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Crazy for History

The year the United States entered the First World War witnessed another first: the publication of results from the first large-scale test of historical facts. J. Carleton Bell of the Brooklyn Training School for Teachers and his colleague David F. McCollum tested 1,500 Texas students, from elementary school to college, and published their findings in 1917.[1] They drew up a list of names (including Thomas Jefferson, John Burgoyne, Alexander Hamilton, Cyrus H. McCormick), dates (1492, 1776, 1861), and events (the Sherman Antitrust Act, the Fugitive Slave Act, the *Dred Scott* decision) that history teachers said every student should know. They gave their test at the upper elementary level (fifth through seventh grades), in high schools (in five Texas districts: Houston, Huntsville, Brenham, San Marcos, and Austin), and in colleges (at the University of Texas at Austin and two teacher-training institutions, South-West Texas State Normal School and Sam Houston Normal Institute).

Students flunked. They identified 1492 but not 1776; they recognized Thomas Jefferson but conflated him with Jefferson Davis; they lifted the Articles of Confederation from the eighteenth century and plunked them down in the Confederacy; and they stared blankly at 1846, the beginning of the U.S.-Mexico War, unaware of its significance in Texas history. Nearly all students recognized Sam Houston as the father of the Texas republic but had him marching triumphantly into Mexico City, not vanquishing Antonio López de Santa Anna at San Jacinto.

The score at the elementary level was a dismal 16 percent. In high school, after a year of history instruction, students scored a measly 33 percent, and in college, after a third exposure to history, scores barely approached the halfway mark (49 percent). The authors lamented that studying history in school produced only "a small, irregular increase in the scores with increasing academic age." Anticipating jeremiads by secretaries of education and op-ed columnists a half century later, Bell and McCollum indicted the educational system and its charges: "Surely a grade of 33 in 100 on the simplest and most obvious facts of American history is not a record in which any high school can take great pride."[2]

By the next world war, hand-wringing about students' historical benightedness had become front-page news. "Ignorance of U.S. History Shown by College Freshmen," proclaimed the *New York Times* headline on April 4, 1943, a day when the main story reported that George Patton's troops had overrun those of Erwin Rommel at El Guettar. Providing support for the earlier claim made by historian Allan Nevins that "young people are all too ignorant of American history," the survey showed that a scant 6 percent of the 7,000 college freshmen could identify the thirteen original colonies, while only 15 percent could place William McKinley as president during the Spanish-American War. Less than a quarter could name two contributions of Thomas Jefferson. Mostly, students were flummoxed. Abraham Lincoln "emaciated the slaves" and, as first president, was father of the Constitution. A graduate of an eastern high school, responding to a question about the system of checks and balances, claimed that Congress "has the right to veto bills that the President wishes to be passed." According to students, the United States expanded territorially by purchasing Alaska from the Dutch, the Philippines from Great Britain, Louisiana from Sweden, and Hawaii from Norway. A *Times* editorial excoriated those "appallingly ignorant" youths.[3]

The *Times*' breast-beating resumed in time for the bicentennial celebration, when the newspaper commissioned a second test, this time with Bernard Bailyn of Harvard University leading the charge. With the aid of the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the *Times* surveyed nearly 2,000 freshmen on 194 college campuses. On May 2, 1976, the results rained on the bicentennial parade: "*Times* Test Shows Knowledge of American History Limited." Of the 42 multiple-choice questions on the test, students averaged an embarrassing 21 correct—a failing score of 50 percent. The low point for Bailyn was that more students believed that the Puritans guaranteed religious freedom (36 percent) than understood religious toleration as the result of rival denominations seeking to cancel out each other's advantage (34 percent). This "absolutely shocking" response rendered the voluble Bailyn speechless: "I don't know how to explain it."[4] Results from subsequent history tests (1987, 1994, 2001, 2006, 2010, and 2014) from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, the "Nation's Report Card") deviated little from earlier trends.[5] When the first NAEP history test was administered in 1987, Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn blasted students' "shameful" ignorance and issued dire warnings of impending decline. Unless we change course, young people, they predicted, will be unable to "stand on the shoulders of giants" because they won't be able to tell "who are giants and who are pygmies."[6]

Fourteen years later, in the wake of the 2001 NAEP, pundits trotted out the same stale indictments ("a nation of historical nitwits," snarled the *Greensboro [NC] News and Record*); the same holier-than-thou condemnations ("dumb as rocks," hissed the *Weekly Standard*); and the same boy-who-cried-wolf predictions of doom at the doorstep (young people's ignorance is particularly dangerous "when the United States is at war and under terrorist threat").[7] Ironically, the 2001 test followed a decade of the standards movement and a relentless push to raise the bar. Yet, inexplicably, results were identical to those from earlier tests. Six in ten seniors "lack even a basic knowledge of American history," wrote the *Washington Post*, results that NAEP officials castigated as "awful," "unacceptable," and "abysmal." "The questions that stumped so many students," groused then–secretary of education Rod Paige, "involve the most fundamental concepts of our democracy, our growth as a nation, and our role in the world." As for the efficacy of standards in the states that adopted them, the test yielded no differences between students whose teachers reported adhering to standards and those who did not. Remarked a befuddled Paige, "I don't have any explanation for that at all."[8]

Doom and gloom display astonishing resilience. After the 2014 National Assessment, headline writers fished into the recycling bin to pull out old standbys like "U.S. Students Stagnate in Social Studies" and "Most 8th Graders Score Low on U.S. History, Civics."[9] More than half of eighth-grade students couldn't identify the precedent set by *Marbury v. Madison*, something that the chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board condemned as "unacceptable." The president of the National Council for the Social Studies raised the volume, linking test results to America's eroding stature on the world stage: "How do we, as a nation, maintain our status in the world if future generations of Americans do not understand our nation's history?"[10] However, the prize for the zaniest link between thirteen-year-olds' test scores and the ailments of American society goes to Les Francis, the former executive director of the Democratic National Committee. In an article entitled "Civic Ignorance Begets Civic Unrest," Francis used invisible ink to connect the dots between scores on the 2014 NAEP and the race riots that convulsed Baltimore following the death of Freddie Gray, a black man who died from injuries sustained in the back of a police van. Francis diagnosed the problem not as one of police brutality and the simmering racism that infects law enforcement. Rather, he called for a "serious discussion about the possible linkages between ignorance of social studies—history, geography, government, civics, economics—and urban alienation," adding, forebodingly, "before it is too late."[11]

