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WINTER 2001

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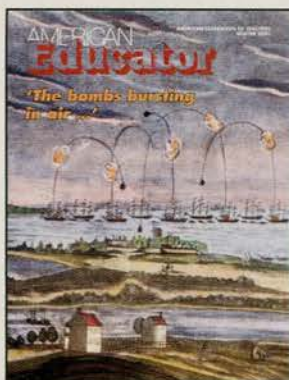
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A National Anthem Is Born

By Irvin Molotsky

The War of 1812 is the only time in our history that the United States was invaded by a foreign power. The war saw American troops decisively defeated by the British at the Battle of Bladensburg, near Washington, D.C., the flight of President James Madison and his wife Dolley, and the burning of Washington itself. But this defeat was followed by a great and unexpected victory at the Battle of Baltimore. This, as most schoolchildren still know, was the inspiration for "The Star-Spangled Banner." The author, Francis Scott Key, a lawyer and amateur poet, watched the battle from a British boat where he was being held prisoner. After a long night, he was elated to see that the fort guarding Baltimore Harbor had not fallen, and he wrote, on the back of a letter, what were to become the words of our national anthem.

Tastes change, even in something like a national anthem, and it is not unusual (or was not before Sept. 11, 2001) to hear people objecting to the unabashed patriotism of "The Star-Spangled Banner." But Key's poem is not mere patriotic rhetoric. It is rooted in an important moment in our history and in the joy that a simple citizen—not a hero or even a participant in the battle—felt when the dawn revealed the American flag still flying over Fort McHenry, and he knew that the real possibility of defeat had given way to victory.

Perhaps we can come closer to recreating this feeling when we read an account of the ignominious destruction of our capital city that preceded the Battle of Baltimore and the triumph that gave us our national anthem. We find them both in the following excerpts from Irvin Molotsky's The Flag, the Poet, and the Song: The Story of the Star-Spangled Banner.

—EDITOR

WASHINGTON BURNS

The Battle of Bladensburg and the subsequent burning of Washington came two years into the War of 1812. The Americans had already lost Detroit in 1812 and burned York (now Toronto, Ontario) in 1813. In 1814, the British, who had finally defeated Napoleon, could give full attention to their American war.

The British began this phase of the war with a series of raids on towns in Maryland and Virginia. Amazed that

they were meeting so little resistance, they advanced toward Washington, which was lightly guarded because the government did not regard it as much of a military target. Strictly speaking, the government was correct. Washington was a small, swampy town without much in the way of military facilities, and it had just 8,208 people in the 1810 census although nearby Alexandria, Va., had 7,227 people and Georgetown 4,948. What the Americans had failed to take into account was the attractiveness of Washington as a symbolic target, the locus of revenge for the sacking and burning of York in Canada. At an emergency cabinet meeting called by President Madison on July 1, 1814, Secretary of War John Armstrong insisted that Washington was not at risk because the main target of the British was Baltimore.

On their way to the capital, the greatest difficulty encountered by the British came from the oppressive August heat of the Washington area. Colonel Arthur Brooke, a British officer, who kept a diary throughout the American campaign, wrote,

Our poor fellows [were] so tired from the long march of the morning and the excessive heat of the day, that many of them in striving to keep up fell down from actual fatigue and breathed their last.

On Aug. 24, the British force reached Bladensburg, Md., just five miles from the White House. Bladensburg is on the eastern branch of the Potomac, now known as the Anacostia River, and it was there that the Americans attempted to make a stand. The British invasion force numbered 5,000, but only 1,500 soldiers, sailors, marines, and freed slaves were on the lines as they attacked a force of 8,000 Americans. However, the Americans were poorly equipped, poorly led, and poorly organized, many of them citizens formed

Irvin Molotsky, who was an editor and reporter for the New York Times for 34 years, is a freelance writer in Washington, D.C. The Flag, the Poet, and the Song is copyrighted by Mr. Molotsky, and this excerpt is reprinted by arrangement with Dutton, a division of Penguin Putnam, Inc. A paperback version of the book, published by Plume, is scheduled to appear in December 2001.



into militia units. The battle began at 1 P.M. and ended in three hours, with the Americans thoroughly defeated and put to flight. Most of the British force paused for a while at Bladensburg to recover from the heat and the battle, while Major General Robert Ross, the British army commander, took a reserve force on the road to Washington.

