

**STATE BOARD of EDUCATION
PUBLIC HEARING – STATE TEXTBOOK ADOPTION 2002
July 17, 2002**

Testimony of Dr. Christopher Hammons

Reviewers were asked to rate each TEKS content area of each book on a scale of 1 to 5 based on factual accuracy, the degree to which the content area met the state mandated curriculum, and coverage of these topics. A score of 1 represents a failing content area, 2 a poor content area, 3 a fair or average content area, 4 a good content area, and 5 an excellent content area.

Our efforts produced hundreds of pages of typed commentary regarding the quality and accuracy of the 28 social studies books we reviewed. In addition, our systematic review process allowed us to make several conclusions about the quality of textbooks on the market.

First, the quality of textbooks is generally good. The average composite score for all books was a 3.93, what we consider a “good” or “slightly below good” rating (1=failing, 2=poor, 3=fair, 4=good, 5=excellent). There is slightly more variation in the quality when we look at specific subject areas. The textbooks in each subject area earned scores from our reviewers ranging from a low of 3.33 (fair) to 4.35 (good or very good). The good news is that no book received an overall score of poor (2) or failing (1). This indicates that regardless of which social studies area we discuss, there are some good choices this year in terms of textbook selection.

Indeed, much of the commentary that our reviewers submitted was complimentary towards the textbooks. Here are a few examples of the favorable things reviewers had to say about the books:

- √ Noteworthy is the mention of the negative effects of technology on p. 113, which this reviewer highly approves of in terms of giving students both sides of the issue. While the United States is a leader in technological development, students will be the recipients of its negative effects as well as the positive ones, so the reality needs to begin now. McDougal Littell, *World Cultures and Geography*, 6th Grade Social Studies.
- √ Nice balanced quote regarding the role of government – “The authority of government must be adequate to the needs of society. At the same time, that authority must never be allowed to become so great that it restricts the individuals beyond necessity.” Prentice Hall, *Magruder’s American Government* p. 20.
- √ I think this text does a good job of presenting the Indian Wars in that both good and bad are presented with little or no bias, a difficult subject to treat without judgment. Both sides are revealed as being good and bad as in the account of Satanta, Satank, and Big Tree (396S) and the buffalo slaughter (398S) Glencoe/McGraw Hill, *Texas and Texans*, 7th Grade Texas History.

The compliments and praise were often accompanied, however, by equally critical suggestions regarding what the reviewers perceived as shoddy coverage or poor presentation of a particular subject or topic. Examples of some of these criticisms are as follows:

- √ The text does an excellent job in pointing out that the Buffalo Soldiers also served in the Spanish-American War. I am disappointed, though, that this text does not mention that the 10th cavalry did

not receive equal treatment and respect from the settlers they defended. Holt, *Holt Texas!*, 7th Grade Texas History, p. 528.

- √ One of the criticisms I have for the book is that it is rather dry reading. The discussion of Congressional committees is a good example. In three sentences, the text moves from changes that occurred from 1970 to changes that occurred in 1974, devoting a single sentence to each. The last sentence even notes that Chairperson Wilbur Mills “refused to resign” but does not say why he faced resignation or even who Mills was. The paragraph is just a list of dates, one after the other with not much meat. By focusing on broad procedure or dates to the exclusion of the details of the story, the book denies students some of the more interesting stories in American government. Glencoe/McGraw Hill, *United States Government: Democracy in Action*, p. 190.

Such comments, positive and negative, were submitted to the publishers for their consideration. More importantly, these comments influenced the scoring that reviewers assigned to each TEKS area. Books that covered topics thoroughly and accurately were given higher scores.

Our second conclusion is that while none of the subject areas received a rating of “poor” or “failing” none of the areas scored a rating of “excellent” either. What this implies is that while the reviewers felt that many of the subject areas had textbooks that were not bad, it also indicates that there is still room for improvement.

This is particularly true when it comes to factual accuracy. **Our reviewers discovered 533 factual errors in the textbooks.** A complete list of errors is published on the Texas Public Policy Website (www.tppf.org).

Some of the errors were simple misstatements of fact. These included some amusing but untrue statements such as claiming that Thomas Jefferson wrote the constitution (he did not), John Marshall was the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (he wasn't), Plato was an advocate of democracy (he wasn't), that Herbert Hoover opposed all government intervention during the depression (he didn't), and that the early Texas settlers called San Antonio the Alamo (they didn't). Reviewers also found incorrect salaries for members of Congress, charts showing the wrong side winning important historical battles, incorrect identification of Native Americans tribes, wrong dates for key historical events such as the Louisiana Purchase, and incorrect substitution of longitude with latitude.