To many commentators, what's at stake goes beyond whether teens can circle the answer that shows they know it was western ranchers and not eastern bankers who supported the gold standard.[12] In a blue-ribbon report called *Education for Democracy*, the Albert Shanker Institute pointed to perennially disappointing test results and claimed that "something has gone awry. . . . We *now* have convincing evidence that our students are woefully lacking in knowledge of our past, of who we are as Americans," indifferent to "the common good," and disconnected from "the American story."[13] One has to wonder what evidence this committee "now" possesses that has not been gathering moss since 1917, when Bell and McCollum hand-tallied 1,500 student surveys. Explanations of today's low scores crumble when

applied to results from 1917, the apex of history as part of the school curriculum.[14] No one can accuse the Texas teachers of 1917 of teaching process over content or serving up a tepid social studies curriculum to bored students—back then, the National Council for the Social Studies (founded in 1921) didn't even exist. Rather than being poorly trained and laboring under harsh conditions with scant public support, Texas teachers were among the most educated members of their communities and commanded wide respect. ("The high schools of Houston and Austin have the reputation of being very well administered and of having an exceptionally high grade of teachers," wrote Bell and McCollum, a statement hard to imagine being written about today's urban schools.[15])

Americans fondly refer to the men and women who fought World War II as the "greatest generation," the college students who abandoned the safety of the quadrangle for the hazards of the beachhead. Yet it is only in our contemporary mirror that they look "great." At the time, grown-ups dismissed them as knuckleheads, even doubting their ability to fight. Writing in the *New York Times Magazine* in May 1942, Allan Nevins questioned whether a historically illiterate army might be a national liability: "We cannot understand what we are fighting for unless we know how our principles developed."[16]

A sober look at a century of history testing provides no evidence for the "gradual disintegration of cultural memory" or a "*growing* historical ignorance." The only thing growing is our amnesia of past ignorance. Test results over the last hundred years point to a peculiar American neurosis: each generation's obsession with testing its young only to discover—and rediscover—their "shameful" ignorance. The consistency of results across generations casts doubt on a presumed golden age of fact retention. Appeals to it are more the stuff of national lore and wistful nostalgia for a time that never was than claims that can be anchored in the documentary record.[17]

ASSESSING THE ASSESSORS

The statistician Dale Whittington has shown that when results from the early part of the twentieth century are put side by side with those

of more recent tests, today's students do just about as well as their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. This is remarkable considering that today's near-universal enrollments are a world apart from the elitist American high schools of the early twentieth century. Despite radical changes in the demographics of test takers, student knowledge hovers with uncanny consistency around the 40–50 percent mark—even counting the radical changes in the demographics of test takers across the century.[18] Given changes in the knowledge that historians deem most important, coupled with changes in who sits for the tests, why have scores remained flat?

Complex questions often require complex answers. Not here. Kids look dumb on history tests because the system conspires to make them look dumb. The system's rigged. As practiced by the big testing companies, modern psychometrics guarantees that test results will conform to a symmetrical bell curve. Since the 1930s, the main tool used to create these exquisitely shaped bells has been the multiple-choice test, known disparagingly among Europeans as an "American test." Each multiple-choice item has a stem and a set of alternatives. One alternative is the correct, or "keyed," answer; the others—in testers' argot, "distracters"—are false (or, deviously, "almost right"). In the early days of large-scale testing, the unabashed goal of the multiple-choice item was to rank students rather than determine if they had attained a particular level of knowledge. A good item created "spread" by maximizing differences. A bad item, conversely, created little spread since nearly everyone got it right (or wrong). The best way to ensure that most students would land under the curve's bell was to include a few questions that only the brightest students would get right, a few questions that most got right, and the majority of the questions that between 40–60 percent of students got right. In such examinations—called "norm-referenced" tests because individual scores are compared against nationally representative samples, or "norms"—items are field-tested to see if they "behave" properly. Testers' language is revealing. A good item is of medium difficulty and has a high "discrimination index"; students with higher scores will tend to get it right, and students with lower scores will tend to get it wrong. Items that veer from this profile are dropped. Only questions that array students in a neatly shaped bell make it into the final version of the test.[19]

When large-scale testing was introduced to American classrooms in the 1930s, it ran counter to teachers' notions of what constituted average, below-average, and exemplary performances. Most teachers believed that a failing score should be below 75 percent, while an average score should be about 85 percent, for a grade of B. And since testing companies knew there would be a culture clash, they prepared materials to allay teachers' concerns. In 1936 the Cooperative Test Service of the American Council on Education, forerunner of today's ETS, explained the new scoring system:

> Many teachers feel that each and every test item should measure something, which all or at least a majority of well taught students should know or be able to do. When applied to tests of the type represented by the Cooperative series, these notions are serious misconceptions. . . . Ideally, the test should be adjusted in difficulty [so] that the least able students will score near zero, the average student will make about half the possible score, and the best students will just fall short of a perfect score. . . . The immediate purpose of these tests is to show, for each individual, how he compares in understanding and ability to use what he has learned with other individuals.[20]

The legacy of the normal curve accompanies the test that is near and dear to the hearts of American high school students: the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test). No matter how intelligent the cohort of young people, no matter what miracles the standards movement performs, no matter how much we close the achievement gap between different races and social classes, it's impossible for most students to score 2400. If that ever happened, the normal curve would become abnormal and Lake Wobegon, where "all of the children are above average," would not be fictional.[21] Just as it is impossible to have a basketball league where every team wins most of its games, the normal curve makes sure that winners create losers.

If all students get an item correct, it doesn't necessarily mean they know the material; the item's distracters may be doing a lousy job. So, when we examine the names and events included among the distracters on the NAEP (the mutiny of British forces under General Howe, Benjamin Gitlow, the Wobblies, the Morrill Act, the relationship between silver coinage and economic downturns), we must remember that these factoids appear not because of their inherent worth or because they appear in state standards, or because a blue-ribbon commission declared that every high school student should know them. Rather, these tidbits appear on tests because they snare students in sufficient numbers to boost an item's discrimination index. It's not sound historical judgment in the driver's seat, but the razzle-dazzle of the testing industry.[22]

Indeed, when the goal is to make items "work," even historical accuracy is expendable. A question on the 2010 NAEP asked students this question:

> During the Korean War, United Nations forces made up largely of troops from the United States and South Korea fought against troops from North Korea and
>
> (A) the Soviet Union
> (B) Japan
> (C) China
> (D) Vietnam[23]

Had students chosen at random, a quarter would have gotten the question right. But students did worse than chance. Only 22 percent chose (C) China, the keyed answer. The most popular choice was (A), the Soviet Union, a distracter that nabbed 38 percent of respondents. Naysayers puffed up their chests as if this answer were outlandish. "How sad," editorialized the *Topeka (KS) Capital Journal*, decrying eighth-graders' performance on this particular question as a "low point."[24] Might it have been that students' choice of the Soviet Union had something to do with the collapse of the joint Soviet-American

trusteeship and the failure of former allies to agree on terms of free elections in Korea in 1947? Or that the leader of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, gave Kim Il-Sung permission to attack the South (Mao wasn't even consulted)?[25] Or that "every MiG flown in North Korea between November 1950 and December 1951 had a Soviet pilot at the controls," and that these Soviet pilots were among the most battle-tested and decorated airmen, members of the USSR's elite 324th Fighter Air Division?[26] Or that practically every ounce of matériel used by the North Koreans—arms, ammunition, supplies—came from the USSR? Or that by the time an armistice was signed, 70,000 Soviet pilots, technicians, and gunners had served in the war effort?[27] None of this information was new. None of it was hard to find.[28] Had the testers wanted to determine what students really knew rather than cunningly shaking out a grade, the "distracters" might have included France or Holland or Australia or Barbados. So, when flawed history is used to assess our nation's children, what factors are to blame?