President Madison had witnessed the Battle of Bladensburg and, before fleeing himself, sent his messenger, James Smith, a free black man, to ride to the White House with an order for Madison's wife, Dolley, to flee. She was fearful but outwardly calm. Years later, Dolley Madison wrote, in a re-creation of that day,

I am accordingly ready. I have pressed as many Cabinet papers into trunks as to fill one carriage.... I am determined not to go myself until I see Mr. Madison safe.... I hear of much hostility towards him. Disaffection stalks around us. My friends and acquaintances are all gone.

She forbade spiking the cannon at the north lawn of the White House with an explosion because she feared that would panic the residents of Washington. The dinner table would be set as if nothing untoward were happening—in fact the table was set for 40 people—and ale, cider, and wine were brought up from the White House cellar.

By midafternoon, Smith galloped up the White House drive and shouted that everyone should flee. Dolley Madison insisted that the portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart be taken down, lest it fall into British hands, and so it was saved and hangs today in the White House. Amid all this confusion, servants continued dinner preparations, including decanting wine into cut-glass bottles on the sideboard. Finally Mrs. Madison left, heading for the safety of Virginia, though an hour later the thoroughly discouraged President Madison returned to the White House and poured himself a glass of wine.

Madison himself finally fled across the Potomac in the evening, joining Dolley in Langley, Va., where they stayed with friends. Servants locked the doors and followed him, as if a bolted door would hold back the invading British. One servant took Mrs. Madison's macaw for safekeeping to the Octagon, one of Washington's magnificent houses of that day, then being used as a residence by the French minister to the United States, Louis Serurier.

When General Ross and his British navy counterpart, Rear Admiral George Cockburn, arrived in Washington on the evening of Aug. 24, 1814, they quickly put the city's public buildings to the torch. First to be set afire was the Capitol, but not before the British had a bit of fun. Admiral Cockburn sat in the Speaker's chair in the House of Representatives and asked, "Shall this harbor of Yankee democracy be burned? All for it say aye!" The resolution carried and the deed was done, and then a force of 150 men set out down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House. They broke in and found the set dinner table, and the officers enjoyed the food and wine while the lower ranks prepared to burn the



(Above) The Octagon, Washington, D.C., was the residence of the French ambassador during the War of 1812. After the President's House was burned, President and Mrs. Madison lived in the Octagon, and it was there, in the second-floor parlor, that President Madison signed the treaty ending the war. The photograph shows the Octagon, which is now an architectural museum, in the early 20th century. (Opposite) The Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington that was saved by Dolley Madison during the Battle of Washington. It was painted in 1797, and it is the only possession from the original presidential mansion that is in the White House today. (Previous page) Washingtonians fleeing the city during the burning of the White House and the Capitol by the British on Aug. 24, 1814: a detail of a drawing by an unknown artist.

building. Rags soaked in oil were lit and the White House went up in flames.

Besides the White House, then called the President's House as it had not yet gotten its coat of white paint, and the Capitol, the British burned the Treasury, the War Department building, an arsenal, and American war supplies. The Library of Congress was then housed in the Capitol and lost its collection of 3,000 books in the fire. The library was re-established in 1815 when Thomas Jefferson sold it his personal library of 6,487 books for \$23,950, the equivalent of more than \$217,000 today.

Although the Americans had burned and looted public and private buildings in York during the invasion of Canada, a fact that is much better known to Canadians than it is to Americans, the British refrained from taking full revenge and, for the most part, destroyed public buildings only.

Margaret Bayard Smith, who established the Washington newspaper, *The National Intelligencer*, with her husband Samuel Harrison Smith, and was a prolific writer for it, left a vivid account of the British attack on Washington in letters to her family. The invading British soldiers, she wrote, "never



halted one moment, but marched in a solid mass—disregarding the dead bodies before them.” She lamented that “our city was taken, the bridges and public buildings burnt, our troops flying in every direction.” She reported seeing many dead horses and “nothing but blackened walls remained” at the once majestic government buildings and offices. “We looked at the public buildings,” Mrs. Smith wrote, “but none were so thoroughly destroyed as the President’s House. Those beautiful pillars in the Representatives Hall were crack’d and broken. The roof, that noble dome, painted and carved with such beauty and skill, lay in ashes in the cellars beneath, smoldering ruins yet smoking.” The Smiths visited the Madisons, and Mrs. Smith reported, “Mrs. M. seem’d much depressed, she could hardly speak without tears.”

