

## Lesson Plan 2:

### Textbook Analysis--Levels of Questions Teaching Strategy

Lesson Background: All of the text content for this lesson comes from Anthony Pellegrino, Linda Mann and William Russell, *To Lift as We Climb: A Textbook Analysis of the Segregated School Experience* (2013). The lesson objective is not meant to have students critique the textbooks themselves (as the article does) but rather to allow students the opportunity to consider what editors choose to include in the narrative of race relations, as well as the complexity and long term significance of the content choices those editors make. The excerpts then are not meant to fairly reflect the quality of the textbooks themselves but simply serve as a vehicle for students to consider varied treatment of comparable topics with some analysis. The material for this lesson is adapted from *Facing History and Ourselves*.

Goal: Students will develop questions of increasing complexity with regard to history textbook excerpts and use these questions to evaluate text excerpts

Objectives: Students will develop personal criteria for evaluating narrative, context and content in history textbooks related to the issues of African American education in the United States.

Students will discuss the implications of agency as a factor in African American history.

Common Core Standards:

9-10. RH.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Oregon Department of Education Standards:

HS.10. Evaluate an historical source for point of view and historical context.

Time Needed: one 90 minute block

Materials Needed:

- Did you know? 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrJfDUzD7M>
- Hand-outs A and B (1 per student)
- Supplementary Background Information (have these on each desk for reference)

**Hook Option 1: (10 minutes)** ADVANCED Watch Video: Did you know? (2014) Have students watch the video and ask them to consider how the proliferation of data and access to data affects what information a US history textbook might include.

Post-video discussion:

Given that we can't include everything (and couldn't even before the data revolution), who decides what goes in the text? Who should decide? What are the criteria today? What should be the criteria? Are textbooks democratic? Does access to more information get society closer to 'the truth'?

In what ways might it matter what parts of the story we tell, what we emphasize, what we omit?

Or

**Hook Option 2: (10 minutes)** Students will define and discuss the word agency by considering the difference between these statements:

- André wrote an excellent paper
- And
- André's teacher taught/allowed/pushed him how to write an excellent paper.

Is it possible for both statements to be simultaneously accurate? What if André already knew how to write an excellent paper? What if André had spent 5 hours at the library working in his free time with a writing tutor? Etc.

Depending on the class, you may want to actually pose the guiding question: What if textbooks narrate the story of African American history and blacks are acted upon rather than acting to create their own solutions?

You can either have students respond in writing first, then discuss in pairs, groups, or as a class or complete this exercise verbally as a class.

**Body: (60 minutes)**

1. (15 minutes) Pair students so that even pairs of students have handouts A and B.

If students are not familiar with the "Levels of Questions" activity, you may want to go through Text 1 in each packet as a whole class. Ideally students should have done this kind of activity previously. Allow students 5 minutes to read the three texts. Students should discuss the texts with their partner and brainstorm 3-5 questions for each category. Students will then choose one of the questions to write down. Be sure that students discuss, generate multiple questions then choose one.

2. (20 minutes) Pairs should then switch documents. Students remain with the same partner but receive the opposite letter handout with the questions written on it. In pairs students should read the new texts and written-in questions, discuss the questions and generate possible answers.
3. (20 minutes) Students return handouts to the original owner and fold into a group of 4 (2 A's, 2 B's). A-B Groups should discuss the following discussion questions (they are also in the handout):
  - a. What was the most interesting question or point to consider in this activity?
  - b. There are very few, if any, U.S. history textbooks adopted by school systems that do not include some information about education for African Americans. What can we infer from this fact?
  - c. "In American history and government, the narrative presented is often a story of triumph and progress glossing over or ignoring episodes of the past that challenge American exceptionalism [the idea that the US is always right and the US story is one of triumph].
  - d. What are the advantages of telling a story of triumph for individuals? For communities? For nations and building nationalism?
  - e. Evaluate the claim, "High school history textbooks often fail to address African American agency in telling the story of the United States civil rights movement."
  - f. Develop 4-5 qualities of an excellent US history text.
4. (10 minutes) Class discussion of themes. Teacher may elicit responses/questions to specific text or ask students to share answers to discussion questions.