> (A) a culture of testing that rewards trickery and deception,
> (B) items intended to distract, not educate, children,
> (C) a view of history that turns it into Trivial Pursuit, or
> (D) all of the above?

Suppose errors like these were eliminated, and we could come up with a test that was reasonably accurate. What would happen if the smart went down with the dumb or, to put it more delicately, if the students who knew the most history were stumped by items that were answered correctly by the less able?

Sorry. Not going to happen. The technology of testing makes sure of that. Large-scale tests rely on a technique known as biserial correlation, in which each test item is linked mathematically to students' total scores, and individual items that do not conform to the overall pattern are eliminated from the final version.[29] How does it work? Imagine an item about the *Crisis* magazine, edited by W. E. B. Du Bois. Then imagine that the item was answered correctly by more black students than white students, on a test where white students outscored black

students by thirty points. The resulting correlation of the item to the rest of the test would be zero or negative, and its chance of being used slim, even if historians deemed the information essential.[30] Technically, examinations like the history NAEP are "standards-based" (hypothetically, every student should be able to "reach standard") rather than trimmed to fit a predetermined curve. But the practices of item analysis, discrimination, biserial or item-test correlations, and spread are so ingrained in the culture of testing that for all intents and purposes, results from most large-scale objective tests fit the traditional bell curve.[31] This was confirmed by Steven Koffler, an administrator with the program that designed the 1987 NAEP history test. He admitted that traditional item analysis and biserial correlations were used to create the supposedly standards-based test.[32]

What does all of this mean, practically? In addition to handicapping students who possess different knowledge from those in the mainstream, it means that no national test can allow students to show themselves to be historically literate. If ETS statisticians determined during pilot testing that most students could identify George Washington, "The Star-Spangled Banner," Rosa Parks, dropping the bomb on Hiroshima, slavery as a main cause of the Civil War, Babe Ruth, Harriet Tubman, the civil rights movement, the "I Have a Dream" speech, all these items would be purged from the test, for they fail to create spread among students. So, when the next national assessment rolls around, don't hold your breath for the headlines trumpeting that "U.S. 12th Graders Score Well on the 100 Most Basic Facts of American History!" The architecture of modern testing guarantees that won't happen—no matter how well teachers do in the classroom.[33]

TESTING THE TESTERS

The foundation of testing rests on the assumption that tests measure what they are supposed to. Simple enough. A test about the Revolutionary War should tell us whether kids know it was a British yoke

Figure 2.

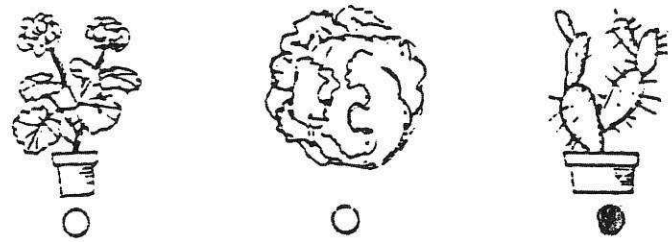

FIGURE 1.1. "Which plant needs the least amount of water?" From Haney and Scott, "Talking with Children about Tests" (1987).

that colonists threw off, not a French or German one. But sometimes, when students fail, it's not their fault. It's the test's.

How can we tell whether a student's answers reflect the thinking a test is supposed to measure? To find out, researchers Walt Haney and Laurie Scott asked a group of ten- and eleven-year-olds to talk out loud as they solved questions from the science portion of the Stanford Achievement Test, a nationally normed test of elementary students. An item on botany presented children with images of a cactus, a houseplant, and something that appeared to be a head of lettuce or cabbage. The question read, "Which plant needs the least amount of water?" Kids interpreted the pictures in various ways—as a "prickle," a "flower," or a "leafy vegetable"—with most choosing "cactus," the answer the test designers deemed correct.

One child disagreed. Asked to defend his choice of "cabbage," he explained that it "doesn't need as much water. Only when you clean it." Shorn of roots and foliage, this image indeed resembled something a youngster might find in his crisper, requiring water only for rinsing. In a traditional testing situation, such an answer would be marked

incorrect, an indication the student lacked basic botanical knowledge. Yet this child's response was arguably more astute than any of the so-called right answers—and certainly more creative.

Stanford researcher Mark D. Smith explored a similar mismatch between test items and the thinking processes that they were supposed to elicit. The 2010 NAEP history examination included items that, according to the test designers, measured "Historical Analysis and Interpretation," which required students to "explain points of view, biases, and value statements in historical sources," "determine the significance of people, events and historical sources [and] develop sound generalizations and defend these generalizations with persuasive arguments."[34] Smith sampled twenty-seven accomplished high school students who had taken the Advanced Placement United States History examination and earned a passing grade of 3 or above. Like Haney and Scott, Smith asked students to verbalize their thoughts as they solved the items. His results were consistent—and shocking. Smith was unable to pinpoint a *single* instance in which students' thinking reflected "historical analysis and interpretation." Rather, using well-crafted test-taking strategies, students bypassed the item's content to arrive at their answers. One of these items asked about the implications of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution:

> This question refers to the excerpt below from the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.
>
> > All persons born or naturalized in the United States . . . are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person . . . equal protection of the laws.
>
> Q: This amendment has been most important in protecting the
> a. right of communities to control what goes on in their schools
> b. rights of foreigners living in the United States
> c. rights of individual citizens of the United States
> d. right of the government to keep secrets for reasons of national security[35]

If this item truly measured historical analysis, one would expect students to comment on the amendment's context: the fury of white Southerners at the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery; the institution of "Black Codes" that erected barriers to voting; the refusal of Southern states to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment; and a host of other factors that give meaning to the term "historical analysis and interpretation." Listening to these AP students, Smith learned little about context but a lot about test taking. Seventeen-year-old Jonathan leapfrogged over historical content entirely:

> Well, in the text of the Fourteenth Amendment it talks about persons born or naturalized in the U.S., and they're talking about their rights. So (b) is pretty clearly not right because that talks about foreigners, which would apply to somebody who is visiting and probably not naturalized. . . . Then (a) and (d) are talking about either communities controlling their schools or government keeping secrets for national security. Those things just aren't even addressed in the text at all. And then (c) is the last one left, and rights of individual citizens is definitely hit on in this, so that one makes the most sense.[36]

There's no indication that Jonathan knew a whit about the Fourteenth Amendment; the only "analysis" he conducted involved matching words in the prompt to words in the keyed answer. Nor was Jonathan shy in admitting as much: "You just sort of 'logic it out' from the things you're given instead of actually having to know what the Fourteenth Amendment is. You can just read these general statements."

