

MindSparks
KYLE WARD

U.S. HISTORY / 1830-1877

HISTORY

VS.

HISTORY

Understanding Historical Thinking and Historiography



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Kyle Ward

MindSparks®

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TO THE TEACHER

For centuries, in nations around the world, one thing that has seemed to be constant in history classrooms has been the textbook. Typically thick books that lay out national history in a strict chronological way, textbooks have also been a major educational tool to help generations learn what it means to be a citizen of their country. Often, history textbooks demonstrate to students what it means to be a good citizen by highlighting all the positive things that their country's citizens have accomplished and by showing how past struggles have made their country a better nation in their own day. With that in mind, this workbook series was created with the hope that students in a history class would be able to learn, understand, and interpret history and historical events by looking at examples of history textbooks from various nations and throughout U.S. history.

The excerpts from history textbooks in this book demonstrate historiography and historical thinking. These history textbooks come from two different categories. Some are from nations around the world and represent what middle school or high school students in their respective countries would typically use in their history classrooms. Most of these books were found at the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig, Germany. The others are old American history textbooks dating from the 1790s through the 1970s. Many of these American history textbooks come from the Cunningham Library at Indiana State University.

Not every nation will be represented in this book, nor will every historical story about the United States be told. The logistics of finding, reading, editing, and translating textbooks from every nation over time would be impossible. Therefore, this workbook is a small snippet of old textbooks with a glimpse of how students learn about the United States in history classes around the world.

These lessons should make it clear to students that history is not about names, dates, and places, but rather about understanding perspective, interpretation, and bias, and being able to make an informed argument about various events in the past. Studying history this way might be new to some of your students, but taking the time to learn how to interpret how society impacted what was written in the past will help your students get more involved with the topic—and hopefully gain a better appreciation of this field of study.

Each section has a brief introduction, followed by one or more textbook excerpts from different nations or periods. The excerpts are followed by a section titled “Items for Analysis,” which will ask students to consider various questions related to the textbook excerpts. Questions will ask students to compare and contrast, organize events or concepts into different times, put stories into specific context, develop arguments through specific evidence, interpret information, and synthesize it all to show that they understand the material.

While many of the questions will relate to the specific textbook selections in that section, at times students are asked to go above and beyond. For those questions, students will probably have to use the internet, the library, or other research materials to help prepare their answers.

The main goal of this series is for students to learn about historiography and historical thinking by looking at textbook excerpts from different nations or periods. This will lead to a lot of discussion, debate, and extra research, and students will need to formulate and defend theories. At the end of the day, these exercises will lead students to become more informed citizens, and will help students develop their self-confidence, allow them to develop their own “voice,” while giving them a more in-depth understanding of the field of history.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS HISTORIOGRAPHY?

Historiography is the study of how history has been written, studied, researched, and analyzed over time. When historians look at specific historical documents, they want not only to learn what it says about an event or person, but also to understand who wrote it, where they wrote it, and when. Historians want to know this information because they are trying to figure out what may have influenced the author(s) perspective, biases, and interpretation of the specific person or event detailed in the source.

Every historian knows that when authors write something they are not doing so in a perfect vacuum or even being completely objective about their topic. Rather, each document (or source) was produced at a time when certain cultural, political, religious, geographic, economic, and/or social events were swirling around them. Therefore, historians would argue that the time period in which the source was written affected how its author(s) saw the world around them.

It is also important to note that very few historical figures lived their lives with the thought they were living “in history.” Rather, most people live day-to-day without considering that in the future their daily actions might be analyzed, researched, written about, and debated. For example, the immigrants who came to the United States in the late 1800s did not sit around saying to one another, “Isn’t it great living in this historical time period known as the Gilded Age?” They were much more concerned about surviving and getting set up in their new home and were probably not considering how people in the future would view them either individually or as a larger group. Therefore, when they wrote letters home, kept journals, or communicated with people in their own community, they wrote what they felt and knew at that moment. Now, because of historical research, we know that there were certain political, economic, geographic, religious, social, and cultural things going on at that time, all of which may have had a direct impact on how these new immigrants viewed the world.

What does all this mean for the study of history today? Consider the following scenario. Today, two historians end up researching the same historical event. For arguments sake, let’s say they are interested in why the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and which world leader should get credit for this event. They are researching the same topic and reading many of the same documents, but when they write up their final report they have two very different perspectives on this same event. One discussed how it was U.S. President Ronald Reagan who was the key player in ending the Cold War by forcing Germany to tear down the Berlin Wall, while the other argues that it was obviously Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and his policies in the former Soviet Union that ended the Cold War.

These two historians came to completely different interpretations of what caused this major historical event probably because their sources emphasized different perspectives. These historians then based their arguments on what individuals from the past had written about the event at the time the event occurred. Some of the sources could have

been an East German who had just left his country to get into West Germany, a Soviet soldier who was stationed in East Berlin at the end of the 1980s, or even an American diplomat working in the U.S. Embassy in East Berlin at this time. Each participated in the exact same event but may have seen and remembered it differently from the others.

After considering all of this, think about one more thing. You have been assigned to read articles about who should get credit for the Berlin Wall coming down in your history class. And, as any good history student does, you check out the sources and footnotes for the articles in front of you and you notice that one has been written by an American historian, and the other by a Russian historian. This forces you to ask another historiographical question: “Does their nationality impact how they researched and perceived this event?”

This is historiography. It allows the reader to think about history from a larger perspective by forcing them to consider not only what was happening at the time of the historical event, but also what is happening in our own time which might affect how we learn about this event.

This perspective is what makes history so interesting, useful, and significant. Studying history is not just about names, dates, and places; applying historiography forces students and teachers to engage with the material, to consider why sources were written the way they were and when they were, and to ask how they relate to our world today. Because, in the end, students must remember that they too will become a part of history, and that current geography, economics, politics, society, culture, and religion may all affect how they view historical events as well.

This workbook will use eight historiographical time periods from American history to examine the external societal impacts that may have influenced how each textbook was written. As you read the following pages of this workbook, use this handout as a reference to help you understand how historians have categorized the different historiographical periods of American history. This will help you get a better sense of some of the major social, political, economic, religious, and cultural issues that may have influenced how these history textbooks were written. It can also help shed some light on the author(s) own interpretation, bias, and perspectives concerning the historical events they were writing about at these specific times in American history.

Schools of Thought in Historiography

- **Providential (1600s–1700s)**

Commonly seen during the pre-Revolutionary period, this type of history explained historical events in biblical terms. One can easily see God's hand in American affairs, with justification for things happening due to God's will. Nearly everything was connected to God's master plan. A classic example of this type of history tells the story of how the first Pilgrims came to the New World for religious freedom and established a new colony based on religious ideals. One only has to look at the pictures depicting the Pilgrims in history textbooks of this period to see the religious images typically related to this group.

- **Rationalists (1700s–1800s)**

Rationalists believed that one should understand history because understanding what had happened in the past would mean a brighter future for people moving forward. They took their main concepts from the Enlightenment era and followed ideas coming from that period, such as the scientific method. In contrast to the Providential period, they felt that the source of progress was natural law. In short, they believed that history should be interpreted through secular and naturalistic interpretations. These historians typically had classical educations, access to personal libraries, and the free time to research and write about history, which was uncommon for most Americans at this time. To explain the world, they typically described men like themselves: free, educated, and ambitious. For them, self-interest, not God's master plan, motivated people. Therefore, it was reason, not faith, that affected history and allowed people to follow their own destiny.

- **Nationalist (late 1800s–early 1900s)**

Historians during this time promoted concepts such as Anglo-Saxon superiority. Considering much of the historical writing during this time was coming from men who were from wealthier families, college educated, and Anglo-Saxon, it is not hard to see why they felt this group was superior to others. They pushed the idea of spreading American democratic principles both in the U.S., and around the world. They believed that America was actually a triumph of the Anglo-Saxon people over the inferior races, who represented the stoppage of progress. Examples of this would be Manifest Destiny as well as the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippine-American War (1899–1913). Each of these events demonstrated America's desire to conquer new territories and to bring American politics, economics, religion, and culture to other groups of people.

- **Progressive (early 1900s–1940s)**

Progressive historians actively wanted to reform their government and they believed that knowledge of the past would empower people to do this. History was viewed as the story of struggle and conflict. It was this constant struggle and conflict that helped shape America. They also believed that conflict was a consistent part of America's past and could be seen in a polarized history, such as labor vs. business, liberals vs. conservatives, rural vs. city, rich vs. poor, North vs. South, etc. But, while Progressive historians often tried to improve society by highlighting discrepancies between groups, they rarely tackled issues such as race, gender, and ethnicity.

- **Consensus (late 1940s–1980s)**

By the mid-twentieth century, Consensus historians tried to move the pendulum away from the Progressives and more toward a “middle-of-the-road” philosophy. These historians believed it was the shared ideas that Americans held that was of most importance, and not conflict in historical events. These historians pointed out that Americans tended to find general agreement on most topics and that much of America's struggle had actually happened in the center rather than the extremes of the left and/or right. They typically avoided ideological discord and they often, as a group, found general agreement in terms of how historical events transpired in the past. These historians also focused on traditional American values and often had a strong nationalistic sense. Not surprisingly, following World War II, they believed that America's democratic society should be celebrated and held up as a model to the rest of the world. They did not shy away from celebrating America's accomplishments and achievements, especially when they highlighted America's democratic institutions. This group spread the idea of American exceptionalism (or uniqueness) that many felt carried with it the implications of the U.S. being superior to others.