Colonel Arthur Brooke, the British officer who kept a diary of the campaign, wrote that the invaders burned “the Senate house (supposed to be one of the finest buildings in the world).” He went on,

The President’s house, in which was found every thing ready for Dinner, table laid, Wine in, etc., etc., etc. I think this was one of the finest, and at the same time, the most awful sights I ever

witnessed—the Columns of fire issuing from the houses, and the Dock yard, the explosions of Magazines at intervals, the sky illuminated from the blazes.

Brooke was amazed by the lack of opposition: “Next morning [we] retired a little from the Town,” he wrote,

as we could scarce think the Americans (from their immense population, and a well trained Artillery) would tamely allow a handful of British Soldiers to advance thro’ the heart of their Country, and burn & destroy, the Capitol of the United States.

Secretary of War John Armstrong, who had insisted that the British would not attack Washington, resigned, but the episode had little strategic importance. The humiliation suffered by the United States did, however, set into motion a unity, a sense of nationhood, that was to be raised further in the next attack by the British, the attempt to capture Baltimore.

Twenty-four hours after he arrived in Washington, General Ross marched his troops back to the ships still at Benedict, Md., on the Patuxent River, and the invaders set sail on Sept. 10 to attack Baltimore, a much richer target than the provincial Washington.

Here is where Francis Scott Key, a lawyer and soon-to-be writer of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” enters the story.

Key was enlisted to help rescue an American physician, William Beanes, a resident of Upper Marlboro, Md., not far from the site of the Battle of Bladensburg. Dr. Beanes had been arrested by the British, who mistakenly thought him to be a recent immigrant from Scotland. This was a more serious accusation than it seems.

At the time, Britain believed that anyone who was born British remained British forever. The United States, on the other hand, maintained that any foreigner could become a citizen after five years of residence and after meeting some requirements. (The conflict between these two views of citizenship was one of the causes of the War of 1812: Seamen on American ships regularly were being seized by British naval officers on the grounds that they were British and were probably deserters from the King’s navy.) Although Dr. Beanes was, in fact, a third-generation American, the accusation that he was born a British citizen meant the British could try him for treason.

Beanes was in immediate danger, too. When he was arrested, his captors made him sit on a mule facing the hind end. “With bare feet tied under the animal’s belly,” an early account said,

he was herded throughout the night and the next day to where the invading army was encamped. From there he was shipped as brig prisoner on the flagship HMS *Tonnant* down the Chesapeake Bay.

It got worse when Beanes boarded the ship, where some of his captors threatened to hang him from the nearest yardarm.

Key went to President Madison and got permission to deal directly with the commander of the British army, General Ross, on Dr. Beanes's behalf. He set off from Washington on Sept. 3, accompanied by Colonel John S. Skinner, an American prisoner-of-war exchange officer, showing a flag of truce and carrying a letter arguing that Beanes had been an unarmed citizen who should not have been arrested. On Sept. 7, they arrived at the *Tonnant*. However, the British could not release Beanes, or even Key and Skinner, while they were in the middle of planning an attack on Baltimore, lest the Americans tell their army what they knew of the plans.

It is hard today to imagine the importance of Baltimore in 1814. Today, it is an attractive, busy city, but not as important as it was then. In the 1810 census, Baltimore, with 46,555 residents, was the third-largest city in the United States, trailing only New York City (96,373) and Philadelphia (53,722). Baltimore had an excellent harbor that made it a center of shipping, shipbuilding, commerce, and industry, and it had a strategic position at the head of the Patapsco River, which connected it to the Chesapeake Bay. Since the British had naval superiority in the Chesapeake, they would approach Baltimore by ship. And so the British, with Key, Colonel Skinner, and Dr. Beanes aboard their flagship, headed toward Baltimore, where they would lose the battle and America would get its "Star-Spangled Banner."



(Above) Fort McHenry, the "Star Fort," as it appears today.