It's even possible to get the right answer by placing historical events in the wrong century. Sixteen-year-old Jenna answered a question about Shays' Rebellion in 1786, in which Daniel Shays, veteran of some of the most storied battles of the Revolutionary War, came home to

find himself saddled with crushing debt. Owed back pay by a bankrupt Continental army and unable to stave off creditors, Shays led a motley crew of disgruntled farmers to attack an arsenal of federal weapons at Springfield, Massachusetts, before his fellow "Shaysites" were routed and Shays went on the lam. The following item ostensibly examines the implications of Shays' misadventure.

Q: Shays' Rebellion (1786) was important because it
a. led many people to believe that the central government was too weak
b. led to the end of public support for the First Bank of the United States
c. made many people fear the tyranny of the President more than the tyranny of England
d. convinced many people in the North that slavery should be expanded to new territories[37]

Most of Smith's interviewees solved the question by recalling a fact straight from their AP course. Jenna, however, conflated Shays' Rebellion with *Bacon's* Rebellion, which had taken place 110 years earlier, when Virginia frontiersmen rose up against colonial authorities for failing to protect them from Indian attacks. She then Ping-Ponged between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries before finally plopping down in the middle of the Civil War.

> Shays' Rebellion, I get mixed up with Bacon's Rebellion. I think it's either about slavery or about the government. I think it's either (A) or (D). I think it was to stop slavery because the slaves were the people like trying to stop it. So, I don't think it's to expand slavery (D). So not (C) or (D). I think it's either (A) or (B), but I don't remember much about the First Bank of the United States. I don't think it was very popular. I know that the South didn't have a good central government. So, maybe, yeah, I think it's (A).

In this temporal hall of mirrors, Shays' Rebellion results from the failed policies that Jefferson Davis brought to Richmond in 1861,

which led Southerners to (A) "believe that the central government was too weak." The optical scanner reading Jenna's circled response would never know the difference.

ASSESSING THE FUTURE

Even given the flaws in multiple-choice testing, a reasonable person might still be worried when two-thirds of seventeen-year-olds cannot place the Civil War in the right half-century. Any thinking person would insist that such knowledge is critical to informed citizenship. Thus, E. D. Hirsch, educational critic and proponent of "cultural literacy," is right when he claims that without a framework for understanding (i.e., the ability to identify key figures, major events, and chronological sequences), the world becomes unintelligible and reading a newspaper virtually impossible. So why do so many young people emerge from high school lacking this core knowledge?[38]

One narrative popular on both sides of the political aisle (not to mention among historians, who should know better) is that the social studies lobby and its agents warp young minds in ways akin to a North Korean reeducation camp, frittering away students' time on "critical thinking" exercises devoid of content. The problem with such armchair analysis is that although we might find some support for it in School of Education curricula, classroom data paint a different picture. Summarizing the results of the 1987 national assessment, Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn concluded that, in the typical social studies classroom, students

> listen to the teacher explain the day's lesson, use the textbook, and take tests. Occasionally they watch a movie. Sometimes they memorize information or read stories about events and people. They seldom work with other students, use original documents, write term papers, or discuss the significance of what they are studying.[39]

Similar conclusions emerged in the early 1960s from an Indiana study of history and social studies instruction. Then came John I. Goodlad's *A Place Called School* in 1984. The most extensive observational

study of schooling in the twentieth century, it involved twenty ethnographers observing 17,163 students in 1,350 classrooms. All of the high schools visited by Goodlad's team offered courses in American history and government, but although teachers claimed that their goals aligned snugly with "inquiry methods" and "active learning," tests told a different story, requiring little more than names, dates, and memorized information. The topics of the history curriculum are of "great human interest," wrote Goodlad, but "something strange seems to have happened to them on their way to the classroom." History becomes removed from its "intrinsically human character, reduced to the dates and places readers will recall memorizing for tests."[40]

Even in the late 1960s and early '70s, at the height of the "new curriculum," those who ventured into classrooms found something different from the halcyon images conveyed in teachers' magazines. In the history classrooms that Charles Silberman visited, the bulk of students' time was "devoted to detail, most of it trivial, much of it factually incorrect, and almost all of it unrelated to any concept, structure, cognitive strategy, or indeed anything other than the lesson plan." In a 1994 national survey of about fifteen hundred Americans conducted by Indiana University's Center for Survey Research under the direction of Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, adults were asked to "pick one word or phrase to describe your experience with history classes in elementary or high school." "Boring" was the most frequent description. History instruction lacked verve, not because of projects, oral histories, simulations, or any of the other "progressive" ideas drubbed in print by E. D. Hirsch and others, but because of what the historian of pedagogy Larry Cuban has called "persistent instruction"—a single teacher standing in front of 25–40 students, talking. A sixty-four-year-old Floridian remembered it this way: "The teacher would call out a certain date, and we would have to stand at attention and say what the date was. I hated it."[41] Despite today's hype over flipped classrooms and blended instruction, history class, it seems, hasn't changed all that much. Over three thousand high school students in a 2015 survey reported that it was their history teachers who lectured more than any other during the school day.[42]

The bane of history classrooms is the all-knowing textbook. Thicker

than a Duraflame log (and often weighing more), today's books rival news websites for busyness and clutter. Artwork with multiple call-out boxes and tri-colored pictures with captions of "How to Read Me" and end-of-chapter test questions cued to standards (with custom editions produced for *your* state) dominate the text. These behemoths daunt all but the most ardent. The textbook industry is often captive to the whims of state adoption boards, who themselves pander to special-interest groups. When the California History–Social Science Framework was rewritten in 2010, lobbying groups responded to the draft standards and, in some cases, authored the actual text submitted by the state committee. For the original standard on the origins of the United States, the committee recommended that students should "understand the major events preceding the founding of the nation and relate their significance to the development of American democratic institutions founded in Judeo-Christian thinking and English parliamentary traditions." The final version, however, inserted the words that students must "explain the philosophy of government expressed in the Declaration of Independence with an emphasis on *divinely bestowed* unalienable rights of citizens." This insertion came straight from the pen of David Barton, then–vice chairman of the Texas Republican Party and founder of WallBuilders, an evangelical Christian group whose historical accounts have been roundly criticized by historians, Christian and non-Christian alike.[43] For its part, the Orange County–based Council for Islamic Education also submitted voluminous comments on the standards, including Standard 7.1 on Islam. The final standard recommended by the California State committee required students to know "the origins of Islam and the life and teachings of Mohammed; the significance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the primary sources of Islamic beliefs, practice and law." These words were copied verbatim from the Council for Islamic Education's written submission.[44]