- **New Left (1960s–1980s)**

In the wake of the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War protests, and a variety of other organized movements trying to bring about equality for women and minority groups, many historians began to look at U.S. history from the “bottom up.” This meant that rather than focusing solely on the history of white men, who often held positions of power throughout American history, these historians wanted to understand history from the perspective of the underrepresented. This included women, minorities, and ethnic groups that had typically been forgotten in historical research. Their argument was that America was not a melting pot, but rather a stew in which one could still see distinct differences that all had to work together for the U.S. to be a great country. The New Left also helped give rise to a social history movement that focused on common people, which again was an underrepresented group in most historical research. This led to some new forms of research using diaries, letters, and other

everyday documents to get a better sense of what life was like in the past. Finally, this group of historians pushed to put American history within the context of a more global perspective by showing how interconnected the world was.

- **Neoconservative (1960s–present)**

Sometimes seen as a response to the New Left, Neoconservative historians began to focus their attention on American progress and based much of their research on traditional values and the shared ideas of Americans rather than on conflicts that might force groups of people away from each other. History is seen as a moral guide that should help Americans see the more traditional characteristics of society. History's main job then is to help promote patriotism and build better citizens by understanding the historical events that have made America great. Unity is valued over a multicultural state. Neoconservative historians believe that society needs order and classes, and would argue against any classless society. Furthermore, the idea of leveling the economic playing field should not be considered progress, but as moving America away from its capitalist origins.

THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR, 1846–1848



CAUSES OF THE WAR

One of the main things that historians do is help explain the concept of cause and effect. These textbook excerpts look at what caused the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) and show how students in the United States have been taught about this subject for generations. Although an American victory, what brought these two nations into conflict has been debated for decades.

1859

Marcus Willson, *History of the United States: From the Earliest Discoveries to the Present Time*

Scarcely had Mr. Polk taken his seat as president of the United States, when decided indications of a rupture with Mexico became apparent. Mexico had long viewed the conduct of the American government, in relation to the acquisition of Texas, with exceeding jealousy and distrust; still claiming that country as a part of her own territory, she had declared that she would regard annexation as a hostile act, and that she was resolved to declare war as soon as she received intimation of the completion of the project. In accordance with this policy, immediately after the resolution of annexation had passed the American Congress, and received the sanction of the President, Mr. Almonte, the Mexican Minister at Washington, protesting against the measure as an act of warlike aggression, which he declared Mexico would resist with all the means in her power, demanded his passports and returned home.

On the fourth of July following, Texas assented to the terms of the resolution of annexation, and two days later, fearing that Mexico would carry her threats of war into execution, requested the President of the United States to occupy the ports of Texas, and send an army to the defence [sic] of her territory. Accordingly, an American squadron was sent into the Gulf of Mexico, and General Taylor, then in command at Camp Jessup, was ordered by the American government to move with such of the regular forces as could be gathered from the western posts, to the southern frontier of Texas, to act as circumstances might require. By the advice of the Texan authorities he was induced to select for the concentration of his troops the post of Corpus Christi, a Texan settlement on the bay of the same name, where, by the beginning of August, 1845, he had taken his position, and at which place he had assembled, in the November following, an army of little more than four thousand men.

On the 13th of January, 1846, when it was believed that the Mexicans were assembling troops on their northern frontiers with the avowed object of reconquering Texas, and when such information had been received from Mexico as rendered it probable, if

not certain, that she would refuse to receive the envoy whom the United States had sent to negotiate a settlement of the difficulties between the two countries, the American president ordered General Taylor to advance his forces to the Rio Grande, the most southern and western limits of Texas, as claimed by herself: on the 8th of March following the advance column of the army, under General Twiggs, was put in motion for that purpose, and on the 28th of the same month General Taylor, after having established a depôt at Point Isabel, twenty-one miles in his rear, took his position on the northern bank of the Rio Grande, where he hastily erected a fortress, called Fort Brown, within cannon shot of Matamoras.

On the 26th of April, the Mexican general, Ampudia, gave notice to General Taylor that he considered hostilities commenced, and should prosecute them; and on the same day an American dragoon party of sixty-three men, under command of Captain Thornton, was attacked on the east side of the Rio Grande, thirty miles above Matamoras, and after the loss of sixteen men in killed and wounded, was compelled to surrender. This was the commencement of actual hostilities—the first blood shed in the war.

1880

John J. Anderson, *Popular School History of the United States*

“Mexico, the capital of the ancient Aztecs, the seat of the Spanish-American empire in America—had passed from Aztec and from Spaniard to the Anglo-American—the Northman of the Goths, the Saxon of Germany, the Englishman of America—the same bold, hardy, energetic, ingenious, invincible, ambitious, and adventurous being, whose genius the forms of civilization cannot confine, and to whose dominion continents are inadequate. In what hour of time, or limit of space, shall this man of the moderns—this conqueror over land and seas, nations and governments—find rest, in the completion of his mighty progress? Commencing his march in the cold regions of Scandinavia, no ice chilled his blood—no wilderness delayed his steps—no labor wearied his industry—no armies arrested his march—no empire subdued his power. Over armies and over empires—over lands and over seas—in heat, and cold, and wilderness, and flood—amidst the desolations of death and the decays of disease—this Northman has moved on in might and majesty, steady as the footsteps of Time, and fixed as the decrees of Fate!

How singular—how romantically strange is this—his wild adventure and marvelous conquest in the valley of valleys! How came the Northman and the Moorish Celt here to meet, and here to battle, in this North-American valley? Look at it! Inquire! Ask yourself how they came here! Are they the citizens, by nature, of this continent? Are they the aborigines of these wild and wonderful forests? Never! How came they, then, to be contending for the lands and groves of those whose children they are not? In the beginning of the sixteenth century, Cortez landed on the coast of Mexico, and, at the

Source: Marcius Willson, *History of the United States: From the Earliest Discoveries to the Present Time* (New York: Ivison & Pinney, 1859), 346–348. Available online at <https://archive.org/details/ushistearliest00wilsrich>.

head of Spanish troops, marched on to the conquest of Mexico, over whose effeminate inhabitants the Spaniard has, for three hundred years, held undivided dominion. Not many years after, the Anglo-Saxon landed on the coasts of the northern Atlantic. He, too, marched on to conquest. The native citizens of the forest disappeared before him. Forests, mountains, and Indians, were ineffectual to oppose him. From the banks of the St. Lawrence to the Sabine of Texas, he is a conqueror over nature. And now, this Spaniard and this Northman meet, in battle panoply, in this valley of volcanoes, by the ancient graves of unknown nations, on the lava-covered soil where nature once poured forth her awe-inspiring flames. Three centuries since, these warrior-nations had left their homes beyond the wide Atlantic. Two thousand miles from each other, they had planted the seats of their empire; and now, as if time, in the moral world, had completed another of its grand revolutions, they have met in mortal conflict.”

1915

Henry W. Elson and Cornelia E. MacMullan, *The Story of Our Country*

Texas had now come into the Union, but there was still trouble with Mexico. That country seemed bent on a quarrel. President Polk did not desire it, he made an effort to settle the question by treaty; and this might have been done had Mexico been willing to yield certain points. “Texas has no right as an independent state to seek and receive admission into the United States,” she said. And then she insisted that the dividing line should be the Nueces River, while Texas laid claim to the Rio Grande.

President Polk, fearing an attack, sent General Zachary Taylor to the disputed territory. And not many days passed before General Taylor received a letter from the Mexican general, Ampudia. “Your Government has not only insulted but has provoked the Mexican nation,” he wrote, “and in this case, by orders of my Government, I require you to break up your camp and retire to the other bank of the Nueces River. If you insist upon remaining upon the soil, it will clearly result that arms, and arms alone, must decide the question.”

What was General Taylor’s answer? “The instruction under which I am acting will not permit me to go back from the position I now occupy. I regret the alternative which you offer, but, at the same time, wish it understood that I shall by no means avoid such an alternative, leaving the responsibility with those who rashly commence hostilities.”

It was not long after this that war was declared. General Taylor did not wait for more soldiers to arrive, but marched on and defeated the Mexicans near the mouth of the Rio Grande, although they outnumbered him. The enemy fled across the river, but Taylor pursued them and captured Matamoros. He then moved up the Rio Grande to besiege Monterey, one of the most strongly fortified cities of Mexico.

Source: John J. Anderson, *Popular School History of the United States* (New York: Clark & Maynard, Publishers, 1880), 241–242. Available online at <https://archive.org/details/popularschoolhist00anderich>.

Source: Henry W. Elson and Cornelia E. MacMullan, *The Story of Our Country*, vol. 2 (New York: World Book Company, 1915), 132–133. Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=1Mo0AQAAMAAJ>.

