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A Story Well Told: Rich Narrative Engages California Fifth Grade Students in American History

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A Story Well Told: Rich Narrative Engages California Fifth Grade Students in American
History

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

School of Education
Dominican University of California

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Signature Sheet

This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the chair of the master's program, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Science. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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November 8, 2007

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Abstract

The educational publisher Pearson/Scott-Foresman in 2006 introduced curriculum to address California History/Social Studies standards. Fifth grade students have difficulty comprehending non-fiction text that is informative enough to have historical accuracy. The publisher promotes a program that features a standard in every lesson, and promises no extraneous content. An examination is conducted as to how this program approaches the required California History/Social Studies elements of providing “A story well told” which should include, according to specifications by the California State Department of Education, “forceful personalities, controversies, issues of the time, and primary sources.”(CDE, 2003) Literature on the topic of history education contains strategies for deconstructing academic language and clarification on historical literature which “should [capture] historical events with dramatic immediacy, engaging students’ interests, and [foster] deeper understanding of the times...” (Crabtree, Nash, 1994). Scott-Foresman History/Social Studies text for fifth grade is examined for its effectiveness in helping students comprehend history through a written narrative, and for enabling teachers to convey the depth and breadth of this span of American history. The adaptations the classroom teacher can make to enhance the written text are detailed in this paper.

Introduction

The researcher Bruce VanSledright indirectly invited me to provide more research, in a reference he makes in his book, *In Search of America's Past*, (2002). The author states, "...we need additional studies of this kind [history investigation with primary sources] in order to lend further support to the claims and implications I have drawn." (p.154). As with many teachers who are passionate about conveying history to children, I struggled yearly with an effective way to introduce my fifth grade students to, and inspire them in my passion of America's varied, rich history. Scott-Foresman's History/Social Science text developed for the California market appealed to me and to other members of the pilot group of teachers in San Rafael City Schools responsible for adopting a program for the K-5 students of our public school district, for many reasons. Indeed, the "three path program" which melded text, activities, and technology appeared to address many of our hopes for a comprehensive, effective curriculum, particularly for fifth grade teachers who are entrusted with teaching the vast span of chronology from early explorers through Native cultures in North America, on through the Revolutionary War, and into the Westward expansion of our nation.

The State of California specifies that explorations of history are to provide "a story well told" by inclusion of "forceful personalities, controversies, issues of the time, and primary sources." What are the ways in which a classroom teacher can be most effective in teaching these young students to learn to think critically about history?

Statement of Problem

The publisher, Pearson/Scott-Foresman has developed a markedly different program for teaching history, yet the text path has limitations. The three approaches of the total program are blended into a multi-faceted curriculum that is designed to combine text/workbook, video and computer based lessons, and activities for classes and individual students.

The effectiveness of the program for fifth grade students is examined in this study, as I, a fifth grade teacher utilize the program for the first full year of its adoption in San Rafael, California. Although the program is new, it has already been adopted widely by many districts and schools in California. The assets are evident. The program contains interesting DVD footage, activities, and a consumable workbook format.

The drawbacks are many, but can be compensated for in careful use by a classroom teacher. According to VanSledright (2002), "The task of a text is to act as a conduit between the truth about the world and the reader. Schoolchildren are repeatedly invited to accept this arrangement without question" (p. 75). If the children are not going to question the framework of the text, teachers, who have been entrusted with this duty, must question this particular version of the story. Within that dialog, teachers will learn how to use varied resources to supplement and enhance the American history program produced by Scott- Foresman.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this action research study is to record a year's use of the Scott-Foresman curriculum for fifth grade, with adaptations and enhancements that bring depth and understanding in an effort to increase student awareness and enthusiasm in the study

of American history. Students who are led through instruction by a teacher who has received extensive professional development in order to expand the knowledge base of history, as well as in the methodology for conveying history, benefit more than students who have a teacher who is limited by just the provided program as delivered to the classroom. Additionally, students who receive opportunities to explore primary sources and make critical conclusions based on their own research, and who have opportunities to work in a more hands-on environment with primary sources and realia, become engaged with American history throughout the year.

Research Issue

The textbook written for Scott-Foresman entitled *Our Nation*, although supplemented with related materials, does not provide adequate depth and background in order to support meaningful historical investigation by fifth grade students. Additional teacher training in both content and methods of providing primary source research techniques for children, enriches this curriculum in order to better educate and engage students in history.

Theoretical Rationale

In his book, *A Place Called School*, John I. Goodlad passes along this dilemma, “One puzzling question is why upper elementary school students liked the social studies less than any other subject... The topics commonly included in the social sciences appear as though they would be of great human interest. But something strange seems to have happened to them on the way to the classroom...” (Goodlad, 1984, p.212)

VanSledright (2002), a history scholar and researcher, looks into how students, particularly fifth graders, use prior knowledge and limited assumptions to think critically about American history education. He has conducted numerous intensive studies into how to best engage students with the broad survey of American history they are required to comprehend in fifth grade.

VanSledright details how students can practice the art of historical detection by being given the opportunities to (a) work with various forms of evidence and types of source material; (b) deal with issues of interpretation, as contentious as they can often be; (c) ask and arbitrate questions about the relative significance of events and the nature of historical agency; and (d) cultivate and use thoughtful, context-sensitive imagination to fill in gaps in evidence trails when they arise.” (Brophy,1997 p.254)

Historian and writer Larry Cuban says of VanSledright’s research,

Bruce VanSledright’s study of fifth graders doing history adds nicely to the work of those historians, educational researchers, and schoolteachers then and now who believe that citizenship is best cultivated when students learn the critical skills of historical investigation and draw their own conclusions supported by evidence drawn from primary sources. That 10-year-olds can do historical

inquiry can be traced back to the work of Dewey, Piaget, and Bruner. (Cuban, 2002, p. *viii*)

Early in his professional career as a writer, VanSledright had already published books presenting his viewpoint on the issues he believed “suffocated history education’s potential vitality.” 2002, p.*xi*) His later book, *In Search of America’s Past*, is a chronicle of his experience teaching 23 fifth graders to learn history by investigation. The author not only taught these students, but also served as researcher; collecting data on the influence of his pedagogical theory of historical thinking and learning.

While the researcher admits he had the luxury of entering into a classroom headed by another teacher in order to conduct his research, plus the help of an assistant, his thorough study indicates important findings with three major indicators.

First, VanSledright believes that students develop an understanding of themselves by investigating their forebears. He believes this is empowering because it enables students to see that they themselves have a hand in the way humans participate in shaping communities.

Second, VanSledright offers the value of drawing students into the process of investigating the past. They learn the lure of historical study and become in charge of their own learning. Students may also come away from such investigations rethinking the notion that inert, heritage-based accounts in one established narrative, the textbook, can imply that history has ended.

Third, the author states another value for active learning in history education: development of the ability to read critically. The author cites research that shows students in about fifth grade stop reading books and text unless they are required.

(National Association of Educational Progress, 1998) Children become stunted in development of the ability to read more deeply. In an information driven culture, such as ours, we cannot afford to allow children as young as 10 years of age to reach a plateau in reading comprehension progress. When given interesting problems to solve, the researcher, VanSledright, has shown that students will attack the reading of historical texts with considerable zeal. It is the development of this valuable skill that the researcher concludes is “the most powerful benefit of engaging young children in the practice of doing history.”(2002, p. 25)

Assumptions

Assumptions exist which underscore the idea that ten and 11 year olds cannot comprehend history the way it is presented in standard textbooks. Nearly every elementary school teacher can testify that a request to take out the social studies book elicits groans and moans from students. The students anticipate that the next hour will be spent reading dry material embedded with ancient dates, and hard-to-pronounce names and places. Additionally, the task of extracting meaning from that text and reformulating it to answer assigned questions, disengages students. An opportunity is missed to have a lively investigation into the controversies of the past which can reflect so closely one's own current journey as a culture.

When Scott-Foresman introduced its “Three Path Program” for history in the elementary grades, teachers in the California market were hopeful that the combination of video, digital imagery, and interaction would mitigate the dread students feel when approaching history. Would this program be adequate as presented to support teachers within self contained classrooms when the time came to study history?

Background and Need

Research is varied, yet deep, in its assessment of how history is conveyed to elementary school students. This study does not deal with the nature of the organization of how history is studied by grade level. Currently, the norm in the United States is for fifth grade students to begin studying a chronological survey of American history after studying state history in fourth grade. Some cases have been made for realigning the study of the History/Social Studies by having students begin a survey course in two parts of American history in fourth grade, and to continue this study in fifth grade, with a particular focus on state history to occur when it is chronologically relative. (Brophy & VanSledright, 1997) The conclusion is made because evidence exists to support the study of state history contextualized within the American history chronology, which appears to be more easily comprehended to 10 and 11 year olds.

Because this study is concerned only within the framework as it currently exists, with fifth grade students undertaking the study of American history for the first time, researchers recommend encouraging curriculum developers and teachers to engage in “...value-based critical thinking and decision making that should be emphasized throughout the social studies curriculum.” (Brophy & VanSledright, 1997) If the motivation to educate elementary students on reflection of history in order to enhance one’s sense of identity within the context of history, is Scott-Foresman’s curriculum adequate to provide this perspective in the classroom as presented by the publisher?

