

September 30, 2002

Dr. Robert Leos
Senior Director
Division of Textbook Administration, Room 3-110
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Dr. Leos,

We at Teacher's Curriculum Institute, publishers of *History Alive!*, are pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the state's textbook adoption. We appreciate the feedback on our curricular materials and are pleased to be able to respond to this testimony. The information that follows contains an overview of our methodology as well as our written responses to the individual concerns expressed in the written comments and oral testimony before the State Board of Education at the Textbook Hearing on September 11, 2002.

History Alive! Methodology

History Alive! is a series of instructional practices and curricular materials used by social studies teachers to allow students with diverse learning styles to experience history and explore multiple perspectives on compelling historical issues. Teachers thoughtfully combined educational research and theory with the realities of classroom teaching to develop these teaching methods. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, Elizabeth Cohen's research on cooperative groupwork, and Jerome Bruner's notion of the spiral curriculum form the theoretical backbone for the *History Alive!* approach.

The *History Alive!* Curricula includes instructional materials that support each of Gardner's seven multiple intelligences:

- Linguistic
- Logical-Mathematical
- Visual-Spatial
- Body-Kinesthetic
- Musical-Rhythmic
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal

Gardner himself wrote about the *History Alive!* approach: "Many have spoken about a 'multiple intelligences' way of presenting curricula but few have actually applied the theory to a specific discipline. *History Alive!* is, to my knowledge, the first text to apply MI theory comprehensively to the study of history."

Testimony of Ann Newman (page 219, line 8 to page 221, line 6 of oral testimony): Concerns about “trivializing serious and significant events [like] the Boston Massacre, Boston Tea Party, Intolerable Acts, U.S. Constitution”

Response: Educational research shows that illustrations, stories, and metaphors help students learn about new and unfamiliar topics. Such teaching tools enable students to see the relationship between something they already know and unfamiliar content. Reading theorists call this “tapping into prior knowledge.” In *History Alive!* materials, metaphors or illustrations are used to relate historical topics to subjects about which students already have “prior knowledge.” For example, in a unit on the Cold War, students are encouraged to think of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a sheriff’s posse out to arrest the outlaw Soviet Union.

Such metaphors do not trivialize American history. In fact, the opposite is true. They help students relate events that happened many years ago (events that from a student’s perspective may have little relevance) with topics about which students already have some knowledge. Such connections raise student retention and achievement.

Generally, the lives of upper elementary, middle, and high school students are centered around three main arenas: school, home, and peer relationships. Teachers who want to relate history to their students, who want to do more than present a dry recitation of historical events, have found it beneficial to relate history to the world with which students are already familiar. The purpose of the metaphors cited in the public testimony --that relate events from the American Revolution and the Constitutional Era to school and family--are designed to better help students understand historical events.

Metaphors are not the sole means of topical coverage. In fact, they are often a beginning point for instruction, designed to capture a student’s attention so that the study of history takes on greater meaning. Indeed, in our chapters on the American Revolution, students read that the Americans overcame great obstacles in defeating the British. A primary source included in the text notes that the men at Valley Forge “had nothing to eat for two or three days previous... The greatest part were not only shirtless and barefoot, but destitute of all other clothing, especially blankets.” The *History Alive!* text quotes Lafayette when he said, “the patient fortitude [courage] of the officers and soldiers was a continual miracle.” Students clearly gain an understanding of the sacrifices made by their forefathers—through the time-tested teaching tool of metaphor.

Testimony of Ann Newman (page 225, lines 15-24 of oral testimony): Concerns about Native Americans (re their ideas influencing the Constitution)

Response: There is strong evidence in the historical record to show that Native Americans did, indeed, have influence on the thinking of some of the men who founded the United States. While pondering the problems facing the disunited colonies on the eve of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin stated, “It would be a very strange thing if Six Nations of Ignorant Savages should be capable of forming a Scheme for such an Union and be able to execute it in such a manner, as that it has subsisted Ages, and appears indissoluble, and yet a like Union should be impracticable for ten or a dozen English colonies.” This quote is from a letter to James Parker, March 20, 1750.

Franklin was referring, of course, to the Six Tribes of the Iroquois that had forged a successful confederacy that all of the founders were aware of as they drafted both the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the United States of America.

For more information about Native American influences on the founding of democratic institutions see *Forgotten Founders* by Bruce E. Johansen, PhD. Johansen is Professor of Communications and Native American Studies at the University of Nebraska, Omaha. Also, see *Exemplar of Liberty* by Donald Grinde and Johansen. Grinde was the Rupert Costo Professor of American Indian History at the University of California, Riverside, has taught at UCLA, and now is on the faculty of the University of Vermont.

Testimony of Ann Newman (submitted reading on “The Gay Liberation Movement” in written comments without any oral testimony): Concerns about USH12-5, Activity 3.1, Student Handout on Gay Liberation

Response: The African American civil rights movement inspired many other groups to advocate for greater equality in the period after 1950. In order for students to gain a broad understanding of the civil rights movement, it is necessary to examine the widening struggle for civil rights. In the 1960s and 1970s, Asian Americans, senior citizens, Native Americans, women, Latinos, the disabled, and many other groups emulated the nonviolent methods that successfully propelled African Americans to a fuller measure of equality. This broader movement transformed many aspects of American life.