1966

Lewis Paul Todd and Merle Curti, *Rise of the American Nation*

War breaks out. President Polk was now sure that Mexico would never willingly give up its control of Upper California and New Mexico, or its claim to Texas. However, he intended that the United States should occupy the vast area and was ready to declare war to get it. Several members of his cabinet urged him to delay, saying that if he waited long enough, Mexico would probably commit some act that would justify a declaration of war by the United States.

In January 1846, however, Polk dispatched troops under General Zachary Taylor from the Nueces (noo•AY•ses) River to the north bank of the Rio Grande. Ever since Texas had declared its independence from Mexico, Texans had claimed that their southern border lay on the Rio Grande, but Mexicans had insisted that it must stop at the Nueces River. . . . By sending troops into this disputed area, Polk could claim that he was acting defensively; but the Mexicans could claim that the United States was acting aggressively.

Weeks passed, with President Polk's impatience mounting daily. Finally, on May 9, the President notified his cabinet that he intended to recommend war with Mexico within a few days. But that very night the news came for which he had long been waiting. Mexican troops had crossed the Rio Grande and had fought with American forces.

Convinced that the American people would approve his action, Polk sent his war message to Congress on May 11. "But now after reiterated menaces," he declared, "Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon American soil. . . . War exists, and notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself. . . ."

Two days later, on May 13, Congress declared war. On the day that Congress made its formal declaration, Polk told his cabinet that "in making peace with our adversary, we shall acquire California, New Mexico, and other further territory, as an indemnity for this war, if we can."

Who started the war? Many people at the time and many people since have regarded the Mexican War as one of aggression on the part of the United States. One person who questioned the actions of the United States was Abraham Lincoln, a young Illinois lawyer then serving his only term in Congress. In 1847 he introduced in Congress his famous Spot Resolutions, questioning whether the "spot" on the north bank of the Rio Grande where American blood had been shed was really United States soil.

On the other hand, some historians have maintained that Mexico deliberately sent troops across the Rio Grande, hoping to start a war that it thought it could win.

Despite the great difference in size between the United States and Mexico, it is true that many Mexican military leaders did not fear a war with the United States. The Mexican leaders were full of confidence. They had expelled the Spaniards in 1821 and had overthrown revolutionists in their own country since that time. Thus they were boastful of their military abilities. They also hoped that Great Britain, which had looked forward to developing its own trade with the Republic of Texas and had therefore opposed its annexation to the United States, would come to the aid of Mexico. The Mexicans believed, too, that the people of the United States would never support a war.

As events turned out, Mexican hopes were misplaced. The Mexicans did not have the necessary military power. Great Britain did not support them. Although some northerners feared the expansion of slavery into the vast area that might be acquired as a result of the conflict, American people in general supported the war.

Source: Lewis Paul Todd and Merle Curti, *Rise of the American Nation*, 2nd Edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), 323–325. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000000840767>

Items for Analysis

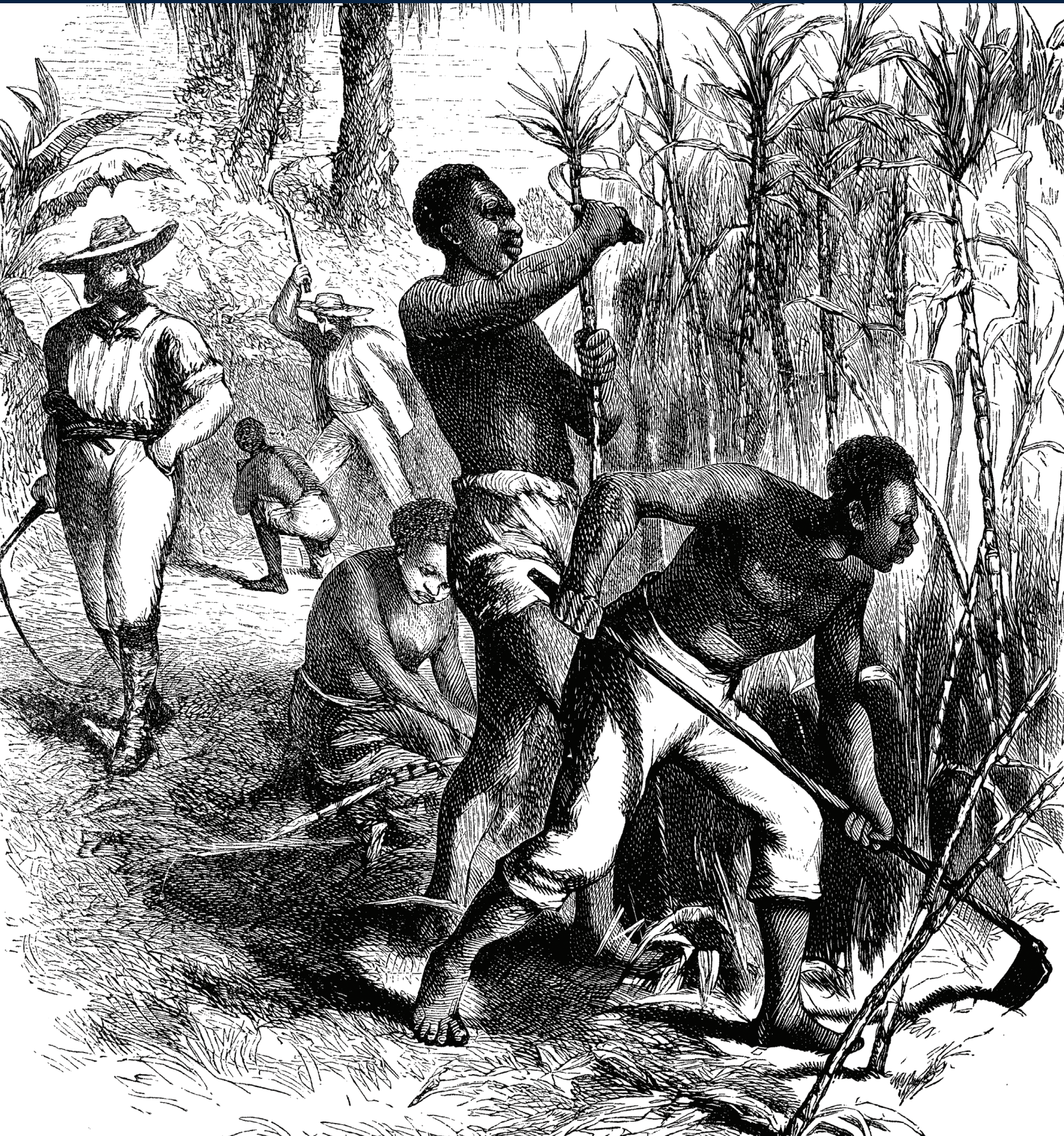
1. Using the selections from the textbooks found above, site examples showing how each textbook made its case about which side, Mexico or the United States, caused this war. If possible, use a more current U.S. history textbook and see which side it blames for causing this war.

Mexican-American War, 1846–1848	Which Side Caused the War?
1859	
1880	
1915	
1966	
Current U.S. Textbook	

2. You have been hired by a major textbook publisher and asked to write a section titled “Causes of the Mexican-American War, 1846–1848.” You are asked to write a new section based on the most recent research and theories about why fighting started between these two nations. Due to space considerations, you have to stay between 250 to 300 words.

Causes of the Mexican-American War, 1846–1848

SLAVERY



THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY AND THE CIVIL WAR

Easily one of the most serious debates in American history, and one that still affects Americans to this day, is the issue of slavery. This collection of textbook excerpts looks at this topic from before the Civil War to the beginning of the twentieth century—a time in which African Americans would not have had any say in what was being written about them in these high school textbooks.

During the 1800s and early 1900s, in American education it was common to find specific history textbooks published by, and marketed towards, schools in either the North or the South. If a textbook in this section was used in a specific region, the region in which it was used will be noted.

1830

William Grimshaw, *History of the United States, from Their First Settlement as Colonies, to the Cession of Florida, in 1821*

Note: *This textbook was primarily used in the North before the war.*

Since the middle of the last century, expanded minds have been, with slow gradations, promoting the decrease of slavery in North America. The progress of truth is slow; but it will, in the end, prevail. The first voice raised against this uncharitable practice, was by a Quaker, the amiable and enlightened John Woolman, of Mount Holly, in New Jersey. He wrote his sentiments on that subject in the year 1746; strenuously recommended its abolition, at the several stated meetings of his society; and, in 1754, published his “Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes;” [sic] a work admirable for its dispassionate and lucid style of argument; highly beneficial in his own time, and deserving most serious attention at the present. Anthony Benezet, of Philadelphia, though his writings were subsequent to Woolman’s, has acquired a yet higher rank among philanthropists. His labours, in the same field, were singularly active, and conspicuously successful. St. George Tucker, of Virginia, also, wrote an able dissertation against slavery. A duty on the importation of slaves was laid by New York, in 1753; by Pennsylvania, in 1762; and by New Jersey, in 1769. Virginia, the first state concerned in their introduction, was also the first that set an example of their exclusion; having, in the year 1778, amidst the perplexing scenes of civil warfare, passed an act to discontinue their entry into her ports. In 1780, Pennsylvania made a law for the gradual abolition of slavery; a law, which, although it did not allow all the natural rights declared in her constitution, has the merit of being the earliest legislative proceeding of the kind, in any nation;

and, soon afterwards, there was instituted in the same state, a society “for promoting the abolition of slavery, for the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage, and for improving the condition of the African race.” All the other states, north and east of Maryland, have since made laws for their gradual emancipation. On the adoption of the federal government, congress was authorized to prohibit, at the end of twenty years, the importation of negroes, into any part of the United States; and, accordingly, no arrivals have legally occurred since 1807. In 1820, a society for colonizing free people of colour, began a settlement at Sierra Leone, on the coast of Africa. A heavy grievance, however, is yet to be removed. Virginia, as well as every other American republic that still sanctions domestic bondage, will, we confidently anticipate, at no distant period, make arrangements, to unloosen, by degrees, the fetters, which are no less alarming to the master, than galling to the slave. Let us not only declare by words, but demonstrate by our actions, “That all men are created equal; that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights; that, amongst these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Let us venerate the instruction of that great and amiable man, to whom, chiefly, under Providence, the United States are indebted for their liberties; the world, for a common home: “That there exists an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness, between duty and advantage.”