As it is written, the text currently provides limited exposure to the areas specified by the State of California as critical to presenting, “a story well told.” In examining the coverage in the text of “Forceful personalities,” Scott-Foresman fifth grade history text

mentions 101 individuals in text references and in biographical profiles. Of these people who appear in the text, the state specifies the need to feature “roles and contributions of people from different demographic groups: American Indians, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans and members of other ethnic and cultural groups (California Department of Education, Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials in History-Social Science, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight, 2003, Education code sections 51009 and 60040).

The 101 people profiled in the Scott-Foresman text can be examined by demographic groups in this way:

- 72 biographic references were of European origin
- 11 biographic references were Native Americans
- 5 biographic references were African Americans
- 2 biographic references were Mexican or Latino Americans
- 11 biographic references were women
- 0 biographic references were Asian American

Evidence exists then, for supplemental material being presented within the course of the year to provide a wider range of ethnic personalities who participated in and shaped American history, in order to meet the state’s goal of providing “forceful personalities” and “biography to portray the experiences of men, women, children, and youths.” (California Department of Education, 2003, p. 3)

Additionally the state documents this need, “Where the standards call for examples, materials shall go beyond the listed examples and include the roles and contributions of people from different demographic groups: American Indians, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, and members of other ethnic and cultural groups. (California Department of Education, 2003, p. 5, Education Code Section 50040)

Within Category 1 of the History-Social Science Content/Alignment with Standards document is specified, “Primary sources, such as letters, diaries, documents, and photographs, are incorporated into the narrative to present an accurate and vivid picture of the times (p. 4)

While it is important here to point out that the publisher has provided supplementary materials in form of biography cards, theme posters, video introductions, and trade books, no facsimiles or reproductions of documents, diaries, letters, portraits, or artifacts from history are included with the program. Primary source references within the program are confined to small, condensed portions of a limited number of actual evidence that exists from history. These sections are generally found at the end of the chapter pages and marked as “Primary Source.”

Within the Scott-Foresman text, there are 143 visual representations. These are photographs of artifacts, places, or people. There are paintings, portraits, etchings and other artistic images. Documents, speeches, and diaries are referenced. Of these 143 images, nine of them have captions or readable dates noted. One hundred thirty four of these images carry no specific date or credit, either in the image or in the related caption. Where written documents, speeches, or diaries are excerpted, all selections have been edited to small segments to highlight one portion of the original in order to bring a reader’s attention to a small point of view of the author, or presenter, or the original.

Perhaps, then, these carefully chosen sources depicted in the text are not providing students opportunities to investigate and make discoveries. While they do appear to fulfill the requirement of being “...carefully selected to exemplify the topic,” as specified in California’s Content/Alignment with Standards guidelines, students are not

allowed access to the full text of the original document in order to draw their own conclusions. This selective use of primary source excerpts may impede the desire of students to read and think critically, and to draw their own conclusions. Students are so closely directed by narrowed, out of context portions of original documents, that they are discouraged from using their own critical thinking skills..

How best, then, to provide a wide range of historical documents and educated guidance necessary to lead fifth graders through the complex task of historical investigation, without resorting to over-simplified and unengaging text?

Review of the Literature

The following review of the literature describes the historical development of social studies strategies for teaching. The second section addresses the importance of teacher professional development in history content. The third section discusses curriculum standards established by the state of California. The concluding section illustrates specific social studies educational programs.

Historical Perspective on Teaching Social Studies

Much of the basic research which has been done in the practice of teaching history and social studies can be found within "*The handbook of research on Social studies teaching and learning.*" (1991). Within this book, Aoki examines Social Studies Program Evaluations in four areas and concludes,

We know that the true magic of the educating act is so much more than a simple, albeit justifiable, concern for improved resources, more sensitively stated objectives, better pre-service and in-service training for teachers, or improved bureaucratic efficiency. Rather, it has to do with the whole meaning of a society's search for true maturity and responsible freedom through its young people. (Aoki, T. T. as cited in Shaver 1991, p. 105).

Within the same reference book, Alleman and Rosaen analyze conceptual knowledge development and conclude that even elementary aged children can understand different types of causal relationships. They further cite studies that suggest the use of

narrative as an effective means of helping children develop time and causation concepts.(1991)

Armento analyzes the changing views about teachers with her investigative question, “How do social studies teachers demonstrate human caring, and how do they encourage students to ‘connect’ with social studies content and with important social issues?” (Armento, 1991, p. 189)

Importance of Teacher Professional Development

Cuban (1991) makes a case for first-order changes, which he defines as intentional efforts to enhance existing arrangements while correcting deficiencies in policies and practices. He underscores this point that those who propose these changes assume the current goals and structures of schooling are both adequate and desirable. Cuban notes that teacher educators throughout the 20th century have been concerned with determining an appropriate balance of general and professional education. New teachers, particularly, may have an inadequate knowledge of social studies content, as well as knowledge of teaching methods.

Cuban further explores how social studies teachers present material, even if the educational terrain becomes far more complicated than what currently exists. He concludes that few fundamental changes have penetrated classrooms; however incremental, or first-order, changes have occurred with the eager help of teachers themselves. Although he provides no concrete solutions for how to bring about these changes, he writes that answers to the questions on how to bring about change in the teaching of history will provide more reliable guides to changes in practice because such

research will be anchored in what teachers did rather than in what they ought to have done. (Shaver, 1991)

Researchers in Stanford University's Teacher Assessment Project and Knowledge Growth in a Profession Project, have studied both novice and expert history teachers. The findings here support the theory that knowledge in the content is a critical ingredient in teacher performance.

Downey and Levstik publish their findings that "there is no evidence that delaying instruction in history is developmentally appropriate." (p. 340) The authors further find "...the value of a shallow 'cultural literacy' approach to concept development in history is brought into serious question by the research."(Downey and Levstik, 1991, p. 340)(372 in Shaver) They further concluded that research based on Piagetian and domain-specific theories underscore the need to devote sufficient time to a particular topic or period to establish an adequate historical context. Students need to see how particular information fits into the larger domain of historical knowledge. They need historical topics rich enough to support sustained study. (Downey & Levstik, 1991, p. 340.)

Social Studies Standards in the State of California

The state of California, in its recommendations for the State board of Education adoptions for new history-social science instructional materials released criteria for materials being considered for adoption. The document listed five key areas:

History-social Science Content/Alignment with Standards

Program Organization

Assessment

Universal Access

Instructional Planning and Support

The Content Alignment with Standards document contains 23 points that the state recommends as critical for curriculum under consideration. Among these, item 4 specifies:

“Instructional materials present accurate, detailed content and a variety of perspectives.”

Item 5 states,

“History is presented as a story well told, with continuity and narrative coherence (a beginning, a middle, and an end), and based on the best recent scholarship. Without sacrificing historical accuracy, the narrative is rich with the forceful personalities, controversies, and issues of the time. Primary sources, such as letters, diaries, documents, and photographs, are incorporated into the narrative to present an accurate and vivid picture of the times.”

Seixas (1999) writes, “The encounter between historians and teachers can potentially provide the stimulus to fundamentally rethink what constitutes history education. It can provide an opportunity to think deeply about the nature of historical understanding, that of historians, of teachers, and of students. But it is only potentially so. The encounter can also act to reinforce a conception of history teaching as a technical problem, where historians supply the content and teachers work out the pedagogy.” (p. 318)

Researchers examining what is currently occurring in the field are looking critically at the relationship between what historians are uncovering, and what teachers are putting forth. They are asking to what extent the past can be used to inform the

present. (Mayer, 2006). Students are challenged “to enter knowledgeably into the historical record and to bring sound historical perspectives to bear in the analysis of a problem. (National History Standards Project, 1996)

Related studies have helped researchers conclude that fifth graders appear to be ready to work with historical documents in investigating history, and are capable of drawing conclusions based on this evidence, provided they are given opportunities to do so.

Social Studies Projects

The California History-Social Studies Project, which is affiliated with the University of California, has closely examined the presentation and accessibility of history textbooks. Nancy McTeague, Executive Director of the project, notes,

The excitement of historical investigation lies in the gray areas of human behavior – leaders who wrote eloquently about human rights while codifying slavery, bloody battles carried out in the name of religion, and the unexpected social impact of technological and industrial change. Textbooks can’t teach all of these nuanced and complex concepts, but they should try to provide even the most talented and prepared teachers with help as their students’ main resource.

(McTeague, p. 75)

The inclusions of primary source documents and references within the Scott Foresman text are extremely edited. McTeague refers to these as “watered-down historical text...boiled down to simplistic sound bites.” (p. 75) In much the same way that advertisers promote movies with strategically snipped wording in order to present a positive review in the press, the writers and publishers of Scott Foresman have also

resorted to heavy control of primary sources in order to direct focus to a desired point of view. This technique satisfies the state requirement of History-Social Studies texts' need to include primary sources within the program, but it does a disservice to teachers in that it robs them of opportunities to allow students to come to their own conclusions through guided study of a larger portion of sources.

Clearly, it is problematic to procure relevant primary source documents for use in a fifth grade classroom. Although the Internet and on-line databases have made possible a wealth of sources, decoding and comprehending these documents requires much guidance by the teacher, and an accessible dictionary or glossary for unfamiliar or outdated vocabulary. However, researcher VanSledright has done much active teaching and observing in order to draw conclusions that fifth grade students can comprehend history by examining primary source documents. The author has also supported his theory that students can, and want to delve into the intricacies of historical events in order to draw their own conclusions.