NONE OF THE ABOVE

If educational change comes slowly, what shall we do while waiting for the revolution? First, we should admit that we cannot insist that

every student know when World War II began, or who our allies were, while at the same time administering tests about minutiae like the Battles of Saratoga and Oriskany. (That's why we have a smartphone, anyway.) Today's standards documents, written to satisfy lobbyists and out-of-touch antiquarians, are a farce. When most graduating students cannot date the Civil War or say whether the Korean War predated or followed World War II, how can we insist that seventeen-year-olds learn about the battle at Fort Wagner, Younghill Kang's *East Goes West*, Carrie Chapman Catt, Ludwig von Mises, and *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* (Massachusetts State History Standards); John Hartranft (Pennsylvania State History Standards); Henry Bessemer, Dwight Moody, Hiram Johnson, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, *Federalist* no. 78, and *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña* (California History–Social Science Standards, grades 11 and 12); Charles Bulfinch, Patience Wright, Charles Willson Peale, and the economic effects of the Townshend Acts (NAEP Standards)?

Following another pie-in-the-sky scheme, the ill-fated National History Standards, William Cronon remarked that he would be ecstatic if his graduate students knew half this stuff. When state legislatures set standards that are out of touch with reality, there can be only one consequence: eroding the public trust and sowing the seeds of cynicism. When we tell kids (while trying to keep a straight face) that it is crucial to know the difference between the Zhou and Qin Dynasties when the only dynasty their parents and grandparents can remember had rulers with names like Blake and Alexis, we diminish the nature of standards documents themselves.[45] And when we learn—surprise!—that kids don't know the difference between Dwight Moody and the Moody Blues, and state departments of education have to retreat, yet again, from reach-for-the-stars rhetoric, we all lose. The big lie is exposed, and each one of us is complicit.

The dilemmas we face assessing young people's knowledge differ little from those confronted by J. Carleton Bell and David F. McCollum in 1917. Few historians would argue that large-scale multiple-choice tests capture the range of meanings we attribute to the "historic sense."

Such tests are used not because they are historically sound or predict engagement with historical study, but because they are easily read by machines. The prototype of these, the Markograph, was invented in 1933 by a Michigan science teacher fed up with hand-grading student papers (later he sold the rights to IBM for $15,000).[46] That a Depression-era technology still shapes the tests we give to students is a national shame.

Multiple-choice tests cost us in other ways. They convey the dismal message that history is about collecting disconnected bits of knowledge scattered hither and yon, where one test item has nothing to do with the next, and where if you can't answer a question in a few seconds, it's wise to move on to the next. When assembly-line workers could earn a living wage performing repetitive actions, this lesson may have made sense. But in a knowledge economy, bubble tests mock the very essence of problem solving. Real problems are more complex than plucking the right answer from four alternatives. Such tests turn history into a trivial pursuit. No wonder students find it distasteful.

Common wisdom has it that a crazy person is someone who keeps doing the same thing but expects a different result. As long as textbooks dominate instruction, as long as states continue to play a "mine is bigger than yours" standards game, as long as historians roll over and play dead when faced with number-wielding psychometricians, we can have all the blue-ribbon commissions we want, but the results will remain the same.

Technology has changed dramatically since 1917, but the brain's capacity to retain information has not. Students could master and retain the piles of information contained in 1917 or 1943 textbooks no better than they can retain what fills today's gargantuan tomes. Light-rail excursions through mounds of factual information may be entertaining, but such dizzying tours leave few traces in memory. The mind demands pattern and form, which build up slowly and require repeated passes, with each pass going deeper and probing further. If we want young people to learn history, we need to draw on a concept from medicine: triage. As University of Tennessee's Wilfred McClay explains:

> Memory is most powerful when it is purposeful and *selective*. . . . [I]t requires that we possess stories and narratives that link facts in ways that are both meaningful and truthful, and provide a . . . way of knowing what facts are worth attending to. . . . We remember those things that fit a template of meaning, and point to a larger whole. We fail to retain the details that, like wandering orphans, have no connection to anything of abiding concern. . . . The design of our courses and curricula must be an exercise in *triage*, in making hard choices about what gets thrown out of the story, so that the essentials can survive. . . . We need to be willing to identify those things that every American student needs to know and insist upon them . . . while paring away vigorously at the rest.[47]

Mechanical testing tempts us with the false promise of efficiency. It whispers that there is an easier, less costly, more scientific way. But the truth is that blackening circles only prepares students to blacken more circles in the future. The sooner we realize this, the sooner we will be redeemed from our craziness.

2

Obituary for a Billion Dollars

The amendment buried on page 69 of the 2000 education appropriation budget was easy to overlook. Tucked into "Repeals, Redesignation, and Amendments to Other Statutes" was a proposal by Senator Robert C. Byrd to provide $50 million "to develop, implement and strengthen programs to teach American history . . . as a separate subject within school curricula."[1]

The speed of the amendment's passage on June 30, 2000, caught most unawares. Department of Education officials scurried to set up shop, draft specs for grant proposals, establish due dates, post notices, solicit reviewers, and put into place procedures for the disbursement of funds. Few historians saw the windfall coming, especially those who remembered the thrashing they got the last time they tried to tinker with the nation's curriculum. The ill-fated National Standards for United States History—a collaboration among professional historians, curriculum specialists, teachers, and staff developers—hemorrhaged on the floor of Congress before convulsing to a violent death in a 99–1 censure (the lone dissenter fuming that the rebuke was insufficiently harsh).

On this June day, however, history found a superhero. Robert C. Byrd, Democratic senator of West Virginia (an "institution within an institution," as President Obama crowned him), commanded respect as one of the longest-ranking members of Congress, admired widely for his stately manner, encyclopedic knowledge of Greek and Roman history, and an uncanny habit of drawing a folded copy of the U.S.

8 On the Common Core State Standards, see http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/frequently-asked-questions/.

9 The actual assignment can be found online in several sites. See, for example, https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.documentcloud.org/documents/1213301/rialto-unified-holocaust-essays-set-12-part-03.pdf. See also Beau Yarbrough, "Rialto Unified Defends Writing Assignment on Confirming or Denying Holocaust," *San Bernardino (CA) Sun*, May 4, 2014, http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20140504/exclusive-rialto-unified-defends-writing-assignment-on-confirming-or-denying-holocaust.