1856

Harper’s School History, *Narrative of the General Course of History from the Earliest Periods to the Establishment of the American Constitution*

Note: *This textbook was primarily used in the South.*

Does either government exercise any dominion over the other?

Young persons sometimes imagine that the general government is, in some sense, a government above the state governments, and that it exercises a sort of superintendence over them; but this is not so in any sense whatever. The general government extends its jurisdiction over a wider field than the state governments, it is true, but it does not rise to any higher elevation in respect to sovereignty and power. It is supreme in respect to the business intrusted [*sic*] to it, and so are the state governments supreme in respect to the business intrusted [*sic*] to them.

What example is there of the exercise of the power of the state government in Virginia?

The government of Virginia, for example, has founded a university in the heart of the state for the education of young men. That is a business that belongs to the state. Now neither the President of the United States, nor the Congress, nor both combined,

Source: William Grimshaw, *History of the United States, from Their First Settlement as Colonies, to the Cession of Florida, in 1821* (Philadelphia: J. Grigg, 1830), 300–301. Available online at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008407988>.

can touch that institution at all, no matter how well or how badly the government of Virginia may manage it. The education of the people of Virginia is a subject that belongs to the state. In respect to that business the state is supreme, and the general government of the United States has no more power to touch it than has the government of France, or England, or that of any other country.

What example is there of the exercise of the power of the general government in Virginia?

On the other hand, at Gosport, near Norfolk, in Virginia, is a navy-yard, established and maintained by the government of the United States. Every thing that pertains to the navy belongs to the departments of national defense and foreign commerce, and those things are the business of the general government. The general government accordingly bought the land for that navy-yard, and built the docks and piers, and hired the workmen, and, although the ground is within the limits of the State of Virginia, neither the governor of Virginia, nor the Legislature, nor both together, can touch the navy-yard at all, no matter how well or how badly the general government may manage it.

How many systems of government, then, have the people of the United States established?

In other words, the people of the United States, having a variety of public business to perform, have divided the business into two great branches, and have adopted one system of government for one, and another system for the other. In respect to certain great subjects of general interest, they have formed themselves into one nation, and they have constituted one general government to attend to that business. In respect to another great branch of business, they deem it more convenient to have it transacted in a different way. In respect to this, they are not one nation in any sense, but are divided into a great many independent states, each of which has supreme and sovereign control within its jurisdiction. . . .

What has been the progress of the country since [the inauguration of the first president?]

Since that time the country has advanced in population, wealth, and power with a rapidity which is entirely unparalleled in the history of the human race. The extent of its territory has been greatly enlarged, and many new states have been successively formed and added to the confederation, so that the new republic is rapidly rising to a very exalted rank among the nations of the earth, and is destined, perhaps, at no distant day, to surpass all the political organizations that have preceded her in population and power, and to exert a vast influence upon the future destinies of the great human family.

Source: Harper's School History, *Narrative of the General Course of History from the Earliest Periods to the Establishment of the American Constitution* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), 446–447, 450. Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=gmdlAAAAYAAJ>.

1895

Alexander Johnston, *A History of the United States for Schools*

Note: *This textbook was written for students primarily in the North.*

Negro Slavery in the colonies was one of the worst of these cases of bad judgment. The first mention of it is in Virginia, in 1619, when a Dutch man-of-war exchanged some negro slaves for provisions. Negroes were soon held as slaves in all the colonies, though they increased most rapidly in the warmer southern colonies. Labor is the most important thing in a state. But, where laborers are generally known as slaves, no free man likes to labor, because there labor is thought to degrade the laborer to the level of a slave. A wise government would therefore have forbidden slavery in the colonies: the king of England not only did not forbid it, but became an active partner in the slave trade, and refused to allow the colonies to forbid it. Thus the southern colonies came to believe that slavery and slave labor were absolutely necessary to them. . . .

Negro Slavery existed in [New York], though there were not so many slaves as in the southern colonies. In 1740, it was believed that the negroes in New York City had made a plot to kill all the whites. Before the excitement ceased, 4 whites and 18 negroes were hanged, 14 negroes were burned at the stake, and 71 negroes were banished. It is almost certain now, however, that there was in reality no such plot. . . .

The Effects of Slavery.—The cause [of the South's dissatisfaction] is now seen by every one to have been negro slavery, though the South could not see that in 1860. Slaves worked only because they were made to do so; they worked slowly, carelessly, and stupidly, and were fit for nothing better than to hoe cotton. In factories or on railroads they were of little use. The rich whites did not need to work; and the poor whites did not wish to work, because they had grown up in the belief that work was a sign of slavery. Here was the real reason for the backwardness of the South, compared with the North. In the North there was a general race for work, and everything was in active motion. In the South there was no great number of persons who really wanted to work, and everything stood still.

1910

Henry W. Elson, *Side Lights on American History*

Note: *This textbook was written for students primarily in the North.*

The enslavement of man by his fellow-man was almost universal among ancient peoples. The system in most countries gradually merged into the serfdom of the Middle Ages, and eventually disappeared, after being greatly ameliorated by the influence of Christianity. In ancient times slavery was usually the result of conquest in war. The enslavement of the African race on commercial grounds had its beginning in comparatively modern times.

Source: Alexander Johnston, *A History of the United States for Schools* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1895), 24, 59, 287. Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=umcAAAAAYAAJ>.

Slavery in the English colonies of North America dates back to within twelve years of the founding of the first colony, Virginia; but it had existed in Central America and in South America for more than a century before that, and in southern Europe for about fifty years before the discovery of the New World by Columbus. Not long after the introduction of slavery into the colonies, the traffic in slaves became quite profitable, and was chiefly carried on by English traders. England was responsible, above all other countries, for slavery in the United States. At different times the colonies attempted to suppress the slave-trade, but the British government thwarted them at every turn—simply because it was a profitable means of commerce.

As early as 1712 Pennsylvania passed an act to restrict the increase of slaves, but it was annulled by the Crown. Fourteen years later Virginia attempted to check the trade by laying a tax on imported negroes, but the colony was soon forced to repeal the law. South Carolina attempted to restrict the trade in 1761, and Massachusetts made a similar attempt ten years later. In each case the effort was summarily crushed by the British Crown. The traffic was a source of much profit to England, and she would listen to no promptings of humanity in the matter. There had been founded in England, more than a century before the Revolution, the Royal African Company, a great monopoly, which furnished slaves for all the British colonies throughout the world. Queen Anne owned one-fourth of the stock in this company during her reign, and she especially enjoined Parliament to suffer no interference with the slave-trade.

Thus England, while not permitting slavery on her home soil, not only encouraged, but enforced it, in her colonies. But the mother country was not alone to blame for the increase of the traffic in North America. The colonists purchased the slaves; if they had not, the traffic would have died out. Virginians made the first settlement in North Carolina, and took their slaves with them. Sir John Yeamans introduced them into South Carolina from the Barbadoes [*sic*], and from South Carolina they were carried into Georgia.

The Society of Friends, or Quakers, took the lead in opposing slavery, beginning about 1688. The Pennsylvania Germans also entered their protest against the evil at an early date. John Wesley called slavery the sum of all villainies [*sic*]. At the time of the Revolution all the colonies but one, Massachusetts, had slaves. The Continental Congress of 1774 pronounced against the slave-trade. This was repeated two years later, only three months before the Declaration of Independence. The people were so jubilant over their own prospects of freedom that they were disposed to extend the blessings of liberty to their slaves; but this feeling was temporary with many, and subsided after the war was over. Jefferson in writing the Declaration of Independence put in a clause condemning the slave-trade, but South Carolina and Georgia demanded that it be struck out, and it was done. But they could not prevent that grand sentiment in the Declaration: "All men are created equal"—not equal in mental gifts nor in worldly station, but equal in their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. If the colonists had followed out that

noble principle, it would have freed every slave in America; and indeed it did furnish a powerful weapon in the hands of the opponents of slavery down to its overthrow in the sixties.