Summary of Major Themes

Most educators and researchers in the History-Social Studies discipline appear to have agreement about the inadequacies of the currently marketed curriculum for American history. Additionally, much research exists on professional characteristics and development of teachers. Academic caliber, preparation, and years of teaching experience are frequently cited in the research literature as key components of success in teaching students to think historically. Finally, deep investigative involvement of

students in looking at differing points of view, and in analyzing primary source documents are often noted as ways to transition students into a more meaningful relationship with the subject of history.

How Present Study Extends Literature

The documentation of the process of use of the Scott-Foresman American history curriculum for fifth grade provides an example and possible roadmap for teachers who find their history study limited by the confines of the condensed text. In addition to analyzing which portions of the program best support the written text, examples are given as to how primary source materials and investigation techniques engage students more fully in the study throughout the year.

Thornton makes a case for exposing children in as many ways possible to every avenue of study. He writes, “Current learning standards do a great disservice if standardization of the curriculum edges out opportunities for individualization of the curriculum. ...Simply declaring that ‘this material is good for all students’ does not make it so.” (Thornton, 2005, pp.51-52)

The program of supplementation to the Scott-Foresman program for fifth grade builds on this premise. Research suggests repeatedly that unreflective perfunctory content representation and bored and disdainful students approach subsequent history courses that they take in eighth grade and high school with a level of disregard that is difficult to change. The researchers Brophy and VanSledright advocate that

... teachers approach the subject of history by asking themselves penetrating questions such as: Can I teach everything from A to Z? If not then what are the

big ideas I want to get across to my students? How can the study of history pique my students' curiosity? How can I encourage them to ask important questions about what happened in the past? (Brophy and VanSledright, 1997, pp.271-272)

With a goal to have answers to these questions which make history learning for all students in one classroom engaging, an active research study is presented..

Discussion

Summary of Major Findings

The history education standards as outlined in the National Standards for United States History were designed to revolutionize the teaching and learning of United States History. As a large portion of the document is devoted to the process and value of historical thinking, it is evident that the National Center for History in the Schools, the group that designed these standards in 1994, values the development of skills in sifting through evidence, analyzing that evidence, and formulating interpretation of primary and secondary sources. As the familiar history textbook is the basis from which history and heritage-based education resides, elementary school teachers who are subject-matter generalists, need to be prepared and supported in effective ways to assist students in historical investigation.

Limitations/Gaps in the Literature

The Scott Foresman History- Social Studies curriculum for California elementary schools has only been available for use in schools for two years. No additional research appears to exist on the impact of a limited text, such as Scott Foresman's workbook portion of the "three path program." Therefore, findings of researchers are dependent on traditional, hardcover, comprehensive history textbooks.

Implications for Future Research

As technology has raised the bar for information that can be accessed within the four walls of a classroom, additional research will need to be conducted on the quality and effectiveness of computer based learning programs. Although other publishers are making more content available on CD, DVD, and Internet linked sites, current research on how information is conveyed to elementary school students remains mainly limited to written texts and printed primary source material.

Overall Significance of the Literature

Though researchers provide a wide variety of conclusions on why history curriculum for younger students remains difficult to read and remember, clearly most researchers are in agreement with this statement made by researchers Isabel L. Beck and Margaret G. McKeown, in their article, "Substantive and Methodological Considerations for Productive Textbook Analysis." (Shaver, ed., 1991)

"Research has shown that, when texts of equal length are compared, those in which the ideas are more dense are harder for readers to comprehend, and a text that says a little about many things appears more difficult to comprehend than one that says a lot about a few things. " (p. 499)

Methodology

A decision to use a method of Action Research was made because of the nature of this study. Richard Sagor, a researcher and writer, specifies three criteria to determine whether action research. These criteria are: Focus on Professional Action, Adjustment of Future Action Based on the Results, and Improvement Possibility. (Sagor, 2005, pp. 3-4.)

For one school year, I used the Scott Foresman curriculum for History-Social Studies in my fifth grade classroom. In addition to using the curriculum as designed, I supplemented and adapted the program in order to determine if I could bring greater depth of understanding for the students. Sagor qualifies this inquiry method as "quasi-experimental research" because of testing a hypothesis without a control group. (Sagor, 2005, p. 6)

I utilized the Action Research model in my classroom by employing these methods: 1)identification of focus, 2)refining the focus, 3)articulation of theory, 4)theory in action, 5)determination of research question, 6) analysis of data, 7)reflection on data, 8)turning findings into action plan, and 9)reporting and sharing action research.

Identification of the focus was determined through my observation of resistance students were exhibiting when social studies was the scheduled study. I also observed that students were unable to synthesize history information in any meaningful fashion. Text weakness was what I identified as the source of this disconnect.

My school and district was using a newly developed History-Social Studies program after a brief pilot study. As this program attempted to convey United States

history information in a different "three path" program, I decided to focus on use of the program, and to journal and document the program's use throughout one academic year.

I clarified and developed my theory that the text component had limits, following a literature review based on research conducted by historians and educators.

Using the program in a modified way, I supplemented and modified the curriculum and documented the process throughout the year. My conclusion was based on assessment of student achievement and feedback at various points in the year.

Following reflection on this process, I incorporated experiences of other teachers in the same district, and shared my research with colleagues.

Analysis of Data

Does the program work as designed?

Throughout the academic year 2006-2007, I used the Scott Foresman curriculum in a fifth grade classroom. The classroom was comprised of 25 fifth grade students, ages 10 to 11. Every student spoke English fluently; although one fifth of the class was classified English as a Second Language (ESL). One student received Resource Support Program services twice a week (RSP). All the students had received approximately the same history-social studies content prior to fifth grade: the continuum of neighborhood, community, and state study, in second, third, and fourth grades respectively. Although some of the students had been exposed to the Scott Foresman curriculum as part of a pilot study in fourth grade, the majority of the students were accustomed to a large, hardcover textbook. Many of the students voluntarily offered their dislike of the subject, and great reluctance in the study of history and social studies.

What follows is an analysis of the program. Student work samples are cited, with names omitted for privacy considerations. When the program has been supplemented with outside sources, these are credited. Teacher created materials are included in the appendix.

The Text

Students were guided in reading the text. The word text, as it appears in this study refers to the written portion of the program, exclusive of activities. The publisher provides color transparencies for every page of the student text, for guided reading and modeling of interaction by the teacher possible on an overhead projector. While this

often proved helpful for demonstrating how to notate directly in the book, visual constraints often limited its usefulness. That is, several students had vision limitations and found it hard to see the projected text. Also, lighting considerations in the classroom made proper viewing conditions problematic.

In order to move students through the reading of the text, which usually occurred in the early afternoon when students were apt to be sleepy, I often had students stand to read, sharing every other paragraph. Other times, students might sit informally in pairs and take turns reading the two or three pages of one lesson together. Because of prior professional development in which I had become convinced that reading non fiction text twice was optimal for deeper comprehension, I often required students to do this. Alternately, students might view the DVD lesson prior to reading the text, as a way to experience the content more than once.

The publisher makes the text available on line in Spanish. For three lessons, I had one ESL student listen to the text read aloud in Spanish. After the third attempt, the student indicated that comprehension in English was adequate, and there was no need for the Spanish translation. This feature, however, provides access for students whose academic Spanish is solid, and for students who are able to read in Spanish so as to follow along with the printed text on the computer screen.

Use of Primary Sources

Despite being convinced of the value of using primary sources in history investigation, I did not utilize this option more than three times, independent of the program's snippets of primary source documents. I did, however, utilize portraits and paintings of early American colonial history in order to provide a visual way for students

to connect with the content. I also repeated many times when showing the DVD scenes, that the people seen in the reenactments were actors so students would not misunderstand that such filming was nonexistent in the 18th century, and is not considered a primary source.

The Program's "Active Path"

As an alternative to utilization of primary source documents which I would have to locate outside of the program as presented, I instead used the "Active Path" activities. Of 44 lessons in the text, I used 14 of the provided activities, although I modified about half of these lessons for adaptation to my students' levels of understanding or prior experiences. Some of the activities relied on the teacher locating sources for additional research, with no suggested titles or web sources offered. Other activities featured directions that were complicated, making the process of conveying the activity to the students difficult. Some activities were simplistic, but the learning objectives obscure. The activities that provided reproducible work pages with straightforward directions for activities that could be completed in one class period with students displaying gains in historical knowledge were most successful.

An example of one of these activities is found in the teacher manual for Unit 3, Lesson 1. The focus question for this lesson asked, "Why did European nations and American Indians compete in North America?" In small groups, students colored maps to indicate land claims by European nations and Native American cultural groups. Each group had clear directions for indicating one portion on their map in colored marker. When these maps were overlaid on the overhead projector, students clearly saw the basis for disagreements over land claims. The text stated, "Conflicts also occurred because

Europeans claimed lands already claimed by American Indians.” (p. 43) Students were able to see the visual proof of these types of disagreements through their own hands-on work.