Reviewers also identified many instances when events or persons were portrayed inaccurately in light of existing facts. One text claimed that ethnic tensions were primarily responsible for World War II when most scholars contend that economic factors and nationalism were of equal or greater importance. Another text contends that early Texans claimed the Rio Grande as the border of Texas, implying the claim was little more than a patriotic war cry. The text fails to mention the fact that the Rio Grande border was established by treaty and hence the claim was more than machismo by the pioneer Texans, it was perceived as legal right. A different text notes that President Kennedy was an ally of the civil rights movement while neglecting the fact that he and Robert Kennedy were often suspicious of it and frequently attempted to frustrate its efforts. An 8th grade American history textbook neglects the overwhelming contributions of Sacagawea to the Lewis and Clark expedition in terms of moral, translation, and diplomacy, and inaccurately presents her instead as a mere guide.





Reviewers were also concerned about the number of instances where theory or conjecture was presented as fact. One history textbook notes that the 2nd Amendment only imparts a “collectivist” right to bear arms in the form of a state militia; that an individual right to bear arms does not exist. Another history book claims that the “General Welfare” clause of the constitutional preamble conveys the framers’ desire to build a national government that would ensure “safety in the workplace” and “aid to the poor.” A government book claims that the constitution has lasted two centuries because of a “loose construction” or “organic” approach to interpreting the document. A different government book claims that political liberals promote “economic fairness.” On a different subject, the same book claims that soft-money contributions are politically “unfair.”

The problem with all these contentions is that while they make good discussion questions and convey the beliefs of many people, they are not fact and are not representative of the diversity of opinions that exists on these issues. The reviewers never suggested that such material be removed from the textbooks, only that theories or conjecture convey legitimate differences of opinion, and inform students that these are beliefs not facts.


The combination of errors, positive comments, and negative comments all influenced our reviewer’s scoring of the textbooks. Interestingly enough, one of the things we noted when the scores were compiled was that almost across the board our college professors were much more critical in their reviews than our classroom teachers. In almost all cases, the composite scores for our university reviewers were about a half point to a whole point lower than the reviews of our teachers. The difference may be a result of the greater emphasis that our professors placed on content while our teachers tended to look at content and presentation as equally important.

The ranking of the textbooks, after such careful consideration by the reviewers, provides a strong indication as to how the books fared in terms of factual accuracy, strength of content, and quality of presentation. Our hope is that those who are considering the adoption of these textbooks will use the reviewers’ ratings as a starting point for their own evaluation. In particular, we hope that special attention is paid to those books that the reviewers felt were particularly good. **A summary of the reviewers’ top choices is presented in the following table.** The Texas symbol indicates subject areas in which the reviewers came to the same conclusion as to which book was the best of the lot.

TABLE FIVE: REVIEWERS’ TOP CHOICES IN EACH SUBJECT AREA

| REVIEWERS’ TOP CHOICES | | |
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| SUBJECT | COLLEGE PROFESSORS | CLASSROOM TEACHERS |
|  <i>American Government</i> | Magruder’s American Government by Prentice Hall | Magruder’s American Government by Prentice Hall |
|  <i>American History, 8th Grade</i> | Holt Call to Freedom by Holt, Rinehart, Winston | Holt Call to Freedom by Holt, Rinehart, Winston |
| <i>American History, High School</i> | America: Pathways to the Present, Modern American History (Texas Edition) by Prentice Hall | The American Republic, Volume 2 by Glencoe/McGraw Hill |
|  <i>Economics</i> | Economics: Principles in Action by Prentice Hall | Economics: Principles in Action by Prentice Hall |
| <i>Social Studies – 6th Grade</i> | Our World Today: People, Places, and Change by Glencoe/McGraw Hill | World Cultures and Geography by McDougal Littell |
|  <i>Texas History, 7th Grade*</i> | Texas and Texans by Glencoe/McGraw Hill | Texas and Texans by Glencoe/McGraw Hill <u>or</u> Lone Star: The Story of Texas by Prentice Hall |
| <i>World History*</i> | Holt World History: The Human Journey by Holt, Rinehart, Winston | World History: Patterns of Interaction by McDougal Littell <u>or</u> Glencoe World History by Glencoe/McGraw Hill |

*In this subject area, there were three rather than two reviewers, with the second and third reviewer each evaluating a smaller number of books. In fairness to the publishers, we have reported the top-picks of both the second and third reviewers.

 : Denotes book was ranked #1 by both reviewers (or 2 of 3 reviewers where applicable).