Soon after the Revolution the northern States took hold of the matter and began to emancipate, Pennsylvania leading in 1780. Virginia came very near it two years before. New Hampshire became a free state in 1784, New York in 1799, and so on until all the northern States had abolished slavery. New Jersey had a few left as late as 1840.

In 1787 an ordinance was framed for governing the territory northwest of the Ohio River, afterward Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. In this document, known as "The Ordinance of 1787," slavery was forever prohibited in that territory. Had it not been for this prohibition Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois would no doubt have become slave States, as they were largely settled by emigrants from Virginia and Kentucky. Even then efforts were made by Governor William Henry Harrison and others to break down that ordinance and to make Indiana and Illinois slave States; but they were not successful.

In 1784 Jefferson introduced in the old Congress a similar ordinance to prohibit slavery in the new States south of the Ohio, afterward Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, etc. Had this motion carried and been effective, how great would have been the results; slavery would have been confined to the few Atlantic States in the South, and would no doubt have died a natural death. This would have prevented the seventy years of slavery agitation and the great Civil War. But the measure was lost by one vote. A member from New Jersey who would have voted for it was absent, and for want of his vote the measure was lost. Thus the entire course of our history was changed by the absence of one man from Congress on a certain day in 1784!

Here let me say a word about the slave-trade, especially the smuggling trade. This was certainly one of the most nefarious pieces of business ever carried on. A vessel would go to the African coast and secure a cargo of negroes. These were packed in the ship almost like sardines in a box, and so inhuman was the treatment that sometimes thirty per cent of them died before reaching America. A smuggling vessel, pursued, would sometimes throw its entire cargo of negroes overboard! This occurred on various occasions. But when a smuggling ship was caught, it seldom brought relief to the poor blacks, as the laws were persistently against them, and often a whole cargo of negroes was sold to pay the cost of investigation. There was always a way found to enslave the black man; sending him back to his home in Africa, or giving him his freedom in this country was almost unheard of. A committee of Congress recommended that a free colored man on trial and proving himself free, must pay the cost of the trial, and if unable to do so must be sold into slavery to defray the expenses! But fortunately this did not become a law.

Source: Henry W. Elson, *Side Lights on American History* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1910), 149–155. Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=KFIZAAAYAAJ>.

Items for Analysis

- 1. Compare and contrast the Grimshaw textbook from 1830 and the Harper’s School History from 1856. Consider the students who would have been asked to read these textbooks and discuss how these selections may have influenced their views of slavery.
- 2. Using the selections above, cite different examples that show the author(s) bias about the issue of slavery. If possible, use a more current U.S. history textbook and answer the same question.

Slavery	Positive Bias	Negative Bias
1830		
1856		
1895		
1910		
Current U.S. Textbook		

- ITEMS FOR ANALYSIS

LIFE AS AN ENSLAVED PERSON

Today the practice of slavery is remembered as a terrible time in American history, but for many generations Americans wrestled with this institution and its effect on the Africans who were forced into it. One argument, put forth in many textbooks, was that slavery was actually a benefit to the Africans. This defense of slavery also helped create a number of stereotypes and misunderstandings about this institution, which still persist today.

1930

Thomas M. Marshall, *American History*

The slaves. Although he was in a state of slavery, the negro of plantation days was usually happy. He was fond of the company of others and liked to sing, dance, crack jokes, and laugh; he admired bright colors and was proud to wear a red or yellow bandana. He wanted to be praised, and he was loyal to a kind master or overseer. He was never in a hurry, and was always ready to let things go until the morrow. Most of the planters learned that not the whip, but loyalty, based upon pride, kindness, and rewards, brought the best returns. If a slave was overworked or was ill-treated, he was apt to run away.

1954

Howard B. Wilder, Robert P. Ludlum, and Harriett McCune Brown, *This Is America's Story*

How did the slaves live? All the hard work on the plantation was done by the slaves. The field hands worked from early morning until nightfall. The more fortunate slaves were personal and house servants. On a large plantation, each member of the family had his own slave as a personal servant. On each plantation there were also a few slaves who worked as carpenters and blacksmiths or who took care of the horses. The great majority of the Negro men, women, and children, however, were field hands. . . .

Slaves were owned by their master, of course, and were absolutely subject to his will. Yet life in the slave quarters on many a plantation was not too unhappy. During the day the small children played merrily, often with the younger white children from the "great house." In the twilight young and old gathered to sing and dance. The Negroes have given us some of our most beautiful folk songs and spirituals, such as Deep River; Roll, Jordan, Roll; and All God's Chillun Got Wings. On special occasions the slaves were allowed to attend picnics or to hunt 'coon and 'possum. Of course there were some harsh masters who treated their slaves cruelly. In general, however, slaves were too valuable

Source: Thomas M. Marshall, *American History* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930), 342. Available online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015066418750>.

to be mistreated. The greatest fear of the slave was that he and his family would be sold. When this happened, families often became separated, and great suffering resulted.

1961

Paul F. Boller and E. Jean Tilford, *This Is Our Nation*

Treatment of slaves varies. The treatment that a slave received depended upon the owner and the kind of work performed by the slave. Farmers with only two or three slaves lived and worked alongside them and often regarded them much as northern farmers regarded their hired help. On the larger plantations, the slaves were usually well treated. After all, they were valuable property and it was foolish to overwork or injure them. House servants were better off than field hands. Slave families lived in log cabins—"the quarters"—on the master's plantation. They received clothing and rations of cornmeal, pork, and molasses, and were encouraged to raise vegetables and poultry for themselves. During the busy season, working hours were from sunrise to sunset, with two hours off at noon. They were given most of Saturday, as well as Sunday, off. Plantation owners insisted that the life of the average factory worker in the North was far worse than that of their slaves.

Nevertheless, the slave was the property of the planter, who was free to do as he wished with him. It was difficult, and in some states illegal, for slaves to acquire freedom or to secure an education. Free Negroes, who were most numerous in Virginia and Maryland, were subjected to increasingly severe restrictions as time went by.

1977

Richard Nelson Current, Alexander DeConde, and Harris L. Dante, *United States History: Search for Freedom*

Free the slaves or repress them? These were two of the choices that white southerners faced. Out of fear, habit, self-interest, and belief, they chose repression.

One reason for this choice was a slave revolt in Virginia. Nat Turner, a black preacher, led other slaves in an insurrection in 1831. They killed fifty-seven whites before they were captured. In the long chase by soldiers and sailors, perhaps as many as one hundred blacks were killed. Turner and twenty other blacks were tried and executed.

A shudder ran through the entire South, and afterward, white planters always wondered which slaves could be trusted. More than any other event, the Turner revolt led to the passage of a nightmarish series of laws, codes, and restrictions.

Every state with slaves had a slave code. This set up the legal position of the slave in relation to his or her master as well as to society. Most codes also prescribed minimum living conditions.

Source: Howard B. Wilder, Robert P. Ludlum, and Harriett McCune Brown, *This Is America's Story* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1954), 286–287. Available online at https://archive.org/details/thisisamericasst00wild_0.

Source: Paul F. Boller and E. Jean Tilford, *This Is Our Nation* (St. Louis: Webster Pub. Co., 1961), 243.

According to most codes, a slave was not to be away from the owner's land without a written pass. This pass had to be shown to any white who asked to see it. A slave could not preach, except to other slaves, and then only in the presence of a white. A slave could not own a gun, blow a horn, or beat drums. A gathering of five slaves or more was an unlawful assembly.

No one might teach a slave to read or write, and it was against the law to give books, pamphlets, newspapers, or other reading matter to slaves. A slave could not give drugs or medicine to whites.

In individual communities, the slave codes often included other rules. A curfew might be imposed. Some codes prohibited dancing or even any outward signs of joy.

The laws set up different standards for blacks than for whites. For example, in every southern state there was harsher punishment for blacks than for whites for the same offense. A crime that carried imprisonment for a white often carried a death penalty for a black.

The laws were, however, very harsh on any white who aided a slave. The stiffest penalties were given to those whites who hid a runaway or helped plan a rebellion. Death was the usual punishment.

The slave codes reflected a "closed society" in which any criticism of slavery could not be tolerated. Southerners who opposed slavery found it necessary to move north. Even in entertainment, such as plays, slaves had to be shown as servile.

Although there had been slave codes in colonial times, they had been relaxed during the first years of the new republic. The Turner revolt and the rising tide of abolitionist activity led to tighter controls.

Source: Richard Nelson Current, Alexander DeConde, and Harris L. Dante, *United States History: Search for Freedom* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1977), 170–171.

Items for Analysis

1. Using the textbook selections above, explain how the depiction of slavery has changed over time. Try to find a current U.S. history textbook and compare what it says to these textbooks about how the enslaved people were treated.
2. All of these textbook selections were written long after slavery was legally ended in the United States but each of these selections discusses slavery using many myths and stereotypes about African Americans and the institution of slavery. Considering the year these textbooks were published, explain how each author's time period may have influenced their presentation of this topic.