**Informal Assessment Tool:**

(5 minutes) Exit slip. Ask students to write an answer to any of the final discussion questions.

**Extensions/Modifications:**

1. This lesson requires high-level analytical and communicative skills. For ELL/IEP students, an appropriate modification might be to give students the questions rather than have them generate the questions. Alternate questions might be: What does the text tell you? (summarize)

2. What is good/bad about the explanation (evaluate)?
3. What might be missing from the story (generalize)?

An obvious extension of this activity would be to have students research and then write a history text entry focusing on Brown v. Board or African American education.

Supplementary Materials/Handouts:

Pellegrino, Anthony and Mann, Linda. "To Lift as We Climb: A Textbook Analysis of the Segregated School Experience." High School Journal, Vol. 96, No. 3. (February/March 2013), pp. 209-231. (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2013.0009>)

Examining History Textbooks

Name:

Handout A

Period:

Student Instructions: Read each of the following excerpts about African American education in US History. Then, working with a partner who has the same handout, you will develop 3 different kinds of questions. Your questions should follow the kinds of questions outlined in the chart below. The overall information you are seeking to consider relates to what makes a "good" (complete, balanced, accurate) historical account of the information.

Kind of Question	What it does	Words that might be useful
Level 1: Fact Based	Answered explicitly by information in the text	Explain Describe Summarize Identify Give examples
Level 2: Inferential	Can be answered through analysis and interpretation.	Interpret Analyze Criticize Compare/Contrast Categorize
Level 3: Universal	Open-ended questions	Justify To what extent? Assess the best solution for What evidence supports the idea that...?

Textbook 1: Discovering Our Past: A History of the United States 2013

Americans in 1865 went to school for an average of just four years. However, in an industrialized, urbanized nation, education was increasingly the key to success. Many believed that young people needed more education. As a result, legislatures across the country began to pass new laws. By 1914 most states required children to have at least some schooling. More than 80% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 were enrolled in school...In the South, many African Americans received little or no education. In many parts of the country African Americans had to attend poor-quality schools that were segregated – separate from schools for white students. (589 quoted on 222)

Level 1 Question:

Level 2 Question:

Level 3 Question:

Textbook 2: United States History LaPansky-Werner 2011

In the summer of 1908, a white mob in Springfield, Illinois, attempted to lynch two African American prisoners in the city jail. Upon learning that the prisoners had been removed to safety, the rioters turned their anger against the city's black residents, killing two people and burning 40 homes...The Springfield riot also got the attention of a number of white reformers. They now acknowledged the need to help African Americans protect their lives, win the right to vote, and secure their civil rights. In 1909, they joined with leaders of the Niagara Movement to form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). (567 quoted on 223)

Level 1 Question:

Level 2 Question:

Level 3 Question:

Analytical Text:

The Black community... [created and] promoted cultural and intellectual growth using ...their own resources, rather than [relying on] White benevolence [kind acts], to construct the foundations of free Black life in the United States. Emphasizing collective self-help and both formal and informal mutual support networks, African Americans established independent churches and schools. Moreover, they reflected the value placed on creating institutions they controlled by embracing the deep-seated desire to learn and attain an education that was associated with freedom, empowerment and the rights of citizenship” (213)

Level 1 Question:

Level 2 Question:

Level 3 Question:

Examining History Textbooks

Name:

Handout B

Period:

Student Instructions: Read each of the following excerpts about African American education in US History. Then, working with a partner who has the same handout, you will develop 3 different kinds of questions. Your questions should follow the kinds of questions outlined in the chart below and the overall information you are seeking to consider relates to what makes a “good” (complete, balanced, accurate) historical account of the information.

