

McDougal Littell

**Formal Response to Written Comments
Received After July 17, 2002, Public Hearing**

Reviewer

Eleanor Hutcheson

Dr. Tina Meacham

Textbook

Creating America

Celebrating Texas

McDougal Littell

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McDougal Littell appreciates the opportunity to respond to written comments specific to our textbooks submitted after the July 17, 2002, meeting of the State Board of Education. The responses that follow include a capsule summary of each comment made and McDougal Littell's response.

Written comments on *Creating America* submitted by Eleanor Hutcheson

1. Pages 133, 135: Ms. Hutcheson's comment: "British troops 30,000, Colonial troops 20,000. The implication is that the colonists did not contribute a great deal during the French and Indian War. Canada going to the British is never mentioned."

Response: The figures Ms. Hutcheson uses do not come from *Creating America*, so we cannot address them. However, the statement that "William Pitt . . . borrowed money to pay colonial troops for fighting" is accurate and not meant to imply that the colonists did not contribute to the war. The text does indicate that "Britain realized that to win the war, it could not rely solely on the colonists for funding and for troops" (page 133). The key word here is "solely." Colonial resources simply were not sufficient to ensure victory for the British, no matter how the colonists felt about the British and the war. The last paragraph on page 135, to which Ms. Hutcheson refers, is not intended to disparage the colonists and their contributions, but instead establishes the conflict that would eventually help lead to colonial rebellion against the British.

In terms of the comment that, "Canada going to the British is never mentioned," the text in fact makes that circumstance clear in the following ways:

Under the head "The British Take Quebec" on page 133, the text states that, "When Montreal fell the next year, all of Canada was in British hands." In addition, on page 134 side-by-side maps show the change in land claims by the British and the French as a result of the war. The map on the right clearly shows all of Canada as belonging to the British.

2. Cover, Pages 147, 149: Query regarding the inclusion of Crispus Attucks, the nature of his ethnic background, and the fact that no African-American men are visible in Paul Revere’s engraving of the Boston Massacre.

Response: We have chosen to combine our responses to queries Ms. Hutcheson made regarding the cover of the book and pages 147 and 149, since all three are concerned with Crispus Attucks.

It is a little unclear as to what Ms. Hutcheson’s main problem is with our treatment of Crispus Attucks. We don’t understand what she means when she says, “Strange is it not that this individual and picture has just appeared after 232 years?” If the implication is that Crispus Attucks and his story are fabricated for purposes of this textbook, we have plenty of documentation attesting to his existence and his role in events of the time. Indeed, Attucks has often been hailed as a hero since his death in 1770, and a monument to Attucks and the other victims of the Boston Massacre has stood in Boston since 1888. Attucks is referred to as a hero, martyr, and patriot of the American Revolution in many encyclopedias and scholarly texts.

Ms. Hutcheson seems to imply that because no person of color is evident in Paul Revere’s engraving shown on page 149, it would suggest that Attucks was not involved in the skirmish. While Revere’s engraving is of historical value simply because he is who he is, it should not be viewed as the definitive portrait of events. Indeed, most historians agree that Revere designed it to create anti-British sentiment. Some other drawings of the event do include a black man in the crowd. However, Revere’s version was the most famous at the time, and Revere has name-recognition value for students.

3. Page 464: Ms. Hutcheson suggests that the Confederate flag shown is not the correct one. She also apparently questions the quality of the photograph of the Confederate soldier as compared to that of the Union soldier.

Response: At least four different Confederate flags were flown during the Civil War, according to World Book Encyclopedia. The flag pictured on this page is the battle flag. Because the “Stars and Bars” flag looked too much like the U.S. flag, troops began to carry this battle flag instead. Encyclopaedia Britannica states that many Confederate soldiers never saw any flag other than the battle flag. This is certainly one of the Confederate flags flown during the war; the text is not in error.

As to why the features and uniform of the Union soldier “contrast sharply” with those of the Confederate soldier, this is the product of reproducing centuries-old

photographs. The fact that the Union uniform is blue while the Confederate uniform is gray also contributes to an unavoidable difference in a black and white photograph. We feel the difference is so subtle that few teachers or students would notice.

4. Page 417: Query as to Peter Cartwright’s life of gambling.

Response: Encyclopaedia Britannica confirms that Peter Cartwright became “a gambler at cards and horse racing” before his conversion at age 16. Several Web sites of religious organizations allude to his “sinful” way of life before becoming a preacher. In fact, Cartwright’s own autobiography tells of his gambling as a boy before his conversion.

5. Page 525: Ms. Hutcheson requests documentation for this statement: “White racists even killed teachers and burned freedmen’s schools in some parts of the South.”

Response: Numerous encyclopedias, scholarly texts, and Web sites provide documentation of the violence that white racists directed against schools and teachers in freedmen’s schools during Reconstruction. These include Encyclopaedia Britannica and *America’s Reconstruction: People and Politics After the Civil War* by Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney (1995). These sources state that teachers at freedmen’s schools faced harassment, violence, and even death, and that their schools were often burned.

6. Pages 590–591: Query as to why carbon dioxide produced by humans is not included on the page, and also why this feature on Protecting the Environment is included in a book whose time period ends in 1877.

Response: (content change) We will add the following statistic to the Data File under “Global Warming:”

Human respiration (2.6 persons) – 1,950

The text does not in any way suggest that global warming was a problem before 1877. This feature is part of an Epilogue that covers the United States from 1860 to the present. The Epilogue is included in the textbook for teachers who want to be able to refer their students to information on events after Reconstruction.