10 The site spreads various conspiracy theories associated with neo-Nazi groups, such as the claim that World War I and II were "financed, executed and controlled by Jewry." See "On the Jewish Question in Europe," https://www.biblebelievers.org.au/jq1.htm.

11 Beau Yarbrough, "Holocaust Denied by Students in Rialto School Assignment," *San Bernardino (CA) Sun*, July 11, 2014, http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20140711/exclusive-holocaust-denied-by-students-in-rialto-school-assignment?utm_content=bufferfb63d&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer; for pdfs of the essays, see http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1213307-rialto-unified-holocaust-essays-set-13-part-05.html#document/p21/a165412.

12 Beau Yarbrough, "Rialto Unified: Eighth-Grader Essays Don't Deny Holocaust History," *San Bernardino (CA) Sun*, May 8, 2014, http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20140508/rialto-unified-eighth-grader-essays-dont-deny-holocaust-history.

13 For example, one of the most posted photos of so-called "Black Confederates" is actually a doctored photo of African American Union troops. See Jerome S. Handler and Michael L. Tuite Jr., "Retouching History: The Modern Falsification of a Civil War Photograph," http://people.virginia.edu/~jh3v/retouchinghistory/essay.html.

14 Prosser appeared in a multiple-choice item (#142, 2006-8H9 #8) ("Famous African Americans") from the 2006 U.S. history NAEP. Released items have been archived on *Scribd*, https://www.scribd.com/document/59470582/Nae-Phi-Story-Questions-Answers-Etc; reference to *Gitlow v. State of New York* appears on page 29 of the *United States History Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (Washington, DC: National Assessment Governing Board, Department of Education, 2006); Sam Wineburg, Mark Smith, and Joel Breakstone, "The 'Nation's Report Card' Says It Assesses Critical Thinking in History—But NAEP Gets an F on That Score," *Washington Post*, September 19, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/09/19/the-nations-report-card-says-it-assesses-critical-thinking-in-history-but-naep-gets-an-f-on-that-score/?utm_term=.fbc693ecd814.

15 See www.hitler.org. I am indebted to T. Mills Kelly for this example. See his *Teaching History in the Digital Age* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

16 Easy to do using WHOIS (whois.icann.org). See chapter 7.

CHAPTER ONE

1 Portions of this chapter originally appeared as Sam Wineburg, "Crazy for History," *Journal of American History* 90 (2004): 1401–14; J. Carleton Bell and David F. McCollum, "A Study of the Attainments of Pupils in United States History," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 8 (May 1917): 257–58.

2 Bell and McCollum, "A Study of the Attainments of Pupils in United States History," 268–69. Five years later Bell and McCollum's survey was replicated, though on a much smaller scale. See D. H. Eikenberry, "Permanence of High School Learning," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 14 (November 1923): 463–81. See also Garry C. Meyers, "Delayed Recall in History," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 8 (May 1917): 275–83.

3 Benjamin Fine, "Ignorance of U.S. History Shown by College Freshmen," *New York Times*, April 4, 1943, 1; Allan Nevins, "American History for Americans," *New York Times Magazine*, May 3, 1942, 6, 28. The *Times* survey followed an earlier exposé on the scarcity of required courses in American history at the college level. See *New York Times*, June 21, 1942, 1. For the editorial, see April 4, 1943, 32. On how the general media reported this survey, see Richard J. Paxton, "Don't Know Much about History—Never Did," *Phi Delta Kappan* 85, no. 4 (December 2003), 264–73.

4 Bernard Bailyn, "*Times* Test Shows Knowledge of American History Limited," *New York Times*, May 2, 1976, 1, 65.

5 Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, *What Do Our Seventeen-Year-Olds Know? A Report on the First National Assessment of History and Literature* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987); Alexandra S. Beatty, Clyde M. Reese, Hilary R. Persky, and Peggy Carr, *NAEP 1994 U.S. History Report Card: Findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP, 1996), http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=96085. Compare Edgar B. Wesley, *American History in Schools and Colleges* (New York: Macmillan, 1944). At the height of Cold War anxieties, *McCall's* commissioned a survey of college graduates' knowledge of the Soviet Union. Over a quarter could not name Moscow as the capital, and nearly 80 percent were unable to name a single Russian author. Harrison E. Salisbury, "What Americans Don't Know about Russia," *McCall's Magazine* 84 (June 1957): 40–41.

6 Ravitch and Finn, *What Do Our Seventeen-Year-Olds Know?*, 201.

7 *USA Today*, May 10–12, 2002, 1; *Greensboro (NC) News and Record*, May 13, 2002, A8; Lee Bockhorn, "History in Crisis," *Weekly Standard*, May 13, 2002, available at LexisNexis Academic. Diane Ravitch quoted in the *Palm Beach (FL) Post*, May 10, 2002, 13a.

8 Michael A. Fletcher, "Students' History Knowledge Lacking, Test Finds," *Washington Post*, May 9, 2002. For the quotations from National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) officials, see *USA Today*, May 10–12, 2002, 1, as well as https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/04/29/report-us-middle-schoolers-fall-short-in-history-civics-education?offset=80. Rod Paige quoted in David Darlington, "U.S. Department of Education Releases Results of Latest U.S. History Test," *Perspectives on History*, July 2002, https://www.historians

.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2002/us-department-of-education-releases-results-of-latest-us-history-test.

9 Caroline Porter, "U.S. Students Stagnate in Social Studies," *Wall Street Journal*, April 29, 2015, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-students-stagnate-in-social-studies-1430280062; and Allie Bidwell, "Few Eighth-Graders Proficient in U.S. History, Civics," *U.S. News and World Report*, April 29, 2015, https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/04/29/report-us-middle-schoolers-fall-short-in-history-civics-education?offset=80.

10 Kimberly Hefling, "8th Graders Struggle in History, Civics on National Exam," *AP News*, April 29, 2015, https://www.apnews.com/2de1ce4aed974fc297c8ba9bc6c9e831.

11 Les Francis, "Civic Ignorance Begets Civil Unrest," *Real Clear Politics*, May 7, 2015, http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/05/07/civic_ignorance_begets_civil_unrest_126509.html.

12 Students did surprisingly well on the gold standard item, with 56 percent answering correctly. See items for the 2001 history NAEP at the user-friendly website of the National Center for Education Statistics: http:// nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/.

13 Albert Shanker Institute, *Education for Democracy* (Washington, DC: Albert Shanker Institute, 2003), 6, 7, http://www.shankerinstitute.org/sites/shanker/files/efd-final.pdf (emphasis added).