(Opposite) The Bombardment of Fort McHenry, an aquatint engraving by John Bower (active 1809-1819).

(Inset) Francis Scott Key's manuscript of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

THE STAR FORT SURVIVES

On the evening of Sept. 11, 1814, a balmy Sunday evening lit by a bright moon shining from a cloudless sky, the British fleet arrived at the mouth of the Patapsco River. This put the British approximately 12 miles from Baltimore by water and 15 by land. At about two o'clock on the morning of Sept. 12, the British force started going ashore. One American account puts the invaders' strength twice as high as the British report of 4,000. On the other hand, Colonel Arthur Brooke, in his campaign diary, put the British force at 3,000 men facing 12,000 Americans. It seems that winners are prone to exaggerate the size of their enemy—it enhances their accomplishment—and losers are just as likely to understate the size of their own force—it suggests a cause for the defeat.

The British carried rations for three days, enough time, they calculated, to capture Baltimore. Major General Robert Ross, the British army commander, had said he would eat his next Sunday dinner there. While accounts of the opposing armies' sizes varied greatly, there is no doubt that the British, who had just defeated Napoleon, were better trained than the Americans, who were largely part-time militiamen.

The residents of Baltimore knew what to expect if the

British could reach their city, since they had received word of the burning of Washington and, in fact, could see the flames of the burning capital 35 miles away. A suggestion of desperation appears in this notice published by a committee formed to defend the city:

Elderly men who are able to carry a firelock, and willing to render a last service to their country & posterity; are requested to meet at the Court House at 11 o'clock tomorrow, to form a company and be prepared to march in conjunction with the troops expected to move against the enemy.

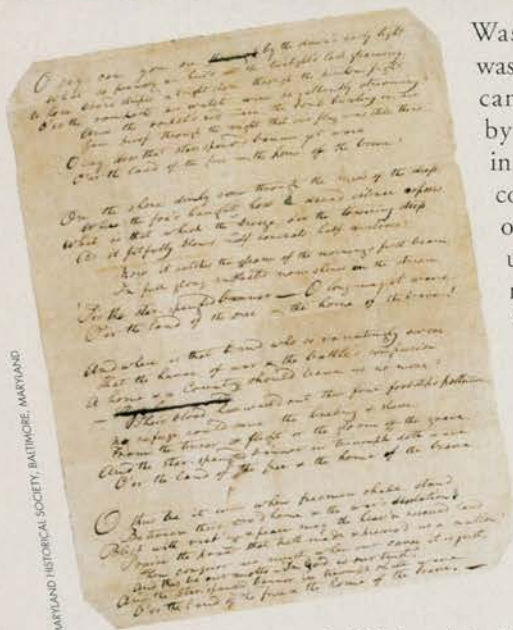
The Americans quickly fell back, and the British land force advanced toward Baltimore. The next day, Tuesday, Sept. 13, the British fleet reached a point 2 miles below Fort McHenry, a star-shaped installation with cannons installed on each of the points.

As the British prepared to attack Baltimore, Francis Scott Key, Colonel John Skinner, and Dr. William Beanes were transferred from the British flagship to a sloop tethered to a British ship about 8 miles below Fort McHenry. A number of British marines remained on Key's boat to make sure no escape would be attempted.

On Sept. 13, 1814, at seven o'clock in the morning, the British bombardment of Baltimore began. This was no



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Washington. This was a major American city, defended by Fort McHenry in the harbor and a considerable force of soldiers on land under the command of Major General Samuel Smith, who deployed them to meet the anticipated land attack to the east of Baltimore.

The British bombardment included

gunships to withdraw after half an hour, and one of them, the *Erebus*, was so damaged that it had to be towed to safety. The two sides exchanged cannon fire into the night, during which a British force left the fleet by barge and attempted to capture nearby Fort Covington. This led the Fort McHenry gunners to turn their fire on them as well, helping to drive them off. It was this terrific exchange of cannon—the noise, the flashes of explosions—that Francis Scott Key witnessed from his position on the sloop.