3. Research the civil rights movement, and then go back and reread the textbook selections in this section. If possible, compare them to a current U.S. history textbook. With the knowledge that you have, develop a theory about how the civil rights movement affected how textbooks discussed the topic of slavery.
4. Imagine you were a history textbook author in the New Left era of historical writing. Explain how your textbook would handle the topic of slavery compared to the selections above.

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1861–1865



CAUSES OF THE WAR

History textbooks in the U.S. usually discuss the idea of “King Cotton” and its role in causing the American Civil War. This was the belief that if the South went to war with the North, cotton would be so important to the British and French industries that they would have no choice but to support the Confederacy during the Civil War. While students in India do not spend a great deal of time learning about King Cotton, they do unintentionally learn about their country’s economic role in the American Civil War and the effect it had on the people and economy in India.

India

Themes in Indian History, Part III

By the mid-1840s there were signs of an economic recovery of sorts. Many British officials had begun to realise that the settlements of the 1820s had been harsh. The revenue demanded was exorbitant, the system rigid, and the peasant economy on the verge of collapse. So the revenue demand was moderated to encourage peasants to expand cultivation. After 1845 agricultural prices recovered steadily. Cultivators were now extending their acreage, moving into new area, and transforming pastureland into cultivated fields. But to expand cultivation peasants needed more ploughs and cattle. They needed money to buy seeds and land. For all this they had to turn once again to moneylenders for loans.

Then came the cotton boom. Before the 1860s, three-fourths of raw cotton imports into Britain came from America. British cotton manufacturers had for long been worried about this dependence on American supplies. What would happen if this source was cut off? Troubled by this question, they eagerly looked for alternative sources of supply.

In 1857 the Cotton Supply Association was founded in Britain, and in 1859 the Manchester Cotton Company was formed. Their objective was “to encourage cotton production in every part of the world suited for its growth.” India was seen as a country that could supply cotton to Lancashire if the American supply dried up. It possessed suitable soil, a climate favourable to cotton cultivation, and cheap labour.

When the American Civil War broke out in 1861, a wave of panic spread through cotton circles in Britain. Raw cotton imports from America fell to less than three per cent of the normal: from over 2,000,000 bales (of 400 lbs each) in 1861 to 55,000 bales in 1862. Frantic messages were sent to India and elsewhere to increase cotton exports to Britain. In Bombay, cotton merchants visited the cotton districts to assess supplies and encourage cultivation. As cotton prices soared . . . , export merchants in Bombay were keen to secure as much cotton as possible to meet the British demand. So they

gave advances to urban sahumars [moneylenders] who in turn extended credit to those rural moneylenders who promised to secure the produce. When there is a boom in the market credit flows easily, for those who give out loans feel secure about recovering their money.

These developments had a profound impact on the Deccan [a large plateau in southern India] countryside. The ryots [peasants] in the Deccan villages suddenly found access to seemingly limitless credit. They were being given Rs 100 [rupees] as advance for every acre they planted with cotton. Sahukars were more than willing to extend long-term loans.

While the American crisis continued, cotton production in the Bombay Deccan expanded. Between 1860 and 1864 cotton acreage doubled. By 1862 over 90 per cent of cotton imports into Britain were coming from India.

But these boom years did not bring prosperity to all cotton producers. Some rich peasants did gain, but for the large majority, cotton expansion meant heavier debt.

Source: Themes in Indian History, Part III (New Delhi, India: National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2007), 279–281.

Items for Analysis

1. You have been hired by a textbook publisher to write a section on the role of “King Cotton” during the American Civil War. After learning about India’s role, you decide that this would be an important angle for American students to learn about. Make an argument to your editor for why adding a section about India helps explain the causes and outcome of the American Civil War.

King Cotton

2. Investigate what historians have said in recent years about the role of King Cotton and its impact on the American Civil War. Are historians in agreement about the role India played in this event? Do any other nations get credit for their role in this?

U.S.-DAKOTA WAR, 1862

This story about a war between the U.S. and the Dakota people in Minnesota was written while the U.S. was still struggling with the Dakota people for control of the Great Plains.

1873

William H. Seavey, *History of the United States of America: For the Use of Schools*

The Sioux [Dakota] War.—The summer of 1862 was sadly distinguished in Minnesota by frightful massacres perpetrated by some bands of Sioux [Dakota] Indians, under Little Crow and other chiefs. They began their outrages about the middle of August, and kept them up for more than a month, when they were driven into Dakota, except several hundred who were captured, thirty-eight of whom were hung in punishment for their murders. It has been estimated that more than seven hundred whites were slain, and twenty-five thousand were driven from their homes; and, for some time, a third of this number was dependent upon charity for support. The next summer the savages renewed their outrages, which were not suppressed till after a tedious campaign, lasting into September.

For a long time the Indians had been dissatisfied. They especially complained of the course pursued by the traders, and of the delay of the national government in making the annual payment due them by treaty. On the 17th of August a party of Indians murdered some whites near the town of Acton, and this taste of blood was followed the next day by a general massacre of the settlers on the Upper Minnesota River. Successful in an encounter with a few troops who first went against them, the savages urged on the work of death throughout the whole western part of the state, and in Iowa and Dakota. Every species of fiendish atrocity was perpetrated on their victims. A fierce attack made upon New Ulm, an isolated town containing some fifteen hundred persons, was repulsed with difficulty. The place was then abandoned by its inhabitants. Fort Ridgely, after enduring a siege for several days, was relieved by Colonel (since General) Henry H. Sibley, who led an expedition up the Minnesota Valley to suppress the ravages of the Indians. After some fighting, Little Crow and his followers fled far into Dakotas. Meanwhile General Pope was sent to take command in this department. Renewing their outrages the next year, the savages were hunted down; their chief, Little Crow, was killed; and an expedition, under General Sibley, pursued the hostile tribes, and, after considerable fighting, drove them across the Missouri River. Yet the Indians remained restive and troublesome, and ready for another outbreak.

Source: William H. Seavey, *History of the United States of America: For the Use of Schools* (Boston: Brewer and Tileston, 1873), 274–275. Available online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc1.0021830827>

Items for Analysis

1. What biases can you identify in this excerpt?
2. On December 26, 1862, in Mankato, Minnesota, the largest mass hanging in American history took place. That day, thirty-eight Native Americans were hanged for their role in the U.S.-Dakota War. In most modern U.S. history textbooks this war is either briefly mentioned or completely ignored. Research this event and explain how history textbooks should deal with this story in the future.

U.S.-CANADIAN RELATIONS

From an American's perspective, this selection focuses in on Canada's role during the American Civil War. But from a Canadian perspective, this event might have had an even more significant effect on their nation.

Canada

Nick Brune, et al., *Defining Canada: History, Identity, and Culture*

In October of 1864, thirty-three delegates, now including two from Newfoundland, arrived in Quebec City to flesh out the details of the new federation. Many of the delegates arrived by train, and almost all had extensive business interests in banking, timber, land, or railways. Representatives of the railway companies also came to the conference with the hope that a political union of the British North American colonies would mean an opportunity for them to extend or build railways that would unite the new country by rail. A new sense of urgency was felt because of the St. Albans raid, which had occurred only nine days before the start of the conference. A group of Confederate agents had robbed banks in St. Albans in Vermont and had fled across the border to Canada. They had been arrested but had been freed on a legal technicality. The outraged northern Americans were again threatening war against Canada. To the delegates gathered in Quebec—some of whom had been children during the invasions of the war of 1812—the threat of American invasion was very real.

Source: Nick Brune, et al., *Defining Canada: History, Identity, and Culture* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2003), 265–266.

Close Reading

1. Where was this textbook published?
2. When was it published?
3. Were the men who met wealthy individuals? How do you know?
4. Why was there tension between the U.S. and Canada?
5. According to this author, what did the Americans threaten?
6. Why did some Canadians take this threat seriously?

RECONSTRUCTION AND THE NEW SOUTH, 1865–1900



POLITICS IN THE SOUTH

In the South during the Reconstruction era, African Americans, in many cases freed slaves, were elected into political office a number of times. In other instances, a number of Northerners also went into the South looking for work in the newly formed governments. Most Southerners called these Northerners “carpetbaggers” and looked down upon them. These changes to Southern society caused a number of problems for the newly freed African Americans.

This section represents how students throughout the United States would have learned about this event in their history textbooks and might reflect how certain stereotypes and myths about Reconstruction were added to America’s memory of this event.

1897

D. H. Montgomery, *The Leading Facts of American History*

Six States re-admitted; Negro Legislators and “Carpet-Baggers.”—Six states accepted these conditions; four refused, but accepted them later (1870). In some of the restored states, especially in South Carolina, there were more negroes than white men. The negroes now got control of these states. They had been slaves all their lives, and were so ignorant that they did not even know the letters of the alphabet. Yet they now sat in the state legislatures and made the laws. After the war many industrious Northern men settled in the South, but, besides these, certain greedy adventurers went there eager to get political office and political spoils.

These “Carpet-Baggers,” as they were called, used the ignorant “freedmen” as tools to carry out their own selfish purposes. The result was that the negro legislators, under the direction of the “Carpet-Baggers,” plundered and, for the time, well-nigh ruined the states that had the misfortune to be subject to their rule.*

After a time the white population throughout the South resolved that they would no longer endure this state of things. Partly by peaceable and partly by violent means they succeeded in getting the political power into their own hands, and the reign of the “Carpet-Bagger” and the negro came to an end.

