

Questions to ask while reading social science & history texts

*Feel free to copy and paste into a word processor to insert your own notes. Remember, these scholarly questions may - or may not -- be the most appropriate way to understand Eaton's book, *The Children from Room E4*. Anyone may edit this public Google document*

1) What's the scholarly background of the author, and how does this shape his/her point of view?

2) What's the explicit (or implicit) research question of the study? What puzzle is the author seeking to answer (if any)?

a) Why is the above average performance at Waverly an exception to the norm regarding public schools in high-poverty neighborhoods in America?

b) I think a big question sought to be answered is how Jeremy, a very intelligent child with a really great teacher is allowed to fall through the cracks. Why isn't he offered the equal educational opportunity? Supporting this main question would be the part when everyone mentions how they know Jeremy is a great kid and a great student but they highly doubt he will make it far in life. If the superiors and adults have this mind set does it play a roll in how the children view their options for a future?

c) "Is what politicians call "school reform"—the contemporary, bipartisan goal of quantifiable standards and better test scores—a just, effective replacement for *Brown's* and *Sheff's* requisite integration and equal opportunity? Or is it actually a return to the "separate but equal doctrine expressed in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court decision that held minorities in place from 1896 until the *Brown* ruling overturned it 58 years later?" – Page xiv--- this might be a thesis (or a research question).

d) How can kids living in Hartford "make it out"?

e) The question Eaton seems to be answering in this first section is "How did we get here?" She mentions how many people seem to have amnesia

about Hartford and the way it once was, because the current racial and economic isolation was not always present.

f) A question that Eaton asks is can kids like Jeremy make it out of Hartford and get accepted into colleges. She wonders how schools such as Weaver High School, which she says was the city's fourth lowest ranking high school in math and science, can prepare ambitious students like Jeremy for college. This is discussed on pages 17-18.

g) It seems that Eaton's research question was *How did such a disparity between Hartford's city and suburban students come to be?*

3) What's the author's thesis (or major argument) for the work as a whole? Is it insight? Is it consistent from beginning to end?

The federally underwritten suburbanization process beginning in the 1960's has left a landscape where inner city schools are segregated and destined for underperformance. Without a regionalization movement, we cannot expect things to change for the better. (good - please add page if possible)

The author's main argument is that the socio-economic stratification of Hartford schooling was created by the city's people, places, and politics. She provide historic and ethnographic research to prove her point. (good - please add page if possible)

Eaton seems to be arguing that the state of Connecticut and its legislation on zoning has increased separation between income groups and between whites and minorities by allowing discriminatory acts to occur, which is the cause of the great inequalities in Hartford schools.(good - please add page if possible)

Eaton is arguing that the school systems in Connecticut, particularly in Hartford are geared a certain way based on factors such as politics and inhabitants of the cities, that the city has become this way because of those who reside in it and the lifestyles of those living in the city. (good - please add page if possible)

4) What evidence do you find most -- and least -- persuasive in supporting the author's thesis? How does the context of this particular social science/historical study shape its findings? Would it be different elsewhere?

**please add reading notes as you finish the book for next week's class*

The evidence that I find most persuasive is in the chapters in which Ms. Luddy's class visits the school in the suburbs. The school in the suburbs has technology for all of the students, books that were in good condition, and a new playground. On page 278 a student from Ms. Luddy's class remarks, "we don't have as much stuff." The visit to Marlborough proved inequality between the city and suburban schools because it showed that the suburban students had more materials to help them succeed, and the students at Waverly do not have the same benefits.

5) What *unanswered* questions came to mind while reading this text?

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