A less successful activity provided in the program is found in Unit 3, Lesson 3. (p. 52T2, T3, T4) Student readers were provided with “scripts” for reporting on the “Powhatan Wars,” “Pequot Wars,” and “King Phillip’s War.” These scripts were written to with the intention of providing varying points of view. The student readers are meant to represent journalists for an imagined media report. After the students have read aloud the different reports of the conflicts, the class is asked, “For whom is the student reporting?” in order to establish awareness of bias in the reporting, and to heighten student awareness of different perspectives on the same events. But due to the nature of the readings, which had difficult to pronounce names and unfamiliar background knowledge, students were not able to easily distinguish point of view. This activity left them puzzled and confused. I concluded that I would not attempt this activity in the future, and I did not give an assessment piece because of the level of deep confusion that resulted following this activity.

Alternative Activities

As in all aspects of classroom teaching, knowing when to seize a window of receptivity to built greater understanding and excitement into the study of American history proved most satisfying in my fifth grade classroom. One such event was the result of reading a book in class not contained in the Scott Foresman program, although the content was relevant. A short paragraph on page 73 of the text discusses the colony on Roanoke Island in 1587. Five sentences relay the brief facts of the failed colony. I

used Jean Fritz's account of this mysterious story as a read aloud for my class during some of our afternoon Social Studies classes. Referring to this story as a "History Mystery," I read and clarified the story for the students, emphasizing the lack of evidence in order to solve the puzzling disappearance of the early colonists. The majority of the students in my class became intrigued with this story, and several of the students suggested staging a play of this event.

Wanting to make the most of this engagement with a historical event, I wrote a short play with 25 roles, with varying degrees of speaking parts. The scenes of the play alternated between imagined present day archeological exploration, and past events.

This play (see appendix), practiced and staged over the course of a month, succeeded in helping the students connect with the travel between Spain, England, and North America; and also highlighted awareness of conflicts with Native Americans.

In addition to meeting some "Speaking and Listening Standards" specified by the State of California, these students also received "...a deep understanding of historical interpretation of multiple causes and effects of these events." This Historical and Social Science Analysis skill, (Historical Interpretation) along with "...how the present is connected to the past," (Chronological and Spatial Thinking) are key elements of the skills desired for historical investigation by the State of California. (pp.1 and 2)

Most significantly, these students were the co-creators of a production and study that engaged them in to a deeper degree than reading static text. Clearly, not all classrooms, nor all teachers, need or desire this level of involvement in study of one historical event. It is included here as evidence of ways the Scott Foresman curriculum

was supplemented in order to increase the knowledge base of history for students encountering the subject for the first time in formal curriculum.

It is important to mention that the publishers collaborated with Colonial Williamsburg's Educational Program. William E. White, PhD, and Director of Educational Program Development at Colonial Williamsburg, is the author credited with writing the text. Colonial Williamsburg houses a vast educational program, and produces lesson plans and interactive games and sponsors conferences and workshops. The Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute trains elementary and high school teachers in ways to effectively convey history to students. To what degree Colonial Williamsburg influenced the direction of selected activities is not known. None of the activities featured duplicate lessons provided to teachers through Colonial Williamsburg's materials or website.

I attended Colonial Williamsburg's Teacher Institute in 2003. As a result of my immersion in multi-faceted ways to teach children history, I returned from the Teacher Institute with materials and ideas which would more actively engage students in the study of early American history.

Also as a result of my visit, and of five return visits on my own time over four years, I have developed an extensive collection of books, facsimile documents, lesson plans, games, and realia for engaging fifth grade students in the study of early American history. The term realia, as used here refers to as objects such as coins and tools used by teachers to illustrate everyday living

Scott Foresman, despite its connection with Colonial Williamsburg, does not provide any supplementary materials with its program that can be considered realia. Yet,

manipulation of actual or facsimile objects is used extensively at Colonial Williamsburg. Visitors to the historic site, and to the website, are able to purchase a variety of objects created to bring historic details to the present generation. Flints, slates, small toys and games, books, dishes, and tools are all offered in order to allow hands on exploration and experience.

The most effect use of relia, I have found, is when objects are used during the “Colonial Day” our fifth grade participates in once a year. This day-long active learning situation consists of five or six stations, through which small groups or “families” of children move through and participate. The stations which have proved most successful for optimum learning and enjoyment are: Quill Pen and Ink, Stenciling, Herbs and “Sweet Bags”, Rolling Hoops and Trap Ball, Tavern Dice Games and Small Games; Storytelling, and Colonial Dance. In all of these stations, tools, games, art materials, and images of the early 18th century are provided for students to use, play with, and hold.

Students are also invited to dress in ways that are in keeping with the style of 18th century colonists, particularly of the Southern Colonies. Boys roll up pants and wear long socks and white shirts. Girls can wear skirts and white blouses. Hats appropriate to the era and gender are provided, so that every child has even the smallest part of costume in order to interact with the experience more directly.

The students who participated in Colonial Day of 2007 included my class of 25, as well as another fifth grade class of 24 students, and a 4th and 5th grade multi-age classroom of 27 students. Following the day-long experience, students were asked to write thoughtfully about the day. Following are some of the written responses which most typify the kinds of reactions received.

Today's Colonial Day was the best day. Because we did a lot of things. And my most interesting part of the day was Colonial art and writing. Because they were both fun but the most fun was when I write with that feather. And I couldn't really write with it. And it was hard."

One new thing I learned today was how to write with a quill pen. How you do it, is you dab the feather into a thing of ink and start writing. But you have to do it on a special piece of paper.

I think the most interesting part of Colonial Day was the storytelling. I especially liked the story about the two little boys who stole the potatoes. I thought it was funny that two men got scared of two little boys in the graveyard. I learned that in those days, people believed in the devil. Storytelling was fun and I learned something about people in those times.

Something new that I learned today was that they danced a lot in the 13 colonies. I really never knew they danced that much at all. I knew slaves danced but not that the colonists were BIG dancers! The dance we did was a bit complicated. I would like to live in the colonies but I wouldn't like to dance like that!"

Another activity that I really liked was the colonial dance. I think the music and beat was one of the best parts. The dance was really fun too. But my favorite part was imaging how people would look dancing like that at parties in colonial days.

My favorite was story telling, because I love stories especially. The ones about colonial times I like hearing about our past. I like stories because all I have to do is listen. The think I did not know is that some slave owners treated their slaves with respect. I also liked the story of the patriot because it was about American history and I love American history, that is why I loved Colonial Day.

Although many of the students had difficulty clearly writing about the direct learning, the responses here show how the students were impacted by the participatory nature of the day. Most students who responded expressed appreciation of the differences, as well as similarities, between their own lives and lives lived by colonists in the 18th century.

Medina, writes, "...researchers and educators have advocated active and imaginative teaching methods too stimulate, motivate and engage students in historical topics. However, hands-on or group projects like building a mission, designing a poster,

or acting out what may have been in the mind of an historical figure provide only a motivational *point of entry* to an extended study of the subject based in reading and writing.” (2005, p. 5)

Reading the responses of these students who participated in Colonial Day, the conclusion might be drawn that the “point of entry” indicated by Medina, is, in fact, a very wide doorway, and events such as these hands-on experiences provide compelling opportunities to more deeply engage students learning. The front loading of information prior to experiences such as this day-long activity, as well as the follow-up learning of historical events of this era being experienced, offer chances for teachers to maximize the receptive minds of these students.

The Language of History

The conclusion reached by many researchers is that history textbook writing is anything but, “a story well told.” In the process of arranging, interpreting and generalizing from recoverable facts and compiling them into textbooks that can be read on the fifth grade level, personalities are flattened and events seem inevitable.

In her writing on the methods used by the California History-Social Studies Project, the researcher Kathleen Medina quotes UCLA history professor Ron Mellor’s words about the preparation students must develop in learning how to read non-fiction text. He is quoted as saying, “College students must turn to reading, analyzing and writing about non-fiction material in a more analytical way in courses in history...K-12 courses in history and the social science provide the most effective preparation for the kind of analytical reading, writing, and thinking that college students must do on an everyday basis.” (Medina, p. 3)

Scott Foresman Text Reading Strategies

An integral part of the Scott Foresman history text for fifth grade is embedded “Reading Skill” directions for each lesson. Strategies such as “Compare and Contrast,” “Main Idea and Details,” “Cause and Effect,” and “Sequence,” are highlighted on the first page with guidance throughout the lesson for identifying text passages which fall under these designations.

In theory, this practice of taking apart text in order to decode the academic language of the narrative is a strong strategy and one used, although in a modified way, by the California History-Social Studies Project. However, I found that my students were often confused about these exercises provided in the text, even with modeling on identical pages I projected on the overhead screen. Even I, at times, was not certain as to what the authors of the text were asking, and I had to refer often to the teacher’s key so as to locate the correct information.

One example of this occurs on page 8 of the student text. The Reading Skill is “Compare and Contrast.” The activity in the margin directs students with this prompt, “Compare and contrast the housing of the Ojibwa and the Mohawk.” Five light blue lines follow, with a pencil symbol to indicate to the students that a written response is required. Several problems occur here. First, the handwriting size of students entering fifth grade is often large and irregular. Most students are not able to complete even a short response which will fit into this limited space. Ten year olds can become easily frustrated with a simple obstacle such as this. Second, the writing requires writing at the fold of the book – another simple, yet potential frustration for children. Third, the prompt is phrased as a statement, and does not pose a question in which students can feel successful in

responding to with evidence in the text. Lastly, and most critically, the text portion is long and the critical information is found both at the end of the reading, and in the caption of the accompanying picture. All of these barriers for students early in the fifth grade year combine to make a well-intentioned, but very difficult exercise for young students. This is only one question of seven within the first lesson of the first unit. Understandably, my students experienced high levels of apprehension about successive questions throughout the next lessons.