Written comments on *Celebrating Texas* submitted by Tina Meacham

In Tina Meacham's written review of Texas history textbooks, she attacks not only the content of the book, but the motives of those creating it, suggesting some sort of subversive political agenda. Needless to say, this comes as a surprise to those of us who actually *did* create the text, who approached this project as a labor of love, with no political agenda whatsoever. We were motivated by a desire to educate the children of Texas about this great state, to instill in them the pride that comes with Texas citizenship, and to prepare them for success both on state-mandated tests and as the future leaders of Texas. All of these motives would be ill-served by the partisan agenda that Dr. Meacham ascribes to us.

We are frankly puzzled how Dr. Meacham could have read the same book that has been read by dozens of authors, reviewers, editors, fact checkers, and writers – some of whom had the sole task of identifying and eliminating matters of bias – and come to such radically different conclusions than any of them came to. In the three days of public testimony about this book and others, there has not been a single voice raised in agreement with Dr. Meacham's conclusions.

Because Dr. Meacham provided so few specific examples to support her sweeping generalizations, it is difficult to respond to the conclusions she makes, other than to say that we disagree strongly with virtually every criticism she has of the text, and that even a cursory review of the book will lead any unbiased reviewer to reject her conclusions out of hand.

Dr. Meacham has broad criticisms about the amount of coverage of various regions of Texas and of various periods in Texas history. We disagree with her comments. *Celebrating Texas* takes a fair and balanced look at all regions of Texas, all the people of Texas, and all the history of Texas. Its coverage is entirely appropriate to state curriculum requirements and to the needs of middle school students.

Dr. Meacham was specific in a few of her comments, and we are pleased to be able to respond to these. Dr. Meacham incorrectly states that neither the Texas Pledge of Allegiance nor the Texas state song are in the book. In fact, both are prominently featured on page 686 and occupy roughly half that page. Dr. Meacham correctly points out that the city of Lubbock is not listed in the index. This was a failure in the indexing process and will be corrected in the next printing of the text (**editorial change**).

Dr. Meacham criticizes the book for what she perceives as “a strong bias . . . against our common American culture.” As “evidence” of this, she points to features that celebrate the cultures of Texas: Native American, Hispanic American, African American, European American, Middle Eastern American, and Asian American. The common factor among all these groups, of course, is that they are Americans. They *are* American culture, and a blending of all of these groups is what makes American culture. *Celebrating Texas* celebrates all of these cultures, both individually and in the unique combination that makes Texas – and America – great. To presume that we can look at American culture without looking at all the cultures that have melded together to form it is impossible and counter to the desire that Texas students understand their own society and its roots.

Dr. Meacham criticizes the use of editorial cartoons on pages 658 and 659. However, her criticism makes it clear that she misunderstands both the purpose of the editorial cartoons’ being in the book and the meaning of the cartoons themselves. The cartoons in question are part of a TAKS-based lesson on interpreting political cartoons and identifying bias in them. Editorial cartoons by their very nature are inherently critical of the people and parties currently in office. The cartoon on page 659 relates to light rail, an issue that is neither “Republican” nor “Democrat.” The cartoon on page 658 does not portray Republicans “pushing Democrats out of the state,” as Dr. Meacham contends. It is a satirical look at the redistricting process, in which the party in power almost always redraws district lines to its own benefit. Part of the assignment is for students to identify bias within the cartoons and interpret their meaning in that light, something that is required by the TEKS.

There are only three other modern editorial cartoons in the text, despite Dr. Meacham’s reference to “cartoons used throughout the book.” One pokes fun at both the Democratic and Republican candidates for governor. One comments on Texas’s move from a state that had been dominated politically by the Democratic Party to one that is dominated politically by the Republican Party. The last shows a tractor labeled “Democracy” with one character saying “Hey, It’s guaranteed sturdy, resilient, productive an’ reliable – nobody said anything about *fast*.” To suggest that this is part of some kind of hidden Democratic political agenda in the text is unsupported. For instance, the two biographies that appear nearest the redistricting cartoon in the text are both of Republicans, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and Justice Wallace B. Jefferson. The text states that “Hutchison continues to provide strong leadership for Texas” and that Jefferson’s appointment to the Texas Supreme Court “was a historic moment for Texas.” *Celebrating Texas* is hardly a “left-wing piece of propaganda,” as Meacham disingenuously claims.

Dr. Meacham also takes issue with the “Visual Summary” graphic on page 656. She correctly criticizes one element of the Visual Summary, the words “Warmer Climate.” These words will be deleted in the next printing of the text (**content change**). However, Dr. Meacham misinterprets the rest of the Visual Summary, in part because she seems to confuse the concepts of “percentage” and “number.” The text predicts that the percentage of older, poor, and wealthy Texans will increase in the 21st century, while the percentage of middle-class Texans will decrease. These predictions are well supported by all current demographic trends and predictions, including those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Dr. Meacham, however, incorrectly states that the book claims the *number* of middle-class Texans will decline, implying that many who are now middle class will become poor. The actual text, appearing within a down-pointing arrow, is “% Middle-Class Texans.” This simply means that poor groups and rich groups are expected to grow faster than the middle class, not that the middle class will shrink, or that, to quote Dr. Meacham, “the poor will become poorer and the rich will become richer,” something the text never states nor implies. The Visual Summary is intended to reinforce the chapter in which it appears, not serve as a replacement for it. It cannot be fully understood by those who haven’t read the chapter.