14 History achieved a stronger position in the curriculum in the first two decades of the twentieth century than at any other time in American history. "By 1900," a historian of education wrote, "history . . . received more time and attention in both elementary and secondary schools than all the other social studies combined." History dominated from about 1890–1920, although its apex probably came in 1915. Edgar B. Wesley, "History in the School Curriculum," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 29 (March 1943): 567.

15 On the school curriculum in this period, see Hazel W. Hertzberg, "History and Progressivism: A Century of Reform Proposals," in *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*, ed. Paul Gagnon and the Bradley Commission on History in Schools (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 69–102. Bell and McCollum, "Study of the Attainments of Pupils in United States History," 268.

16 Nevins, "American History for Americans," 6.

17 E. D. Hirsch, cited in Chester E. Finn and Diane Ravitch, "Survey Results: U.S. Seventeen-Year-Olds Know Shockingly Little about History and Literature," *American School Board Journal* 174 (October 1987): 32; Rod Paige quoted in "Students and U.S. Secretary of Education Present a Solution for U.S. Historical Illiteracy," Ascribe Newswire, June 8, 2002, available at LexisNexis Academic. For the adjective "shameful," see Ravitch and Finn, *What Do Our Seventeen-Year-Olds Know?*, 201. For manifestations of this neurosis in other national contexts, see Jack Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998); and Yoram Bronowski, "A People without History," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), January 1, 2000.

18 Similar test results didn't show that what students know today is identical to what they knew in the past, but "that each group performed about the same on the particular set of test questions designed for them to take. This observation is buttressed by the comparison of the distributions of item difficulty. The shape and location of these distributions for tests covering a span of 42 years are strikingly similar." Dale Whittington, "What Have 17-Year-Olds Known in the Past?," *American Educational Research Journal* 28 (Winter 1991): 759–80.

19 The origins of multiple-choice testing go back to the first mass-administered examination in American history, the Army Alpha and Beta, during World War I. See Daniel J. Kevles, "Testing the Army's Intelligence: Psychologists and the Military in World War I," *Journal of American History* 55 (December 1968): 565–81; Franz Samelson, "World War I Intelligence Testing and the Development of Psychology," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 13 (July 1977): 274–82; and John Rury, "Race, Region, and Education: An Analysis of Black and White Scores on the 1917 Army Alpha Test," *Journal of Negro Education* 57 (Winter 1988): 51–65. For critical and nontechnical overviews of modern testing, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981); Banesh Hoffmann, *The Tyranny of Testing* (New York: Dover, 1962); Leon J. Kamin, *The Science and Politics of IQ* (Potomac, MD: Routledge, 1974); Paul L. Houts, ed., *The Myth of Measurability* (New York: Hart, 1977); and Cathy N. Davidson, *Now You See It* (New York: Penguin, 2011), esp. chap. 4. An evenhanded assessment from a major figure in modern psychometrics is Lee J. Cronbach, "Five Decades of Public Controversy over Mental Testing," *American Psychologist* 30 (January 1975): 1–14.

20 Cooperative Test Service of the American Council on Education, *The Cooperative Achievement Tests: A Handbook Describing Their Purpose, Content, and Interpretation* (New York, 1936), 6.

21 For Garrison Keillor's famous phrase, see "Registered Trademarks and Service Marks," *A Prairie Home Companion*, https://www.prairiehome.org/about/legal.

22 Even professional historians do poorly when staring down items outside their research specializations. When historians trained at Berkeley, Harvard, and Stanford universities answered questions from a leading high school textbook, they scored a mere 35 percent—in some cases lower than a comparison group of high school students taking Advanced Placement U.S. history courses. See Samuel S. Wineburg, "Historical Problem Solving: A Study of the Cognitive Processes Used in the Evaluation of Documentary and Pictorial Evidence," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 83, no. 1 (1991): 73–87.

23 Samantha Burg, ed., *The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History 2010: The National Assessment of Educational Progress at Grades 4, 8, and 12* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

24 "Editorial: History Education Fails the Grade," *Topeka (KS) Capital Journal*, June 20, 2011, http://cjonline.com/opinion/2011-06-20/editorial-history-education-fails-grade.

25 Kathryn Weathersby, "Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War: 1945–1950: New Evidence from Russian Archives" (Working Paper No. 8, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center of Scholars, Washington, DC. 1993); Kathryn Weathersby, "New Russian Documents on the Cold War," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, nos. 5–6 (Winter 1995–96): 30–40.

26 Ralph Wetterhahn, "To Snatch a Sabre," *Air and Space Magazine*, July 2003,

http://www.airspacemag.com/military-aviation/to-snatch-a-sabre-4707550/?all2/.

27 Kathryn Weathersby, "The Soviet Role in the Korean War: The State of Historical Knowledge," in *The Korean War in World History*, ed. William Stueck (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 78.

28 For overview, see Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings Over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003).

29 For non-multiple-choice items, the functional equivalent is the item-test correlation. Biserial or item-test correlations range from −1.00 to +1.00, with −1.00 being a score for a completely ineffective test item and +1.00 one for a perfect item. A +1.00 correlation would be achieved if all students in the highest scoring group got a particular item correct and all students in the lower scoring group got it incorrect (conversely, for a perfect negative correlation). Most multiple-choice items on large-scale tests have biserial correlations that range from +.25 to +.50.

30 For bias in large-scale achievement testing, see Roy O. Freedle, "Correcting the SAT's Ethnic and Social-Class Bias: A Method for Reestimating SAT Scores," *Harvard Educational Review* 73 (Spring 2003): 1–43. For nontechnical overviews of Freedle's argument, see Jeffrey R. Young, "Researchers Charge Racial Bias on the SAT," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 10, 2003, A34; and Jay Mathews, "The Bias Question," *Atlantic Monthly* 292 (November 2003): 130–40.

31 Perfect normal curves are extremely rare in nature and typically result from experiments in probability, such as tossing a thousand quarters in the air, each time plotting the number of heads; as the number of tosses approaches infinity, the curve becomes more and more symmetrical. Only by fixing the results beforehand can one make something as diffuse as historical ability fall into such well-shaped patterns. The best critique of the normal curve is by a physicist: see Philip Morrison, "The Bell Shaped Pitfall," in *Myth of Measurability*, ed. Houts, 82–89. See also Irving M. Klotz, "Of Bell Curves, Gout, and Genius," *Phi Delta Kappan* 77, no. 4 (December 1995): 279–80.

32 Whittington, "What Have 17-Year-Olds Known in the Past?," 778. The use of biserials (and their equivalents, now employed with Item Response Theory methods) is predicated on the unidimensionality of the "construct" being tested. That is, "historical knowledge" is considered a single entity, not a woolly construct composed of different factors and influences in the spirit of J. Carleton Bell's 1917 formulation. Typical of psychometric reasoning is the following statement: "Items that correlate less than .15 with the total test score should probably be restructured. One's best guess is that such items do not measure the same skill or ability as does the test on the whole. . . . Generally, a test is better (i.e., more reliable) the more homogeneous the items." Jerard Kehoe, "Basic Item Analysis for Multiple-Choice Tests," *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation* 4, no. 10 (November 1995), http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=4&n=10.