Potential Solutions

Because students are challenged by the text syntax, construction, and inference, finding ways to support them as they develop strategies for unlocking the meaning within, is difficult. Further complicating this dilemma is in how to assist ELL students, and other students with learning limitations.

Under close and thorough examination of the teacher support materials for the program, Scott Foresman does provide short lessons for clarification of reading strategies, as well as brief vocabulary development skills, for each lesson. The publisher makes these available through reading transparencies, with support provided both in the teachers' copy, and teachers' on-line access. Vocabulary cards are included with the program as well.

I did not use this additional support when guiding my students through the reading of each lesson. Perhaps if I had done so, this particular class might have benefited from deeper examination of terms such as: Making Generalizations and Main Idea and Details.

Because many of these terms and strategies overlap, yet do not necessarily align with our district adopted reading program provided by Houghton Mifflin, I made the decision frequently to limit focus to one guiding question per lesson. This guiding question was not a reading strategy, however. My questions for the students stayed on the ability to gather evidence and to think historically.

Historian and educator Bruce Van Sledright emphasizes the importance of four critical points for helping students think historically. These are 1)identification, or knowing what a source is, 2)attribution, or recognition that a source is constructed by an author or artist, 3)judgment of perspective, and 4)assessment reliability. (VanSledright, p. 231).

In an attempt to help students especially with the issue of perspective while looking at historic issues of a potentially uncomfortable nature, I chose to supplement the program with outside sources.

An example of this is how my students dealt with the issue of slavery in Colonial America. Unit 4, Lesson 6 poses this focus question: What was the role of slavery in colonial America? I did use the program's Active Path activity which involved student discussion groups with adult guidance. Three different groups of students rotated through three stations of evidence: one was a drawing of how slaves were "packed" aboard ship in order to ship them to North America, the other was a newspaper advertisement for a slave auction, and the third was a watercolor image of slaves working on a Virginia plantation. The discussions that students participated in were productive. Because I and the other two adult volunteers in my classroom, were repeating the lesson twice more, our

moderation of the discussions became more refined and the quality of the discussions was elevated.

Because the lesson on slavery was so brief, and this issue so important, I supplemented the text, video, and active paths of the program with four other resources. I read aloud portions of a book entitled, "...If you Lived When There Was Slavery in America," by Anne Kamma. I also read my students a biography of Phillis Wheatley by Kathryn Lasky. This book features large watercolor paintings, which helped my students visualize the poet and slave, and helped them put a face on an issue. Third, I guided my class in a reading of "A Williamsburg Household," by Joan Anderson. Each student had a copy of this book, so as we read it together, they were able to view the photographs of recreated scenes that contrasted the comfortable lifestyle of a slave owning family, with the slave quarters of a typical slave family.

Lastly, I showed the video *Chained to the Land*, an Electronic Fieldtrip produced by Colonial Williamsburg. This powerful film dramatizes the selling of slaves on a southern plantation in order to help the landowner pay his debts. The film gives the perspective of the devastation on a slave family when one member of the family is sold.

As I did not use a final assessment piece, I have no evidence of the learning experience for my students. However, I found that written responses were most effective in gauging what information reached the students most significantly.

Additional Experiences

In March of 2007, my school hosted a program entitled, American Lives. This one-woman presentation by Darci Tucker, an actress and interpreter at Colonial Williamsburg, features three monologues of women of the Colonial era. Tucker prefaces

this 30 minute play with strong background information for the students on the differing points of view of citizens prior to the Revolutionary War. The conflicting view points between colonists loyal to Britain and those opposed to the King are clearly explained by Tucker to the students in about 20 minutes. Because of this introduction, the students are able to bring some basic knowledge to the presentation. After the play, each class of students was able to meet with Tucker for questions and answers, and for the opportunity of trying on samples of clothing from the era. Following are short excerpts from five paragraph essays the students wrote following the performance. Selections are recorded exactly as written, with spelling corrected only.

Today a lady named Darci Tucker came to talk to the fifth graders. First, she acted out three people. Second, she told us the three people were undecided, a loyalist, or a patriot. Third, we got to dress up in 1700 types of clothing.

I got to learn many new information about colonists who can't change things by themselves. This was the best day I had.

The first woman Darci Tucker played was Jane Walker. Jane Walker was a wealthy girl. Her father had 350 acres of land, 25 slaves, and lots of money. Her father died when she was 18, and then she inherited all of the land because she was an only child. But then she married Mr. Walker. Mr. Walker had a gambling problem. First he gambled all the land, then the slaves, and then their own house! So then her husband signed up for the war and he took Jane and her five children with him. Then her two youngest children died and so did her husband.

Deborah Sampson was an orphan. She wanted to fight in the army but ladies weren't allowed to. So she dressed up as a lad and entered the army. In a fight she got hit in the leg and had to go to the surgeon, would the surgeon find out? No. Deborah Sampson went out into the bushes and took the bullet out herself. I think Deborah Sampson was a great person. I think Darci Tucker is an amazing person. She played all those people and I really enjoyed it

The Darci Tucker assembly was a very good story from three points of view. I learned many new things too. Now when I think about history, I could add these points of view to my thinking.

From these excerpts of student writing, a case might be made for the impact of a live performance in a dramatic mode to enhance learning for students of American history in fifth grade. The reality of a live performance appears to assist students in relating in an empathetic way to historical characters, whether they are based on actual historic records – as two of these characters were – or on an amalgam of several different history sources – as was one of Tucker’s characters.

From these portions of essays, and from other essays not appearing here, students seemed to retain details from the presentation, and were more able to relate to the humanity of individuals of the past through this dramatic performance. The appearance of a knowledgeable person who appears at an important point in the curriculum seemed to be key for deepening the students’ understanding of this time period.

Another Extension Activity

Because of my experience in Colonial Williamsburg as a participant in the Teacher Institute, I obtained a CD with a large collection of primary source documents relating to 25 men and women who lived in and around Williamsburg in the 18th century. The documents collected on this CD consist of inventories, photographs of buildings, wills, portraits, and letters that are attributed to the lives of these people. The 25 people represent gentry, middling class men and women, and slaves. Using this resource, and some additional components that I adapted, I developed a long term assignment for my students that helped familiarize them with the use of primary and secondary sources to reconstruct the profile of a colonist.

Research of these documents which can be viewed on classroom and lab computers, and can be supplemented with other sources such as books, pictures, and

internet research. This activity can be adjusted to meet the needs of different learning levels.

The lesson is included in the appendix. Assessment rubrics guide students in the extent and quality of the research, which for some, is the first opportunity to use multiple sources of research. Posters, illustrated by the students, were created to showcase the research information. These posters represented three weeks' worth of work. In the course of the research, students made discoveries as to the position of the person being researched, as to whether that person supported or opposed separation from British rule. Students also made discoveries as to relationships between individuals, finding that slaves were often possessions of other citizens of Williamsburg who were being researched by other members of the class. Finally, as students researched housing, diet, and occupations and trades in other research materials, they gained a broader understanding of how colonists lived in the 18th century. The posters were displayed in the classroom, and students were able to read the research and work of others. This sharing of information further enhanced the learning.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Assessing student learning was an inconsistent aspect of the program as used in this classroom during this school year. Because the publisher was not able to fully support all aspects of the program on-line at the start of the year, the on-line quizzes for each lesson were not fully operational. Because of this drawback in the first three months, and because I also used a variety of methods to assess learning and to inform future instruction, I used the multiple choice quizzes a limited number of times. One example of this was when students were tested on Unit 4, Lesson 1 (Scott Foresman, pp.

67-70). The quiz consisted of five questions, with a choice of four answers for each question. Twenty five students took this quiz on the computer after studying the lesson for two class sessions, and after viewing the DVD movie one time. Twenty three of the students answered one or no questions incorrectly. Two students answered four questions incorrectly. Upon analyzing these answers and the success rate of the class, I observed that success for the majority of students on the five question quiz appeared to be connected to two factors: 1)the repetition of vocabulary and content in the lesson and in the DVD movie, and 2)the visual reinforcement of photos and maps in the DVD movie which followed the student reading of the text.

Other Professional Viewpoints on the Scott Foresman Text

Approximately two thirds of the way through the school year, I assembled a group of six teachers who all worked within the same district, and who all were using the Scott Foresman program in their fifth grade classrooms for the first year. With the assistance of a moderator, I listened to these teachers address the following questions by citing experiences in their respective classrooms.

The group was introduced to the discussion with the following introduction: the State of California specifies the history curriculum present “A story well told,” with “forceful personalities, issues of the time, and controversies.” Teachers were then asked by the moderator if they felt the Scott Foresman text provided this.

All teachers in the focus group agreed that the written text was difficult for students to read and comprehend. Yet the group also agreed that the text was condensed and simple in its coverage of historic events. One teacher commented, "The snippets are so heavily condensed, it's like the Sesame Street textbook of history."