* Original Footnote: In 1868 the total debt of South Carolina was about \$5,000,000. Under four years of “Carpet-Bag” government, or rather misgovernment, the debt was increased to no less than \$30,000,000. Much of the debt represented simply what was stolen from the people of the state.

Source: D. H. Montgomery, *The Leading Facts of American History* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1897), 328–329. Available online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t0sq9874z>

1917

James Alton James and Albert Hart Sanford, *American History*

One-third of the white bread-winners had been either killed or disabled. But the most difficult problem in the situation involved the negroes, who comprised one-half of the population. Could they prove their fitness for freedom? Under slavery they had been elevated from barbarism to at least a semblance of civilization; but they had had no experience in working under any other incentive than the fear or the love of a master who was at the same time owner. It is not strange that they should have developed little power of self-control and that, emerging from slavery, they should have been, on the whole, both indolent and shiftless.

During the war the mass of the slaves had remained on the plantations, quietly guarding the women and the children and raising crops. For their admirable conduct they had won the gratitude of their masters. If this benevolent attitude could have continued, all might have been well; but that was not to be. As the victorious Union armies advanced, particularly after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, multitudes of negroes flocked to them for protection. Many of them followed the troops, while others left their plantations and went to the neighboring towns and cities. All were without means of subsistence, and consequently the Federal Government was forced, for humane reasons, to begin the practice of issuing rations and clothing to them. In March, 1865, a special bureau was created in the War Department, known as the Freedman's Bureau, with officers and agents in all parts of the South. Its purposes were: (1) The distribution of food, clothing, and fuel to destitute freedmen; (2) the distribution among them of abandoned or confiscated lands; (3) the establishment of schools for their instruction.

During the summer of 1865 and the winter that followed, multitudes of freedmen were without occupation; against the advice of the Freedman's Bureau officials, they continued flocking to the towns and wandering from place to place. Petty larceny became very common. Many, indeed, took advantage of their new freedom to assume insolent airs toward their former masters.

1933

Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker and Donald E. Smith, *The United States of America: A History*

The Negroes Are Demoralized. After Lee's surrender many a white-haired planter called his slaves around him to tell them of their freedom. They came always respectfully, hat in hand, crowding around the front portico—old men, burly field hands, buxom women, half-naked boys and girls. "You are now free," said the master, "and

Source: James Alton James and Albert Hart Sanford, *American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 415–416. Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=DDNEAQAAMAAJ>

you may go if you please, or if you wish you may stay with me and work for a share of the crop.” “Yes, master,” was the usual reply, “we want to stay right here with you.” Yet many left. Freedom for these simple souls meant release from work, and during the summer of 1865 the roads were full of negroes on their way to the Freedman’s Bureau or the nearest federal garrison. They had heard that rations were handed out there, and many believed that each negro was to have forty acres and a mule. Thousands of idle men and women were concentrated in camps, or wandered over the country living by raiding barns or chicken-coops. Lawlessness, idleness, immorality, sickness resulted, while many plantations were uncultivated for lack of workers. The Freedman’s Bureau did much to alleviate this situation, by caring for the negroes and sending them back to work at fair wages. But the problem was too great to be handled by this bureau, and called loudly for action by the state governments.

The Black Codes Are Misunderstood in the North. When the new legislatures in the Southern states assembled, they met the situation in a practical way, but a way which proved unwise because it was misunderstood in the North. They passed laws fixing the status of the negro, and providing penalties for vagrancy and lawlessness. In some states he had to have a license to preach or to engage in trade, in others he could own no land. For seditious speech, rioting, or vagrancy he was subject to fine. If he could not pay the fine he might be handed over to a white man and forced to work. If he failed to support his children, they might be apprenticed to an employer, who must clothe and feed them, teach them to read and write, and keep them employed. When these Black codes were published in the North they aroused great indignation. “Are we going to permit the South to re-establish slavery under a different name?” it was asked. “After fighting a long war to abolish this evil, is it to come back under the guise of laws for vagrants and apprentices?”

1950

Howard B. Wilder, Robert P. Ludlum, and Harriett McCune Brown, *This Is America’s Story*

Selfish adventurers gain control of state governments. By the Reconstruction Act, men who only a few brief years before had labored as slaves were enabled to vote and hold office. Many of them could neither read nor write, and did not understand the workings of government. Therefore, they became easy victims of selfish white men who sought to gain control of the southern governments. These white men were known as *carpetbaggers* and *scalawags*. The carpetbaggers were Northerners who saw a chance to get rich quickly. They earned their name from the fact that they rushed to the South with their belongings hastily packed in old-fashioned traveling bags called “carpet-bags.” The scalawags, on the other hand, were southern white men who had opposed secession or who now thought they could gain something by favoring the North. Both

Source: Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker and Donald E. Smith, *The United States of America: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1933), 417–418.

carpetbaggers and scalawags were more interested in wealth and power for themselves than in rebuilding the South.

Reconstruction is carried out under carpetbag governments. How did the carpetbaggers gain control of the state governments? They joined with the scalawags and the Negroes to form a Republican Party in the South. By promising the Negroes money and power, they got themselves elected to offices in the state governments. Negroes and scalawags were elected to the state legislatures. It was those carpetbag governments which carried out the provisions of the Reconstruction Act. By 1870, all the southern states had been admitted once more to the Union.

Under the carpetbaggers and scalawags, the southern legislatures wasted huge sums of money. The capitol building in South Carolina was furnished with \$650 French mirrors, \$60 chairs, \$600 clocks, and \$60 imported china spittoons! Huge amounts of money were voted for buildings, roads, schools, and railroads, and much of this money was spent foolishly. In order to raise these sums, heavy taxes were voted. The heavy taxes fell chiefly on the southern whites who owned property. Many had to sell their lands because they could not pay the taxes.

Source: Howard B. Wilder, Robert P. Ludlum, and Harriett McCune Brown, *This Is America's Story* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 398–399.

Items for Analysis

1. What biases can you identify in each of these excerpts?

1897

1917

1933

1950

2. These textbooks were written during the Nationalist, Progressive, and Consensus eras of historical writing. Are these excerpts representative of their respective eras? Cite examples to support your claim.

3. Imagine you are a student reading these textbooks during the various years in which they were published. Consider a typical student's lack of educational resources during this time (lack of different books, few libraries, no internet, etc.) as well. With that in mind, explain what a student's image of African Americans might have been like during that time. What effect might this image have had on relations between African Americans and other groups? What effect might this image have had on politics and political decisions?
4. The last textbook used in this section comes from 1950. Research more recent U.S. history textbooks and explain if this story has changed over time.

BIRTH OF THE KKK

History textbooks are written to teach future generations what it means to be a good citizen. Often, they do this by telling stories about great individuals or groups from the past who did great things or made great sacrifices for their country. Understanding this makes reading this section interesting. When it comes to how textbooks dealt with the KKK over the years, one must consider whether the textbook authors viewed these people as the “good guys” or the “bad guys.”

1914

Lawton B. Evans, *The Essential Facts of American History*

The first few years after the war were known as “The Reconstruction Period.” In the North business went on as before; in the South the people had to face new conditions. The negroes were no longer slaves who had to work; they were free to work or not as they chose.

Most of them stayed on the farms and worked for wages. There were some, however, who wandered idly from place to place, and became a menace to the peace of the country. Soon they had no money, no food, and nobody to care for them. Some of them became vicious, and even thought they could take by force what they needed.

To protect themselves against these idle and lawless negroes, who were often led away by evil white men, a secret order known as the “Ku Klux Klan,” was formed by the white people of the South. Its members met in the woods or on the outskirts of the town. They wore masks and hideous disguises, and had a pass-word and secret signs. Whenever a bad negro or white man began to give trouble a sign was nailed on his door, or a note was sent to him, ordering him to leave the community or suffer the consequences.

The “Ku Klux” riders were a great terror to the negroes. Whenever they appeared, the frightened blacks scurried to their cabins. The threats of this organization held the negroes in check, kept them in their houses, forced the evil ones to behave, and made the idle ones work.

1916

Emerson David Fite, *History of the United States*

The self-respecting Southerners, before Congress would allow them to vote, found two ways of fighting against their oppression. First, they formed secret societies to intimidate the black voters and frighten them away from the polls. The members of the

Source: Lawton B. Evans, *The Essential Facts of American History* (Boston: Benj. H. Sanborn & Co., 1914), 440–441. Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=VqwwAQAAIAAJ>

most notable of these societies, the Ku Klux Klan, would ride about among the negro huts at night, attired in fantastic costumes, to frighten the occupants and bind them by solemn oath to do the bidding of the whites. They resorted not only to actual violence but also to grotesque devices. Drawing up before one hut and requesting a drink of water, a horseman, who carried a tank concealed beneath his robes, would drink three bucketfuls [sic] of water, with the words, “That’s good; the first I’ve had since Shiloh.” Another would ask a frightened negro to hold his horse, and then taking off what was apparently his own head would bid the black hold that too. It was easy to frighten the superstitious ex-slaves. In 1870 and in 1871 by “Force Acts” Congress adopted extreme measures against such methods and the Ku Klux Klan was broken up.