33 As the Cooperative Test Service explained to teachers in 1936, "The purpose of the test is to discover differences between individuals, and this must also be the purpose of each item in the test. Items that *all* students can answer will obviously not help to discover such differences and therefore the test should contain very few such items." Cooperative Test Service, *Cooperative Achievement Tests*, 6.

34 National Assessment Governing Board, *U.S. History Framework for the 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2011), 42–43, http://www.nagb.org/publications/frameworks/history framework.pdf.

35 National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP Questions Tool*, http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrlsx/search.aspx?subject=history.

36 Mark D. Smith, "Assessments of Historical Thinking: Three Validity Studies" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2014); Mark D. Smith, "Cognitive Validity: Can Multiple-Choice Items Tap Historical Thinking Processes?" *American Educational Research Journal* 54, no. 6 (July 5, 2017): 1256–87, DOI: 10.3102/0002831217717949.

37 National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP Questions Tool*, http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrlsx/search.aspx?subject=history.

38 The Civil War question is from the 1987 NAEP exam; E. D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (New York: Vintage, 1988).

39 Sean Wilentz, "The Past Is Not a Process," *New York Times*, April 20, 1997, E15. Wilentz predicted that the "historical illiteracy of today's student will only worsen in the generations to come," without referring to similar baleful predictions from 1917, 1943, 1976, or 1987. Ravitch and Finn, *What Do Our Seventeen-Year-Olds Know?*, 194.

40 Maurice G. Baxter, Robert H. Ferrell, and John E. Wiltz, *The Teaching of American History in High Schools* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964); John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1984), 212.

41 Charles Silberman, *Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education* (New York: Random House, 1970), 172; Larry Cuban, "Persistent Instruction: The High School Classroom, 1900–1980," *Phi Delta Kappan* 64, no. 2 (October 1982): 113–18; Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms, 1890–1980* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993); Roy Rosenzweig, "How Americans Use and Think about the Past: Implications from a National Survey for the Teaching of History," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*, ed. Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 275. The full survey is reported in Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

42 Grant Wiggins, "Why Do So Many HS History Teachers Lecture So Much?," *Granted and . . . Thoughts on Education* (blog), April 24, 2015, https://grantwiggins.wordpress.com/2015/04/24/why-do-so-many-hs-history-teachers-lecture-so-much/. See as well the invaluable study by Larry Cuban, who recently observed classrooms in schools he himself had taught in as a young man. *Teaching History Then and Now: A Story of Stability and Change in Schools* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2016).

43 Bradley Fogo, "'What Every Student Should Know and Be Able to Do': The Making of California's Framework, Standards, and Tests" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2010), 87; also Brad Fogo, "The Making of California's History–Social Science Standards: Enduring Decisions and Unresolved Issues," *History Teacher* 48 (2015): 737–75. For a piercing critique of Barton, see John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).

44 Fogo, "The Making of California's History–Social Science Standards," 749.
45 See Minnesota Social Studies Standards, revised 2011, which became effective in 2013. Downloaded from http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/stds/soc/.
46 Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).
47 Albert Shanker Institute, *Education for Democracy*, 16.

CHAPTER TWO

1 147 Cong. Rec. (2000). An earlier version of this chapter had its origin as an invited address to the Organization of American Historians in Seattle in April 2009. Rick Shenkman, editor of the history website *History News Network*, blogged about the address in a controversial post he titled, "Sam Wineburg Dares to Ask If the Teaching American History Program Is a Boondoggle," April 19, 2009, http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/76806.
2 Adam Clymer, "Robert C. Byrd, a Pillar of the Senate, Dies at 92," *New York Times*, June 28, 2010.
3 147 Cong. Rec. S4808 (2001).
4 H. W. Crocker III, *Don't Tread on Me: A 400-Year History of America at War* (New York: Crown, 2007), 57.
5 147 Cong. Rec. (May 10, 2001).
6 147 Cong. Rec. 7867 (May 10, 2001).
7 146 Cong. Rec. (June 30, 2000).
8 146 Cong. Rec. (June 30, 2000).
9 Anne D. Neal and Jerry L. Martin, *Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2000); Lieberman, ACTA as "nonprofit group dedicated to the pursuit of academic freedom." 146 Cong. Rec. (June 30, 2000).
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11 146 Cong. Rec. (June 30, 2000).
12 All quotes come from the June 30, 2000, Senate Resolution, 129.
13 Robert C. Byrd, *Child of the Appalachian Coalfields* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2005), 15.
14 147 Cong. Rec. 7867 (May 10, 2001).
15 66 Fed. Reg. 24830 (May 23, 2001).
16 *Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools* (Washington, DC: Educational Excellence Network, 1988); see Kenneth T. Jackson, "The Bradley Commission on History in Schools: A Retrospective View," *History Teacher* 23, no. 1 (1989): 73–78; "How Students Benefit from Experiencing History," *History Alive!*, 69, http://hunter-methods.weebly.com/uploads/6/3/2/8/6328737/simulations-history_alive.pdf.
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Programs," *CPRE Research Reports*, August 2009, http://repositor
/cpre_researchreports/54; and David K. Cohen et al., *Improveme*
The Promise of Better Schools (Chicago: University of Chicago Pres
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of Education Office of Planning Evaluation and Policy Developme
20 Humphrey et al., *Evaluation of the Teaching American History Pro*
21 Laura M. Westhoff, "Lost in Translation: The Use of Primary Source
History," in *Teaching American History Project: Lessons Learned*,
Ragland and Kelly A. Woestman (New York: Routledge, 2009), 66
22 Arnita Jones, "How Scholars Can Improve History Education,
Higher Education, June 8, 2001.
23 Arnita A. Jones, "Unfinished Business," *Perspectives on History*,
https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/per
-history/march-2009/unfinished-business.
24 Phyllis Weinstock et al., *Study of the Implementation of Rigorous E*
Teaching American History Grantees (Oakland, CA: Berkeley Poli
2005), i.
25 Weinstock et al., *Study of the Implementation of Rigorous Evaluati*
26 Weinstock et al., *Study of the Implementation of Rigorous Evaluati*
27 Full disclosure: I wrote to him in my capacity as executive co-direc
tional History Education Clearinghouse, an initiative of the Depar
cation, whose charge was to gather "best practices" from TAH pr
the country and feature them on a website dedicated to improving
tion. The National Clearinghouse was a collaboration of George M
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