

Maegan Seegers
Dr Radhakrishnan
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Professional Analysis #3

The different texts we chose to utilize in our classrooms have a great impact on the quality of our students' education. When we choose material and resources that teach social studies from a single, dominant perspective, we are doing our students a huge disservice. Providing students with diverse perspectives and materials can greatly enhance their learning. It makes them more knowledgeable on different groups, different societal issues, and the way historical events may be viewed differently depending on a person's identity and perspective. Materials and resources in the classroom should be used to help deepen students' understanding of history through the use of diverse perspectives, as well as being utilized in an engaging and interesting way for students.

The texts that we provide our students should be ones that enrich their education. Texts should be engaging, informational, and utilized in a way that gets the most out of a student's learning. According to Gholdy Muhammad (2021) and her work, *Cultivating Genius*, she states how “Texts should drive cognitive goals (skills and intellect) as well as critical analysis (criticality) and sociocultural goals (identity)” (Muhammad, 2021, p. 145). Texts shouldn't be solely used to relay content, but rather help our students develop different critical skills. We want our students to be engaging with a text critically, and using their own personal knowledge to apply the content of a text to a broader concept or skill. It's also important that we as educators choose texts that won't overcomplicate our students' learning. According to Wolsey and Lapp (2017) and their work, *literacy in the Disciplines: A Teacher's Guide for Grades 5-12*, they discuss how “...students are not usually experts in each of the fields that schooling requires of them. Rather, they are aspiring novices or sometimes amateurs seeking to make sense of what their mathematics, art, ELA, and social studies teachers ask of them. Teachers must leverage students' reading skills to help them make sense of often complex content knowledge” (Wolsey and Lapp, 2017, pp. 4-5). We want to challenge our students, but we don't want to give our students texts that they aren't able to understand. Content should be relayed in a way that broadens a student's own personal knowledge/intellect, not diminish it. It's important that we

know our students and their learning styles, and properly implement texts that will help to overall enhance their learning, and make social studies more engaging.

One of the main types of text my host teacher utilizes in his classroom is edpuzzles. He uses edpuzzles to replace traditional lectures. Edpuzzles are videos that stop periodically and force students to answer some type of question (multiple choice or short response) in order to continue watching the video. How my host teacher utilizes this type of text in the classroom is he has specific days dedicated to watching edpuzzles. This will typically be a students' first or second introduction to a specific piece of content. My host teacher has each of the students independently watch the edpuzzles on their personal chromebooks using headphones. He has the ability to view their answers/submissions live, so if he sees that a student is struggling grasping the content or if their answer just doesn't make that much sense, he will go up to them and ask them to further explain their answer, and have a conversation with them. Doing this allows him to monitor all of his students' understanding, and to keep them all engaged. He discussed with me before that he found in a traditional lecture, he would lose students very easily. It was hard to gauge who was getting the content and who wasn't. Edpuzzles seem to be hit or miss with students. Sometimes the quality of the videos isnt that great, and the students will often complain about them. They tend to complain a lot about the edpuzzles my host teacher has made. They're not really that engaging, and are just a recording of him going through slides one by one.

Another type of text my host teacher utilizes in his classroom is an online textbook. This textbook is a typical American History Textbook. I haven't seen any information presented in it that differs from the textbooks I would read when I was in middle school. The students have weekly textbook assignments where they have to read a chapter from the online textbook, and answer several multiple choice questions. This is the only homework assignment the students ever have. A good thing about the textbook is that there is a feature where the text can be read out loud, and students can follow along by listening instead of having to read on their own. However, the textbook consists of a lot of words/texts, and there are very few images. A lot of the students are visual learners, so they tend to struggle getting through the textbook chapters on their own, and will often become disengaged and distracted. Students will often turn in their homework blank or unfinished. They seem to not really enjoy doing these textbook assignments, and when I work with students during extra help time to fix their answers they don't want to go back and reread the text, they just want to keep guessing until it's right.

The texts my host teacher utilizes in his classroom don't offer much in terms of diversity. There is rarely ever a diverse perspective being shared. White perspectives tend to be privileged. The edpuzzle videos that either he personally creates or borrows from other educators rarely ever discuss historical events from the perspective of underrepresented groups. History tends to be viewed through a white lens. Even the textbook passages don't offer much differing perspectives. They rarely touch upon the lives or experiences of underrepresented groups. It's really disheartening to see. In fact, this lack of diverse texts has caused many students to have misconceptions about different groups of people. I had a student ask me during the most recent

class if there were any Native Americans still alive today. I was absolutely shocked. This just goes to show how important it is that we provide our students with historically relevant and diverse texts. According to Gholdy Muhammad (2021) and her work, *Cultivating Genius* it is incredibly important that “Students must see themselves in texts, including their cultures, identities, interests, experiences, desires, and future selves. Texts should teach multiple ideologies and perspectives” (Muhammad, 2021, p. 146). Though the school I am currently at is predominantly white, there are still students of color. They deserve to see themselves represented in the text that they are being presented with. They deserve to read about their own cultures and backgrounds through the perspective of said culture, rather than from a white lens. At the very least, the texts my host teacher utilizes needs to show a broader view of history, one from multiple perspectives and ideologies. Though it may be challenging at first for the students to understand, it will greatly benefit them and their learning. When they are able to understand history through multiple perspectives, and understand how one event may be perceived differently based on a person's race/gender/ethnicity, I believe that they will become better historians, students, and people.

I also see my host teacher fail to utilize the full strength and power of technology. Though he tends to implement a lot of technical resources for his students to interact with, I feel like he could go further is his implementation of these electronic texts. You have an infinite amount of information at your fingertips. I feel that these texts can be utilized to help further student understanding of different cultures and groups, as well as develop empathy and activism among these young students. In Ziemke’s (2020) work, *Read the World: Rethinking Literacy for Empathy and Action in a Digital Age* she states how “Rather than fearing the devices that bring these stories, we can put them to use as empathy machines- tools that give students opportunities to build bridges rather than barriers” (Ziemke, 2020, p. 94). Technology can truly be harnessed to help our students understand history in new and more complex ways. You can show interviews from people who lived through the different historic events you are discussing. You can share music, and show art from different time periods. You can make learning more personal. You are able to provide students with so much, and teach history in new and exciting ways. I believe that providing students with more diverse texts and perspectives will create a classroom environment where students will be more engaged, and overall become more knowledgeable and empathetic learners.

It is very important that we as educators not only utilize a diverse set of texts in order to help engage our students, but also provide diverse perspectives in said texts. Providing students with diverse perspectives and materials can greatly enhance their learning. It makes them more knowledgeable on different groups, different societal issues, and the way historical events may be viewed differently depending on a person's identity and perspective. When students see themselves represented in social studies content, they become more engaged in their learning. It's important that we as social studies teachers are utilizing different texts and materials to give our

students a broader perspective of history, and provide them a learning that values multiple perspectives and views.

Work Cited

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