Furthermore, the disfranchised whites, through their Northern friends, carried on a persistent agitation in Congress in favor of giving them back the suffrage. Congress, as we have seen, yielded but slowly, and lent its favor rather to the negroes than to their old masters. It was not till 1872 that a law was passed by Congress wholly removing from the Southern whites the political disabilities resulting from the war. From that time the “carpet-bagger,” the “scalawag,” and the negro gradually lost their political domination.

Source: Emerson David Fite, *History of the United States* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1916), 417–418. Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=sXIZAAAYAAJ>

Items for Analysis

1. Both textbooks were written in the early twentieth century. Investigate this topic more and explain how the era in which these authors were writing their textbooks influenced their interpretation of the KKK.
2. Explain how depictions of the KKK have changed since the early twentieth century. How are they depicted today?

THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR, 1846–1848

CAUSES OF THE WAR

1. Mexican-American War, 1846–1848	Which Side Caused the War?
1859	Mexico did not trust the U.S. due to jealousy and therefore prepared for war. Since the U.S. was worried about war starting over Texas they sent troops to the border. On April 26, Mexican troops attacked U.S. soldiers.
1880	According to this author, this battle had been developing for centuries, between a civilization made up of strong, heroic people who let nothing stand in their way, versus an effeminate group of inferior people.
1915	This author seems to give more blame to Mexico, but also argues that the American military forces attacked the Mexican military first.
1966	This textbook argues that both sides may have been at fault and does not give a clear answer. It points out that Abraham Lincoln questioned the causes of this war and lays out the argument that Mexico may have pushed for war with the belief that England would join them against the U.S.
Current U.S. Textbook	Answers will vary.

2. Answers will vary, but much of the recent research into this topic seems to lean more toward the U.S. having caused this conflict in order to fulfill Manifest Destiny.

3. After reading this section students should be able to see that this is in fact a classic example of Nationalist history. There are a number of sentences and phrases that students can point out, but one of the main points should be that the author sees northern Europeans as being a superior group of people who do not allow nature or “lesser” people stand in their way of taking new territory. There are a number of racist comments and examples of Anglo-Saxons trying to spread liberty and progress wherever they go.
4. Answers will vary but students could possibly discuss that the 1966 textbook’s discussion of the Mexican-American War and the Gulf of Tonkin Incident were both very unclear situations that brought the U.S. into armed conflict with another nation. Students could also argue that by having two examples of the U.S. getting into a war without clearly defined reasons may have led some to protest the current Vietnam War.

SLAVERY

THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY AND THE CIVIL WAR

1. Answer may vary but students could possibly point out that the Grimshaw textbook, written for Northern students, clearly discusses the arguments against slavery and praises the role of abolitionists. While the Harper’s School History actually does not mention slavery, it does go into detail about how the federal government does not and should not have power over the state governments. Students will possibly argue that both of these textbooks may have helped lead the U.S. to war because they only backed the arguments from each region and usually cast the other side in a negative light.

2.

Slavery	Positive Bias	Negative Bias
1830		Numerous examples can be used from this selection. Students could highlight how this textbook called for an end to slavery in 1851.
1856	This one is hard to answer because the author does not mention slavery. A student might point out that a textbook written for the South did not want to mention that topic but that they are arguing for states' rights.	
1895		Numerous examples can be used from this selection. Students may emphasize how this author discusses the "backwardness" of the South, due to slavery.
1910		Numerous examples can be used from this selection. This author argues that American colonists often tried to get rid of slavery but that England continued to force it upon them.
Current U.S. Textbook		Various answers are possible but students will notice a more negative view of slavery in modern textbooks.

3. Answers may vary, but most students will probably see that neither of these two textbooks are good examples of Nationalist History. Nationalist History was typically more racist and would have had no problem claiming that one group was superior to another. These two textbooks actually argue that slavery was wrong and discuss how states did or should have gotten rid of it during the Colonial period.
4. Some students may argue that it would be a positive for the country in that every American student would be reading the exact same stories, which would hopefully unify everyone and make better citizens. Others might argue that each state is unique and that, by highlighting specific historical events, students would be able to gain more pride in their own state/region. It could also be argued that these state-specific textbooks could get students more interested in history by showing the connections between their state and the nation as a whole.

LIFE AS AN ENSLAVED PERSON

1. While several stereotypes and myths about slavery exist in every excerpt, students might notice that the textbooks written later discussed the role slaves played in society and how cruel it was to sell family members. A more recent textbook would typically argue that even if a master was being “nice” to his slaves that slavery was still an inherently evil and cruel institution.
2. Answers will vary, but students might consider the following. In the 1930s and 1950s segregation was still widely accepted throughout the United States, and many Americans would have assumed that these stories were correct since they were widely held beliefs. There was also very little research being done on this topic, and textbook publishers probably would have been questioned had they written about the horrors of slavery. By the 1960s and 1970s the civil rights movement was in full swing, and many people began to question what they had heard about African Americans. There was also a push from civil rights leaders to change textbooks to better reflect the reality of slavery.
3. Answers may vary but it is possible that students will see that while African Americans were demanding their equal rights they also wanted to have Americans better understand their history as well. The civil rights movement also influenced a number of historians to begin doing more thorough research into African American history.
4. Answers may vary but students will probably emphasize that during the New Left era they would have not worried about making U.S. history look bad and would have included all the terrible things that happened to African Americans while they were slaves. They might also highlight how the slaves brought some of their African culture with them and developed new cultural traits in the United States. Students might also argue that they would have tried to find sources that came from the slaves and not just relied on the historical perspective coming from the masters or white Americans.

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1861–1865

CAUSES OF THE WAR

1. Students could possibly argue that by adding in the India story they are making students understand that the Civil War actually had a global impact. They could also point out that economics played as big of a role in this war as did politics. Finally, they could make the point that since India had enough cotton for the European countries, nations like England did not get involved in the American Civil War, and therefore, one could argue, allowed the North to win.
2. Students will probably find that most historians agree that since England did not rely on cotton coming from the Confederacy they did not find it in their best interest to get involved in the American Civil War. Where there might be some disagreement is when historians discuss the overall significance of cotton from India. Some argue that it was the key turning point, while others claim it was just one of many factors. Along with India, Egypt is often mentioned as another nation that sent cotton to European buyers.

U.S.-DAKOTA WAR, 1862

1. A possible answer is that the author was biased against the Native Americans. Examples could be his use of the words outrages, savages, “taste of blood,” and massacre, all used when referring to Native Americans or their actions. It is also interesting to note that the author does not describe how many Native American deaths there were.
2. Answers may vary but students could argue that many of these hangings were unjust and that a legal process was not followed. Students doing even more research will discover that Abraham Lincoln signed off on all of these hangings. While answering this question students may want to emphasize that it is actually an important event that should receive more attention in future history textbooks.

U.S.-CANADIAN RELATIONS

1. This textbook was published in Canada.
2. This textbook was published in 2003.
3. Yes, the men were all wealthy businessmen dealing in banking, timber, land, or railways.
4. There was tension because of the St. Albans raid in Vermont.
5. The Americans were threatening war.
6. Some Canadians took this threat seriously because they remembered the War of 1812 and believed America's threats were real.

RECONSTRUCTION AND THE NEW SOUTH, 1865–1900

POLITICS IN THE SOUTH

1. All of these textbooks demonstrate that the authors held very racist views towards African Americans and blame them for any problems that may have occurred following the Civil War. Some students might even notice that these authors tend to make the argument that it was the federal government and their taxes that saved African Americans.
2. Answers will vary but students should be able to point out that much of the racism in these excerpts is an example of the Nationalist era that would have argued that Anglo-Saxon people were superior to the African slaves. The 1912 textbook could serve as an example of the Progressive era in that it could be argued to be the least racist of the textbooks shown above. Finally, students could argue that the Consensus style is not truly demonstrated in the 1950s textbook, which again seems to sound more like a Nationalist era work.
3. Students could argue that with lack of contact with African Americans, and with no other sources helping to defend them, many white Americans may have developed a racist attitude—especially if what they read confirmed their beliefs that African Americans were lazy, dishonest, and/or unintelligent. This would then cause animosity, fear, and anger toward African Americans and would convince many white Americans to keep politicians and laws in place that supported the Jim Crow Laws.

4. Answers will vary depending on the textbooks used but students will find that modern textbooks are much less racist and will probably give more positive examples of how African Americans fared while working in state governments during Reconstruction.

BIRTH OF THE KKK

1. Students will find that there was a revival of the KKK in the early twentieth century and that being a member was not always seen as a negative thing. In an era where movies like *Birth of a Nation* were being shown in movie theaters, seeing authors describe this group in a positive way should not be too shocking.
2. Answers may vary but overall students should demonstrate that since the end of the twentieth century the KKK has been portrayed more negatively. Textbooks since the 1960s that condoned the violence and racism associated with this group would not be accepted into a school.