It is important for students to understand two key issues about the civil rights movement. First, many different groups advocated for change—not just African Americans. Second, each of the groups used a variety of methods to achieve their goals. The activity referred to in testimony, entitled “The Widening Struggle,” allows students to analyze an array of primary source documents to help them achieve these two important learning objectives.

Primary documents included in the activity include excerpts from Cesar Chavez’ *Forty Acres*, the membership requirements for the Mexican American Youth Organization, and a letter home from a young, white college student who participated in the “Freedom Summer” voter registration drive in Mississippi in 1964. Each document is also accompanied by an historical visual that students must “read” in order to better comprehend the primary source.

These documents enable students to see the civil rights movement from multiple perspectives. Thus, the movement is revealed as multi-faceted, wide-ranging—not monolithic and limited to a single group. For, in reality, the civil rights movement cut a wide swath through American life, impacting everything from the economy to politics to social relations.

The material submitted by Ms. Newman is one of eight primary source documents used in this activity. It relates to the gay rights movement of the 1970’s, and it should be considered in context with the other sources and not in isolation. It comes from a biography of Harvey Milk, by Jim Rivaldo and Dick Pabich. Milk, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors until his assassination, was the first openly gay elected official in American history. The document is intended to help high school juniors understand the struggles of a group that has played an important role in shaping public dialogue in recent times. In the last decade, Americans have hotly debated such topics as gays in the military, hate crimes legislation, and increased funding for AIDS research. It is our contention that students can better participate in public dialogue about such topics when their views are informed by a knowledge of history.

Testimony of Ann Newman (page 224, line 18 to page 225, line 14 of oral testimony; submitted lyrics as part of written comments): Concerns about the song “Give a Damn”

Response: Music is an important element in understanding an era, a period, or a movement. The recordings and lyrics included in the *History Alive!* unit on the Civil Rights movement are rich primary sources selected to assist students in understanding the ways in which music unified civil rights workers and awakened a nation to the injustices of segregation.

The song “Give a Damn” is one of three songs in an activity that tells the story of the African American civil rights movement from 1954 to 1968. The other songs, “We Shall Overcome” and “Ain’t Nobody Gonna Turn Me ‘Round,” help students understand the early struggles of the civil rights movement when desegregation and voting rights were the key issues. “Give a Damn,” a Top 40 song played on radio stations throughout the country in 1968, poignantly helps students understand the issues facing the civil rights movement in the late 1960s—namely, housing and urban poverty.

The song “Give a Damn” is performed by Spanky and Our Gang who also performed “I’d Like to Get to Know You,” another hit song from the time period. We selected the song, in part, to show the extent to which the civil rights movement permeated the culture, making its way into the popular culture of the era and to the top of recording charts.

More importantly, the song has a strong pro-social message. Its overarching theme is that if we look around we will find need, and as citizens we have the obligation to care for those in need. It is a message that is at the heart of civics education: care, be concerned, get involved.

Below is the first verse of the song:

*If you’d take the train with me
Uptown, thru the misery
Of ghetto streets in morning light,
It’s always night.
Take a window seat, put down your Times.
You can read between the lines.
Just meet the faces that you meet beyond the window’s pane.*

(Chorus) And it might begin to teach you to give a damn about your fellow man.

Testimony from Elizabeth B. Gonzales (page 238, line 3 to page 242, line 19 of oral testimony): Experiences using *History Alive!* materials

Response: This testimony is typical of feedback we receive from teachers who find that *History Alive!* materials help them to reach all the learners in their diverse classrooms. Ms. Gonzalez states that students are “excited and motivated” in class when she uses a lesson or strategy from *History Alive!*, and she notes the success teachers who use *History Alive!* have experienced on the TAAS test. We received similar feedback from Kathy Benz from Cypress-Fairbanks ISD. She sent us the following information regarding the success they have had using *History Alive!* materials: “We experienced a 10% growth in our overall TAAS scores last year, going from a 79% passing rate to 89% passing. Truitt is a middle school with a very diverse population, and we needed a way to reach all learners. *History Alive!* engages kids, takes them to a higher level and increases their understanding of historical events and concepts. I feel it really does make ‘history come alive’ for all students.”

Testimony from Delia Woodbury (page 273, lines 1-17 of oral testimony and submitted list as part of written comments): Concerns regarding historical accuracy of references to the Mormon Church

Response: We appreciate Ms. Woodbury’s review of our material and are pleased that she has listed our materials as having a high degree of historical accuracy. We hold high standards for historical accuracy, and believe it is important to include multiple perspectives in telling the story of American history. There are no factual errors of our materials cited in her testimony.

Thank you for your time in reviewing these responses. Please contact me if there are any questions or concerns that remain. You can reach me at (800) 497-6138 extension 112 or at nmartin@historyalive.com.

Sincerely,

Natasha Martin
Sales Manager

cc: Mario Campanaro
Becki Smith
Jim Lobdell