A teacher who represented a school with a high percentage of ELL (English Language Learners) students offered his perspective on the presence of "forceful personalities." He said, "The personalities are thrown out there and not developed in any way." He also commented, "The text is completely inaccessible for my ELL students. When we read the text, I read, then the ELL readers repeat after me. Then I clarify words like, "interact."

All teachers present during the focus group discussion agreed that supplementary materials are needed in order to help students make sense of the sparse information in the text. "It's a skeleton of history," one teacher said. Another agreed, "It's bare bones."

The teacher with a majority of ELL students said, "I have to be a bridge to help students understand the text."

Other teachers shared their methods for supplementation. Three of the five teachers in the focus group had used materials that were not part of the Scott-Foresman program to add to their history instruction.

At the conclusion of the discussion, teachers offered these comments on the text: "I would like the chapters not to be so condensed." "They (the students) need to be able to think of them (the people in history) as people, " and "Tell me about these forceful personalities!")

Limitations in the Research

This action research plan was clearly limited in several aspects, the first limitation being the experience of one teacher in one classroom for most of the year's study. The variations of ways in which lessons were conveyed to the students mean that assessment measures would give information that cannot be organized into statistical data. Finally,

limitations in research resulted because no two lessons were assessed identically. If future study is to be continued on the text portion of this program at the fifth grade level, a decision might have to be made as to what the most successful mode of delivery was, and an attempt to be more consistent with this pattern might be made.

Having considered that, however, it might be beneficial to consider that varying the modes of delivery of content to 10 and 11 year old students might also actually enhance retention of material and engagement in the subject. Using a control group of students whose teacher moves through the program strictly as presented would be one way to analyze how successfully students can learn history, if demographic factors were similar.

The guiding question for bringing a focus to how history is taught in a fifth grade classroom is this, "Given the limitations of a tightly packaged program, what are the ways a classroom teacher can deviate from the curriculum as presented in order to enhance the subject for optimum learning and student engagement?"

The absence of a substantive and engaging narrative text for American history at the fifth grade level, is problematic. The simplification and generalization of facts, people, and events present several problems. Chiefly, the narrative simplifies complex events into brief chronologies that leave the assumption of large stores of prior knowledge not generally found in the 10 or 11 year old mind. Also, attention to meeting standards frequently neglects time spent developing a narrative text which can reveal the deeper complexities of stories and issues of the time. What students and teachers are left with is a simplified, dry series of sentences that are surprisingly difficult to ascribe meaning to, because so much more is left unsaid than actually explained. And, finally,

the task of assisting students in analyzing text and utilizing it as a model for expository writing, is neglected as publishers strive to package programs and texts that attempt to appeal to teachers with long lists of standards to cover, with little preparation time in which to thoughtfully consider the best methods for teaching them.

Keeping these limitations in mind, the American history curriculum presented by Pearson-Scott Foresman has developed must be lauded for what it does attempt to do. The program does strive to introduce an active path for students by providing extension pieces for each lesson. These activities often provide point of view perspectives of people involved in the issue being studied. Although many of these activities also assume much prior knowledge not necessarily presented in the text, the attempt to provide a platform for consideration of multiple perspectives is noteworthy.

The curriculum also provides visual footage via DVD or computer access. Students are provided with artwork, reenactment footage, geographic features, and other displays within three to five minute segments for every lesson in the program.

Finally, the third aspect of the curriculum is the text. The publisher made the decision to create a consumable workbook format for students. Embedded within the pages of text are focus questions and reading strategies for analyzing the content. Students are meant to directly write in the margins, when prompted, or to circle and underline important words and sentences. The interactive nature of this workbook, combined with its slim profile, makes the text appear less overwhelming to children.

Conclusion

VanSledright has written these words to explain the challenge of teaching history in the elementary classroom: “[It] requires more than significant memory of historical events and people involved in them. It requires a deep understanding of the processes involved in investigating past: knowing where to obtain the sources of evidence, knowing what to do with that evidence, understanding how to read difficult texts and analyze sometimes mysterious artifacts, and honing the ability to get into the hearts and minds of people whose worlds were different from own without unfairly imposing our contemporary assumptions on them. In other words, deep substantive knowledge of the subject matter of history must be coupled with equally deep procedural knowledge.” (VanSledright, 2002, p. 14)

The contribution here to the research supplies one kind of response to this observation. The text component of the Scott Foresman history curriculum for fifth grade is able to supply only a brief summary of important events in over 400 years of history in North America. Along with visual and active pathways to learning, a classroom teacher with limited knowledge and expertise in history study and methods of delivering historical information, would be at more of a disadvantage in helping students utilize multiple methods in examination and analysis of evidence in order to draw unique conclusions and discoveries from primary and secondary source documents that are part of, or supplements to, the presented history-social studies curriculum.

While it can be determined from this study that the first version of Scott Foresman’s history program for fifth grade has many strong components, particularly in the paths of learning other than the written text, a conclusion is made that knowledge as

to how to access and utilize supplementary resources appropriate for 10 and 11 year old students can further enhance the classroom experience and learning for most children. Additionally, techniques acquired through professional development such as those provided by the California History Project benefit study of other subjects in the classroom, such as science and expository writing.

Lastly, the engagement of students in historical investigations and thoughtful experiences into historical perspectives puts the students more in charge of their own learning. In this way, according to the researcher Bruce VanSledright, students “are at the center of their own action rather than on the periphery, as passive recipients of the results of someone else’s decision-making process.” (VanSledright, 2002, p. 151)

The contribution made in this study is a recommendation for teachers to consider how they might add too, and possibly subtract from, the existing text portion of the Scott Foresman History-Social Studies curriculum for fifth grade in California. In order to convey “A Story Well Told,” educators will want to engage students in more than condensed narratives of chronological historic accounts. At this level, delving deeper into less content may be of more value for conveying what’s important about heritage study through history.

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Appendix A

The Mystery of the Lost Colony
A play by Julie Alice Huson

25 Speaking parts
(parts as they appear for the first time)

Narrator

I. Archaeologists – 4 (A,B,C,D)
Children doing a report – 2 (boy, girl)

II. Queen Elizabeth
Sir Walter Raleigh
Sir Richard Grenville
Ralph Lane
Manteo
Colonists – 3 (1,2,3)

III.

IV. Eleanor White Dare
Simon Fernandez
Colonists – 2 (4,5)
John White

V. Sailor

VI. Powhatan
Colonists – 2 (6,7)

Act I: (setting: archaeological dig)

Introduction: In the 1500s, European explorers sailed the Atlantic Ocean. Many European countries wanted to establish settlements in the newly sighted Americas. The English explorer Sir Walter Raleigh had a plan to do just that. He didn't know that his plan would spark one of the strangest mysteries in American history.

Narrator: Four archaeologists are working in North Carolina. They have been working for months searching for answers to a “History Mystery.”

Arch. A: (*with feeling*) There just isn’t anything else here!

Arch. B: (*frustrated*) We can’t stop now!! We’ve been digging and looking, and looking and digging for months!

Arch. C: It’s still a mystery. I guess it will have to remain a mystery forever.

Arch. D: We’ll have to just rely on journals and documents. There’s no evidence here at Cape Hatteras that there ever was a “Lost Colony!”

(*Children enter.*)

Boy: Our report is due next week! And this “Lost Colony” is still a mystery!

Girl: Yes, there’s nothing here to help us. I guess we’ll just have to go back to the library.

Arch. A:(*seeing children and talking to them*) Hey, you two sound as disappointed as we are.

Boy: You can’t be doing the same thing we’re doing, though. We’ve been assigned to research The Lost Colony of Roanoke. All we can find is a few old books in the library, and some things on the Internet. We’re not even sure there was any “Mystery.”

(*Archeologists all laugh in a friendly way.*)

Arch. B: We almost agree with you!

Arch. C: But we ARE looking for evidence of those Englishmen who tried to make a home here in North Carolina. They called it Virginia then, did you know that?

Girl: Yes, we read that it was named for Queen Elizabeth. Although why they didn’t call it LizzyLand, I still can’t figure out!

Arch. D: The only artifact that’s been found even related to Roanoke is a gold ring, which was actually found at Jamestown, many miles from here. It might be as old as 450 years!

Arch. A: And some people think it might have belonged to one of the first colonists who tried to settle here at Roanoke.

Girl: But all those people died, right?

Arch. B: Well, eventually they did. But nobody knows what happened to them – that’s the mystery! More than a hundred men, women, and children – just vanished!

Boy: I wish we knew more! I’m really interested in this – but it’s frustrating not to be able to find out!

Arch. C: We know how you feel! But we’ll tell you what we DO know.

Arch D: Do you have a pencil?

(children look eagerly to the archaeologists, who gather together and begin to talk quietly. They move to one side of the stage.)

Scene II: (setting: England)

Narrator: Let’s go back to England to the year, 1584. The explorer, Sir Walter Raleigh, is addressing Queen Elizabeth of England. Let’s listen.

Sir Walter Raleigh: Your majesty! I have consulted with the explorers, Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlow. They report that this new land, now named Virginia, in your honor, is a welcome spot for England’s first colony.

Queen: Excellent! Well done, Sir Walter! You shall leave in April. I will grant you seven ships. Sir Richard Grenville *(she gestures towards Sir Richard Grenville)* will travel with the colonists.

