effect to the thematic approach. It sometimes happened that having laid out key events in a theme a substantial gap in time was left unaccounted for. This would lead me to research the developments of my theme during this missing period and add new materials. The end result was a more connected coherent theme and a stronger curriculum. Again, this should contribute to improved instruction.

It is important to note that a thematic approach does not eliminate the breadth-depth dilemma. Within each theme, the same choices of what to leave in and what to leave out have to be made by the curriculum designer. Making the subject matter more specific and the scale smaller with a thematic unit only changes the context in which the battle between content and coverage is conducted. The direction provided by pursuing a theme and sub-themes is extremely effective in guiding teachers through these decisions, but they are still difficult decisions that are an important part of the teacher's role as a curriculum designer.

The thematic approach also has the potential to make history more relevant to students, an accomplishment that certainly qualifies as improving history instruction. This relevance is a product of the thematic approach's ability to better establish the past-present connection. This was one of the key reasons advanced by many of the authors in the literature review for switching to a thematic course. From my experience in designing the thematic curriculum in chapter four I would concur. The most obvious reason for this is the structural reality of thematic curriculum—students do in fact go from the past to the present many times, and over a shorter period of time. Even in a course which suffers the familiar problem of running out of time and thus fails to complete the last unit, students would still go from the past to the present eight times, which is eight more times than in a traditional course that encountered the same problem. Additionally, this trip from the past to the present is going to occur in about six weeks, not thirty-six as in the traditional curriculum. This means that a more manageable amount of material is covered by the students as they go from the past to the present. This reality makes it more likely they will be able to draw a connection between then and now.

Of course, just because the curriculum goes from the past to the present does not mean the students make the past-present connection. Fortunately, other features of the thematic approach make this likely to happen. Because of the thematic approaches ability to keep the subject matter and materials focused on the units central and sub-

themes as discussed above, students encounter a more coherent story with less extraneous details. In this situation it seems likely that students will have an easier time establishing the past-present connection. The assessment developed for the unit on Expansion and Conquest is a good illustration of the ability of the thematic approach to establish the past-present connection. An end of the unit test traditionally asks questions that pull all of the information in the unit together. In a thematic unit this means questions that ask students make connections between the beginnings of U.S. history all the way to the present. In the unit on Expansion and Conquest, students are asked to discuss U.S. Indian policy from the colonial era to the contemporary issues surrounding fishing rights. In the traditional chronological approach these questions must await the end of the year.

The thematic approach also has the potential to provide a more engaging curriculum to students. This was a claim made by several of the authors in the related literature and one which my experience in designing the curriculum framework would lead me to support. This is likely to be the case for several reasons, the most obvious being the existence, in a thematic curriculum, of a coherent story. This coherence is partially a result of the effectiveness of the thematic approach in dealing with the breadth-depth dilemma as discussed above. It is also a result of traveling from the past to the present in a reasonable amount of time. An analogy would be the ease of understanding a short book on a narrow topic versus a large book that covers many topics. Related to this, and also likely to increase student engagement, is the superior ability of the thematic

curriculum to achieve a past-present connection. In making history more relevant, this should make it more engaging as well. All of these observations are, of course, based on the nature of the thematic curriculum itself, nor on any actual experimentation in a classroom setting. The need for such a study is apparent from this discussion and I have commented on that in the recommendations below.

One of the realities which makes the potential for thematic organization to improve history instruction so high is that the establishment of a cause-and-effect relationship, which is the central benefit of chronological history, does not have to be abandoned. Chronology can easily be maintained within the thematic approach. As the units in chapter four indicate, and is illustrated by the unit on Exploration and Conquest, history still unfolds chronologically, with each lesson in a unit building a foundation for the next. United States history has been divided into nine themes, but for six weeks, nine times, history is a linear journey from the past to the present. In fact, with this journey unfolding within a more narrow subject matter and occurring quicker, the importance of the cause-and-effect relationship seems to be enhanced. Switching to a thematic curriculum is thus not a matter of costs and benefits, or positives and negatives, but of improving history instruction altogether.

No reward greater than improving the quality of history instruction would be required to justify switching to a thematic approach. However, I have found the process of designing a thematic curriculum to be fascinating, engaging, and motivating from the

standpoint of an instructor. The continuous loop of reading, writing, organizing, and researching the themes for this framework, as well as the time spent imagining how all of this will play out in the classroom, has been a fulfilling aspect of the teaching profession in and of itself. Having worked on traditional curriculum design in several situations in the past, I have come to realize that building a specific theme with its own story to tell is much more rewarding work than plugging through a set of chronological lessons that resemble the chapters of the course textbook. This is another important consideration, not to be overlooked or downplayed, when considering how to organize a history course. An approach that increases the interest and enthusiasm of the instructor is likely, by way of effecting the instructor's behavior, to have the same positive effect on the students.

The thematic approach is not all rewards, however. The task of organizing a curriculum along thematic lines presents a challenge not found in the traditional approach—the need for strong subject area knowledge on the part of the curriculum designer. It has already been mentioned that the research base in secondary level single-subject thematic instruction is very thin. This means, among other things, that the classroom teacher has no textbook available to him or her from which to gain general ideas about how to proceed with designing a thematic curriculum, not to mention providing any content such as historical narrative or materials (this project provides a framework, but not the information and materials that are found in textbooks). As a result, instructors attempting to design thematic curriculum have to draw even the most



basic decisions about course structure from their own knowledge and research.