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Textbook 1: American Anthem, Ayers 2009

Linda Brown, an African American third-grader in Topeka, Kansas, lived just blocks away from the nearest elementary school. However, that was a whites-only school, so she had to walk five blocks and then take a bus for two miles to reach the elementary school for blacks. (913 quoted on 225)

Level 1 Question:

Level 2 Question:

Level 3 Question:

Textbook 2: United States History, LaPansky-Werner 2011

All nine of the Courts' Justices supported the Brown decision, which was written by the newly appointed Chief Justice Earl Warren. "Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race...deprive the children of the minority group equal education opportunities?" Warren asked in his decision. "We believe that it does." (919 quoted on 225)

Level 1 Question:

Level 2 Question:

Level 3 Question:

Analytical Text:

Event-focused coverage, while not necessarily misleading, does little to foster a sense that the Black educational experience was long-fought and with active participation of African Americans from systems established and maintained by the Black Community (Anderson, 1988; Siddle Walker, 1996) (226)

Our collective memory of the Black educational experience continues to be episodic [sometimes missing parts of the story] and typically carries the notion that White intervention was the sole means by which Black children were afforded opportunities to learn... Ignorance of past and current racism and fundamental inequality in American society for people of color accounts for perpetuation of misunderstandings in contemporary cultural dynamics and the interwoven associations found among Americans. (214)

Level 1 Question:

Level 2 Question:

Level 3 Question:

Final Group Discussion Questions:

Discuss each of the following questions. You may focus on the questions that most interest you but be certain that each person in the group responds to each question. Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

1) What was the most interesting question or point to consider in this activity?

2) There are very few, if any U.S. history textbooks adopted by school systems that do not include some information about education for African Americans. What can we infer from this fact?

3) “In American history and government, the narrative presented is often a story of triumph and progress glossing over or ignoring episodes of the past that challenge American exceptionalism [the idea that the US is always right and the US story is one of triumph].

What are the advantages of telling a story of triumph?

For individuals?

For communities?

For nations and building nationalism?

4) Evaluate the claim, “High school history textbooks often fail to address African American agency in telling the story of the United States civil rights movement.”

5) Develop 4-5 qualities of an excellent US history text.

*Supplementary Materials:*  
Textbook Analysis: Supplementary Information

African American Education in the US:	Brown v. Board of Education
<p>Historians/academics have found that...</p> <p>African American schools were “embedded in their communities” (Johnson, 2004)</p> <p>Provided students with exemplary educational qualities including: caring teachers (Hundley, 1965)</p> <p>Provided teachers with exemplary administrative leadership (Siddle-Walker, 1969)</p> <p>Provided high academic and moral expectations (Morris and Monroe 2009)</p> <p>Provided a robust curriculum (Anderson, 1988)</p> <p>Provided a supportive community (Fairclough, 2004)</p> <p>Black graduates went on to higher education at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s) as well as renowned White universities and succeeded at every level of academia (Anderson, 1988)</p>	<p>Brown v. Board was the culmination of 5 different court challenges; all 5 were sponsored by the NAACP</p> <p>NAACP recruited and vetted plaintiffs for Brown case</p> <p>Linda Brown’s school is of equal quality to White school</p> <p>Oliver Brown was chosen as the lead name strategically because NAACP thought the US Supreme Court Justices would respond better to a man</p> <p>Charles Hamilton Houston, one of several lawyers who argued the case, was a black, Harvard graduate and the first African-American editor of the Harvard Law Review. Houston went on to train Thurgood Marshall.</p> <p>Chief Justice Earl Warren is also known for his work as Attorney General during WWII to forcibly remove Japanese Americans to internment camps</p> <p>For a period of 2 years Mr. Burnett had attempted to have Topeka Public School officials choose to voluntarily integrate schools; filing suit was a final strategy</p> <p>The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and its legal offspring, the Legal Defense and Educational Fund, developed a systematic attack against the doctrine of “separate but equal.” The campaign started at the graduate and professional educational levels. The attack culminated in five separate cases gathered together under the name of one of them—Oliver Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. (Library of Congress Exhibit)</p>