Sir Richard Grenville: *(bowing to the queen)* Yes, your majesty! I should be pleased to be of service. We will take with us Manteo. *(points to Manteo, who is standing nearby)* Although he loves our dear England, he will be of great service to us as translator in this New World, from where he comes.

Ralph Lane: *(pushes his way politely to the front of the group)* Yes, and I will be glad to go as well. I have had much experience on the seas. I will act as captain of the flagship, the Tiger.

Sir Richard Grenville: This is Ralph Lane, Your Majesty. He feels rather hostile towards the native peoples, however, Manteo will guide us if conflicts arise.

Manteo: *(proudly)* The People are kind and good. The people will welcome you as friends. The earth has been good to us. We will share the goodness with the English friends.

Ralph Lane: These brave Englishmen are here too, Your Majesty. *(he gestures to the colonists standing nearby)* They testify to the worthiness of the journey.

Colonist 1: Long live the Queen of England, and now of Virginia!

Colonist 2: We are ready to take on the wildness of the New World!

Colonist 3: We hear there is gold enough to gather from the ground!

Sir Walter Raleigh: You see, Your Majesty? These good people are brave and eager to establish a new colony for the honor of England.

Queen: Go, then! I wish you peace and calm seas.

Colonists: *(together)* God Save the Queen!

Scene III: *(archaeologists and children come in, and colonists and Queen freeze in place)*

Arch. A: So in April, 1586, seven ships carrying 108 men began the long journey to Roanoke Island.

Girl: No women?

Arch. B: No, women didn't usually make these kinds of voyages. Once a town had been built, women and children would come on another boat.

Arch. C: That was the plan, anyway...

Boy: We read that two Colonists painted pictures and wrote about everything they saw on their arrival in Roanoke.

Arch.D: Yes, and those are some of the documents we have that help us understand what happened there. But we don't know much else.

Arch. A: One of those colonists wrote that an Indian named Menatonon said there was a place that had copper and pearls. We think the colonists went exploring to find them.

Arch. B: So they went exploring, but just ended up tired and hungry.

Girl: *(remembering)* Oh! Is that when the colonists fought with the Native American people?

Arch. C: Yes, we think Ralph Lane led a surprise attack on some of the native peoples. The colonists must have been very hungry and very desperate to be so violent to people who had caused them no harm.

Boy: Didn't Sir Francis Drake stop by on his way back to England from the Caribbean to see how the colonists were getting along?

Arch. D: Yes, that's right. And he offered to take anyone from Roanoke who wanted to go, back to England.

Boy: I remember reading that a bad storm came up, and then everyone really wanted to go home, right?

Arch. A: Yes, and Sir Richard Grenville, who had left the colonists earlier, came back and found everyone in Roanoke gone!

(Grenville moves)

Arch.B: *(turning and addressing Grenville)* Isn't that right, Sir Richard?

Sir Richard Grenville: *(speaks defensively to the archaeologist and the children)* Well, yes. I admit I left the colonists, and Ralph Lane, in anger, earlier in the voyage. Once I landed at Roanoke and looked for everyone – they were gone! But I left fifteen men at Roanoke to “hold the fort” as they say.

Boy: That doesn't seem very smart. Just fifteen men? How were they supposed to protect themselves from all those very angry Native Americans who had been attacked?

Sir Richard Grenville: *(looks at his feet, ashamed)* I didn't really think about that.

(Sir Walter Raleigh moves)

Sir Walter Raleigh: No, you didn't. But I did! I went back to get them when I took families to start my “City of Raleigh” on the Chesapeake Bay.

Girl: Were they there, Sir Raleigh?

Sir Walter Raleigh: That's another part of the mystery.

Scene IV: (Ship)

Narrator: In 1587, a second voyage was attempted to settle in the New World. This time, men, women, and children were traveling by ships to Virginia. Eleanor White, along with her husband, and her father were among those who sailed.

Eleanor Dare: 500 acres of land! It will be a new beginning in a new land.

John White: You are brave, my daughter, to come on this voyage to the settlement of our new home – the City of Raleigh.

Eleanor Dare: I am confident in every way, save one, Father.

John White: (*encouragingly*) Now Eleanor, I know that you do not care for the leadership of Simon Fernandez, but he is familiar with what some call “the golden highway” through the Caribbean. I believe he will get us there safely.

Eleanor Dare: Perhaps, Father, yet he has not yet loaded supplies for the journey. I fear he means to do us harm.

John White: You are suspicious for nothing, Daughter. I am certain Mr. Fernandez will get us safely to Virginia.

(*Simon Fernandez enters.*)

Fernandez: (*falsely friendly*) Ah, Mr. White, Mrs. Dare! I have just been informed that our three ships will be ready to leave England in July.

John White: Indeed, Simon! We will have the new citizens assembled and ready to leave the docks.

Colonist 4: My family and I will be ready to leave. We have already sold our belongings, and bid our relations goodbye.

Colonist 5: Mr. Fernandez; I understand that we are to make a stop first at Roanoke Island to collect the fifteen men who were left there of late.

Fernandez: Oh, uh...ah yes! Certainly, certainly. (*he leaves quickly*)

Eleanor Dare: (*turns to John White*) You see, Father? The man clearly does not have the colonists’ best interests at heart!

John White: Eleanor! The man is very busy. Now let’s have no more of these idle speculations. We have a journey to undertake!

Scene V: (the ship)

Narrator: The company gets underway on the journey to America.

(*Eleanor Dare approaches Simon Fernandez, who is busy looking at a map*)

Eleanor Dare: Mr. Fernandez. I feel I must have a word!

Fernandez: I am very busy, Mrs. Dare. Perhaps you should send your husband or your father to discuss matters with me.

Eleanor: Mr. Fernandez! I can handle my own affairs!

Fernandez: *(with a patronizing tone)* Very well. What is your concern?

Eleanor: The ship is even now being anchored off the coast. Yet we have not arrived at our destination on the Chesapeake Bay.

Fernandez: My dear; that is not your concern.

Eleanor: It IS my concern! I am to begin a new life here! Sir Walter Raleigh has extensive plans for a city on the Chesapeake Bay. We are nowhere near there!

(sailor enters and calls to Fernandez)

Sailor: Sir! Sir! We are ready to go ashore!

(John White also enters after the sailor, looking worried)

John White: Simon? What of this? Are these your directives?

Fernandez: *(angrily)* Mr. White. Surely you are aware that supplies are short, and it is too late in the season to plan crops for a spring harvest?

John White: What of it, Simon?

Fernandez: The colonists must settle here for the winter. There is nothing else to be done about it.

John White: *(very surprised)* But Simon! Our charter was for the Chesapeake Bay! This is to be a momentary stop in order to board the fifteen men left at Roanoke. They are to come with us to the City of Raleigh!

Sailor: *(stepping between the two men)* I am boarding the women and children to follow the men, Sir. They will go to shore in the smaller ship.

Fernandez: Very good.

(Eleanor is listening to all this, then cries out to John White)

Eleanor: Father!

John White: *(turning to Eleanor)* I fear you may have been right about the motives of Simon Fernandez. We shall just have to make the best of it.

(All these characters move to the side of the stage and freeze)

Scene IV: (land)

(Again, the archaeologists and children enter.)

Boy: So what did they do?

Arch. A: Apparently, the colonists tried to make the best of things, and attempted to settle on Roanoke Island. But they hoped to move on to the Chesapeake Bay eventually.

Girl: Weren't there houses still there from the first settlers?

Arch B: Yes, but those were abandoned and ruined.

Arch. C: Bones from earlier settlers were found.

Arch. D: One settler, George Howe, wandered off to fish for crab, and then was attacked by Indians.

(off to the side, George Howe is seen fishing with a stick, then is attacked by a man who appears to be a Native American)

Boy: I can imagine that the Native Americans were still very upset about the earlier fighting started by the English.

Arch. A: Yes, and then John White went to talk to Manteo, an Indian who could speak English, and asked about the attack.

(John White steps forward. Manteo enters.)

John White: (addressing Manteo) Manteo. One of our own has been killed by your people.

Manteo: Those were not of our people, but we know the leaders.

John White: Will you bring them to us for peace talks?

Manteo: If they will come, I will bring them.

(Girl interrupts the scene and addresses the archaeologists)

Girl: Didn't John White ask Manteo about the fifteen men who were left on Roanoke?

Arc. B: Yes, and Manteo said that eleven of the men had left by boat. But no one knew where they went.

Manteo: We did not want to care for these men. They were not our people. They came into our home, yet expected us to help them.

Boy: (with sympathy) How annoying.

(Ralph Lane steps forward)

Ralph Lane: Annoying for whom? These savage people killed one of our own!

Manteo: (addressing Ralph Lane) Friend. You forget about the attack led by your men on our people.

Ralph Lane: (embarrassed) Well, yes. That was a very unfortunate error. When the men attacked at night, they thought it was the enemy tribe. (*He smiles at Manteo*) We named you "Lord of Roanoke" then by way of apology.

Manteo: This was no honor. Only you Englishmen are served by titles.

Ralph Lane: (quietly) I am sorry now.

Manteo: Things were to get worse for you then.

Ralph Lane: Yes. Much worse.