The challenge that this poses to the classroom teacher is even more apparent at the lesson level. Merely looking through a traditional U.S. History textbook and pulling together all of the disparate parts that deal with the subject matter of each of the units themes is not sufficient. There are several reasons for this, each the inverse of the other. First, some of the themes will be over-represented in the textbook and there will simply be too much information for the limits of one unit. An example of this would be political history, which dominates most texts. This is the lesser of two evils as careful editing can yield a decent outline for a thematic unit. The inverse situation stems from the gross under-representation of themes in the textbook. Pulling together the few and far-between references to the subject matter of such a theme will not yield a coherent, connected unit. To properly construct a unit and its lessons the curriculum designer will generally have to consult a variety of sources specific to the subject matter of that unit.

For some units, teachers may be able to find textbooks dedicated to that area from which they can build a set of lessons in a fairly straightforward manner. In chapter four, I found this to be true for only one of the nine units—Religion In America. For most of the others it took several textbooks to be able to develop a comprehensive plan for the unit. In some cases, as with the unit on The Search For The American Character, no textbooks were available at all and I had to rely on a broad collection of secondary historical works. Each of these cases requires a high amount of input on the part of the

classroom teacher. To give some sort of quantitative indication, I would estimate that research equivalent to two full length college courses would be needed to acquire enough background knowledge to successfully design one theme. In designing the unit on Expansion and Conquest in chapter four, I drew very directly on three courses. One was my senior undergraduate seminar at the University Of Washington on the idea of nature in American History. The other two were graduate courses here at Central Washington University, one on the History of the American West, and one an independent study on Environmental History. Even with this recent background I consulted several additional sources beyond the books and notes from these courses and reread parts of many of these books, as well as reviewed many of the notes. This increased need for subject-area knowledge is an important challenge to the creation of thematic curriculum.

### Recommendations

It is abundantly clear, given the potential of the thematic approach to improve history curriculum, that more research is needed in this area. Developing this curriculum framework has raised many questions that should be answered. Some of these concern the reaction of students to thematic curriculum: *Do students find thematic curriculum more relevant than traditional curriculum? Do students make the past-present connection more strongly in a thematic curriculum? Do students find thematic curriculum more engaging?* It would also be interesting to compare the knowledge of

chronological history between two different groups of students, one in a traditionally organized course and one in a thematic course. More research is also needed into the content of thematic curriculums. Designing this framework has indicated that very different choices are made when operating under a thematic approach. *What are the patterns in those differences? What gets emphasized? What gets de-emphasized?* Research that would answer these type of questions would help educators to evaluate thematic instruction more thoroughly.

The creation of this curriculum framework also begs for an attempt at a thematic United States History textbook. Or, if not a textbook, a curriculum guide, not unlike the framework in chapter four, which teachers could consult for organization and information in designing their own thematic courses. Such a resource would go a long way in easing the burden of such an undertaking for the classroom teacher. Ideally, such a resource would contain developed themes such as those presented here, with each theme fully developed into lessons complete with materials and background information.

Research by education professionals is only part of what needs to happen. The other part must come from classroom teachers. The ultimate function of most research conducted by education professionals, after all, is to improve what happens in the classroom. Indeed, what education professionals decide to research often depends on the perception of what is needed, and what is possible, in the classroom. Classroom teachers need to begin to try the thematic approach in their own classes. This can only serve give

researches more to work with. Furthermore, those teachers who are working with thematic curriculum need to contact each other and share ideas. Some sort of organization of such teachers, perhaps divided by field, communicating, perhaps via the internet, could come a long way toward advancing thematic instruction. This is the kind of practical experience that is invaluable and is needed.

## Reference List

Allen, D.D., & Piersma, M.L. (1995). Developing thematic units: Process & product. Albany: Delmar Publishers.

Connor, M. E. (1997). Teaching United States History thematically. Social Education, 61, (4), 203-204.

Fox-Genovese, E., & Lasch-Quinn, E., (Eds.). (1999). Reconstructing History: The emergence of a New Historical Society. New York: Routledge.

Fredericks, A. D., & Meinback, A. M., & Rothlein, L. (1993). Thematic units: An integrated approach to teaching science and social studies. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Jackson, K. T., Jackson, B. B. (1989). Why the time is right to reform the History curriculum. In Glagnon, P, & The Bradley commission on History in schools. (Eds.), Historical literacy: The case for History in American education (pp. 3-15). Washington D.C.: Educational Excellence Network.

Jacobson, D. A. (1999). Methods for teaching: Promoting student learning (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River: Merrill.

Liles, J. (1975). United States history: The thematic approach. The Social Studies, 66, (3), 121-125.

Manning, M., & Manning, G., & Long, R. (1994). Thematic immersion: Inquiry-based curriculum in Elementary and Middle Schools. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

National Center For History in schools. (1996). National standards for History: Basic edition. Los Angeles: National council for History in schools.

Pike, E. L. (1997). "Letting go": Rethinking teaching world history at the secondary level. A plan for a one-year thematic history course. New York: Klingenstein Center for Independent School Education.

Ravitch, D. (1989). The plight of History in American schools. In Glagnon, P, & The Bradley commission on History in schools. (Eds.), Historical literacy: The case for History in American education (pp. 51-68). Washington D.C.: Educational Excellence Network.

The Bradley Commission on History in Schools. (1989). Building a History curriculum: Guidelines for teaching History in Schools. In Glagnon, P, & The Bradley commission on History in schools. (Eds.), Historical literacy: The case for History in American education (pp. 16-47). Washington D.C.: Educational Excellence Network.

Thompson, G. (1991). Teaching through themes. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

Washington State Commission on Student Learning. (1998). Essential academic learning requirements: Technical manual. Olympia, WA: Commission on Student Learning.

White, R. M. (1995). How thematic teaching can transform history instruction. Clearing House, 63, (3), 160-162.