Scene VII:

Narrator: The colonists who were forced to disembark at Roanoke attempted to make the best of things. But there was not enough food. The colonists pleaded with John White, Governor of Virginia, to return to England to seek help.

John White: (waving from a ship) Goodbye brave people. Goodbye daughter! Goodbye little Virginia, my first grandchild!

Colonist 6: (*to Eleanor Dare*) It is a brave Governor, that Mr. White. To go back to England for supplies and to plead for help.

Colonist 7: Yes, with good winds and calm seas he should return with food and supplies in several months' time.

Eleanor Dare: (sadly) I fear I shall not see him again.

Colonist 7: Now, now! He is the most brave among us! He shall return quickly. Perhaps before your new daughter takes her first step!

Colonist 6: Remember we shall carve a signal to him on a tree, should we decide to move our camps.

Eleanor Dare: (*bravely and loudly*) I remember: carve the words of the place where we might go.

Colonist 7: And carve a cross above the words if we leave in danger.

Eleanor: I hope he shall not come back to find such a carving.

(*The children step into the scene*)

Boy: (to Eleanor Dare) And then he didn't come back for years, did he?

(*Eleanor Dare nods sadly and exits*)

Girl: We read that England's war with Spain delayed sailing for America.

(*John White enters*)

John White: Yes. I tried to get back to the settlers as soon as possible, yet it was not to be for three more years.

(*the archaeologists enter*)

Arch. A: All the possessions John White had left were in ruins when he returned in 1590.

Girl: But didn't the colonists leave a secret message?!

Boy: We heard that they carved on a tree!

John White: (sadly) Indeed. Yet all I found was the mysterious C-R-O carved in one tree.

Arch. B: And farther on, near a fort wall, another carving: Croatan.

Girl: But no cross. So they moved to Croatan, Manteo's home! They would be safe there!

Arch. C: That is what no one knows. We can't be certain.

Boy: One hundred fifty people. Just vanished. Weird.

(*Powhatan enters proudly*)

Powhatan: John Smith, a settler at what the English called Jamestown came to me.

Arch. D: (*surprised to see him*) Powhatan! (*to the children*) He is chief of the tribe near Jamestown.

Powhatan: The weapons used to kill your men, women, and children were in our possession.

John White: But John Smith did not report this for ten years!

Powhatan: That is not my concern.

Girl: (*to Powhatan*) Did your people kill the colonists?

Powhatan: It is said to be so. (*looks at the girl and boy*) Do you believe it?

Narrator: The Lost Colony of Roanoke remains a mystery today. Some believe the colonists were killed. Others believe the colonists were taken captive to work in Indian copper mines. Many searches have taken place, but nothing has been found which really solves the mystery once and for all.

(*Simon Fernandez comes on to the stage in front*)

Simon Fernandez: (*wickedly*) They really never had a chance, did they?

Boy: Simon Fernandez! What part did you play in this mystery?

Fernandez: Let's just say, I may have wanted everything money could buy, shall we? But the weather and the ocean may have been the biggest enemy. It always comes back to Mother Earth, doesn't it?

Powhatan: Yes. Yes it does.

Narrator: So who was ultimately responsible for the fate of the first European settlers on Roanoke Island? Ralph Lane, no doubt (Ralph Lane steps forward) for causing unfriendly relations with the Native Americans. Simon Fernandez, (Simon Fernandez steps forward) the Portuguese pilot of the expedition, certainly, for not planning for the success of the new colony. And yes, Mother Earth and the weather. The weather had a habit of whipping up a storm at every critical journey in this long adventure. So the mystery of the Lost Colony of Roanoke will remain forever a mystery.

(*Cast bows*)

The End

Credits: *The Lost colony of Roanoke by Jean Fritz, 2004.G.P Putnam's Sons.*

The Mystery of the Lost Colony by Candice F. Ransom, McGraw-Hill

Appendix B
Portrait of a Colonist
Lesson Plan

Aligned with California State Standards
Fifth Grade
Julie Alice Huson

Objective

Student will research, create a graphic, and report on a colonist who lived in the 18th century.

Goal

In doing so, within a classroom situation, all students will form a more complete picture of the influence of colonists from different social classes and spheres of influence, and will become aware of their roles which shaped a new country and a new governmental system.

California State Standards

History-Social Studies

5.5.4, 5.6.3

Listening and Speaking Standards

2.2

Procedure

Graphic Poster

Each student will receive the name of an early colonist. These individuals can include notable persons, Founding Fathers, and also any other person for whom some existing primary source documents can be located and read. This list should include slaves, indentured servants, Native American individuals, and women, in addition to land-owning colonists.

Using available books, primary documents, and other resources, students will gather information, using the Colonist Research page for note taking.

Following the gathering of facts and images, the student use the template as a guide, and will create a poster of the individual, using drawn illustrations and written or typed text in each quadrant of the poster.

Bibliography and Resources

Websites

Colonial Information

www.hfmgv.org/education/smartfun/colonial/intro/

www.vlib.iue.it/history/USA/ERAS/colonial.html

www.web.bryant.edu/~history/h364proj/sprg_98/powderly/powd_menu.htm

Biographies

www.odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/B/index.htm
www.history.org
www.earlyamerica.com/portraits/
www.colonialhall.com/

Primary Sources

www.personal.pitnet.net/primarysources/

Written Sources and Books

The George Washington Biography Lesson
Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens
Encyclopedia of world biography. Eds. Paula Kay Byers and Suzanne Michele Bourgoïn.
2nd ed. Detroit: Gale, 1998

From biography to history: best books for children's entertainment and education. Ed.
Catherine Barr. New Providence, NJ: R.R. Bowker, 1998

Hooray for heroes! Books and activities kids want to share with their parents and
teachers, Dennis Deneberg and Lorraine Roscoe, Metuchen, NJ, Scarecrow, 1994.

Index to short biographies for elementary and junior high grades. Comp. Ellen J. Stanius.
Metuchen, NJ, Scarecrow, 1971.

Index to young readers' collective biographies: elementary and junior high school level.
Judith Silverman. 2nd ed. New York, R.R. Bowker, 1975.

Assessment

Upon completion of the project and presentation, the teacher will use the following
rubrics to assess depth of understanding.

Rubric for Graphic Poster

Acceptable

1. All four quadrants of graphic are complete.
2. At least one fact is incorporated into each area of text.
3. Portrait displays understanding of reasonable dress and hairstyle of the period.
4. Illustrations are reasonable for the period, with some color and detail which demonstrate some research of available materials.

5. Text contains minimal misspellings. Poster is fairly neat and some time and effort in text and drawing is evident.
6. Name of Colonist, and name of student, are clearly visible.

Below Acceptable

1. Any or all of the quadrants are incomplete.
2. Facts in text are minimal, or not based on research.
3. Portrait is not necessarily based on reasonable research of appropriate dress and hairstyle of the period.
4. Illustrations are minimally executed or non existent, and may not use color detail.
5. Text contains many misspellings and mechanical errors. Poster may be carelessly executed, with minimal effort visible.
6. Name of colonist, and/or name of student are not on poster.

Above Acceptable

1. All four quadrants of graphic are fully and completely filled.
2. One or more facts are incorporated into each area of text.
3. Portrait not only displays understanding and research of appropriate dress and hairstyle, but also shows time and effort.
4. Illustrations are reasonable for the period, and show color and detail which demonstrate evidence of much research in available resources.
5. Text contains few or no misspellings, and is written with a depth of understanding which conveys interesting information.
6. Name of colonist and name of student are clearly displayed.

Presentation of Research

Following the completion of the research and poster, each child should present an oral presentation in order to best convey the diversity of lifestyle, occupation, and circumstances to the class.

This presentation should contain, but not be limited to:

1. Introduction of colonist by name
2. Context of colonist within the colonial time period
3. Clarification of where the individual lived, and in what sort of home
4. Explanation of how the individual spent his or her days
5. Information on the significant contribution this individual made to history

The following rubric can be used to assess research and understanding; and it can be used to assess mastery of speaking standard skills.

Mastered

1. Student speaks audibly within the room, so all can hear.
2. Student speaks with understanding about his or her subject.
3. Student uses complete, reasonable, and articulate sentences.
4. Student can answer questions with reasonable responses.

Acceptable

1. Student speaks so all or most in the room can hear.
2. Student conveys some understanding about the subject, although some facts and details are confusing or omitted.
3. Student usually speaks in complete sentences, but pauses at times, and occasionally uses words which indicate some lack of preparation.
4. Student may be able to answer questions about the presentation with reasonable responses, although may be unclear about some details and facts, and may hesitate or respond, "I don't know."

Not Acceptable

1. Student speaks too quietly to be heard, and cannot or will not raise voice despite requests to speak louder
2. Student's presentation is too short to convey important information or presentation is repetitive or confusing.
3. Student uses incomplete sentences, fragments, and many phrases such as "or something" and "and stuff" and "I can't remember."
4. Student is unable to answer questions about the subject, or responds with "I don't know."

My Name _____ My Colonist's Name _____
My Colonist Research

What I found out
about what my
colonist looked like:

What I found out
about what kind of
house my colonist
lived in:

What I found out
about what kind
of food my colonist
ate:

What I found out
about what kind
of clothes my
colonist wore:

What books did I use?

What other
resources did
I look at?

Poster Planning Page: Portrait of a Colonist