As the river stalemate continued, the British land force moved toward Baltimore and General Smith then concentrated his defenders in its path. The British, disheartened by the loss of their army commander, Major General Ross, who had been killed by an American sniper, and their strength depleted by battle, now calculated that they were far outnumbered by the Americans. Because of the guns of Fort McHenry and because of the obstruction from 20-odd boats that the Americans had sunk in the river, the British army was deprived of covering fire from the ships on the river. When a small flanking naval attack was repulsed, the British hopes for capturing Baltimore vanished.

The British fleet continued the bombardment of Fort McHenry to cover the withdrawal of the army, ending its attack on Sept. 14, twenty-five hours after it began, and sailing down the Patapsco River two hours later. On Sept. 15, the withdrawing British army, its movements shielded by a heavy rain, reached the mouth of the Patapsco and went back aboard the ships. Two days later, the British fleet sailed off. The Americans had won at Baltimore.

1,500 bombshells fired from the ships at Fort McHenry, but the large naval guns of the fort's battery kept the enemy from moving in close.

It was here that the British overreached. Sir Alexander Cochrane, who was in command of the British expedition, ordered three gunships to move closer to increase the chances of their damaging the fort, but this brought them within range of Fort McHenry's guns, and Major George Armistead, the fort's commander, ordered that a cannonade be directed at them. The American response forced the three

Major Armistead's Flag

The maker of the flag that Francis Scott Key saw flying over Fort McHenry on the morning of Sept. 14 was Mary Pickersgill. Mrs. Pickersgill, a widow, was a professional flagmaker, as her mother had been before her. (In fact, Rebecca Young, Mary Pickersgill's mother, had made a flag for General George Washington's headquarters in Cambridge, Mass., during the Revolutionary War.) The flag was commissioned by Major George Armistead, the commander of Fort McHenry. Armistead explained his motive to Major General Samuel Smith, the leader of American forces in the Baltimore area:

We, sir, are ready at Fort McHenry to defend Baltimore against invading by the enemy. This is to say, we are ready except that we have no suitable ensign to display over the Star Fort, and it is my desire to have a flag so large that the British will have no difficulty seeing it from a distance.

Mrs. Pickersgill completed Armistead's flag in August 1814, shortly before the Battle of Baltimore took place.

The flag has 15 stars and 15 stripes, although there were 18 states in the union by then. Yes, that's right—15 stripes. After the first flag of 13 stars and stripes for the original colonies, two more stars and stripes had been added when Vermont became the 14th state in 1791 and Kentucky the 15th in 1792. Congress passed a law halting further additions in 1794. It was not until 1818 that another law was passed requiring a star for each new state. Congress also recognized the frightful prospect of skinny red and white pinstripes by mandating that the flag should henceforth revert to 13 broad stripes for the original 13 states, adding a star for each new state but not a new stripe.

The 15 white cotton stars, which are two feet wide, point to point,



The original star-spangled banner, with 15 stars and 15 stripes, photographed at the Boston Navy Yard in 1873. The flag is nearly square, primarily because of "souvenirs" cut from it during the 19th century.

were not made of a single piece of fabric but of "piece goods" sewn together. As an example, the middle and, say, four points might be made from one piece and the fifth point from another.

There is another surprise in the field of stars discovered during the Smithsonian Institution's project to conserve the flag, which began in 1999. The same stars are seen from both sides. Mrs. Pickersgill first sewed on the stars on one side, then turned the flag over, cut out the part of the blue field under the stars, and sewed down the stars to the blue field on the second side. This is known as the reverse appliqué method. Smithsonian conservators estimate that 350,000 stitches were used to sew the flag together. That's 350,000 individual stitches, *hand-sewn* one by one. (For information about the Smithsonian Institution's flag conservation project, visit the Star-Spangled Banner Web site at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ssb/>).

The eight red and seven white stripes are also two feet wide, but close inspection shows that, like the stars, the stripes are not made of single pieces. Instead, the stripes are pieced together

with varying lengths of bunting.

Mrs. Pickersgill and her helpers started work on the flag in her house and then, when it got too big, laid out the material on the floor of the malt-house of Claggett's Brewery, which was near the Pickersgill house. When they were finished sewing the flag together, it was 30 feet, or three stories high, 42 feet long, and weighed 80 pounds. That is relatively light when the size of 1,260 square feet is taken into account, but it had to be light in order to flap in the wind.

To get an idea of the size of the flag, consider that each star is twice as large as an adult's head and that, in its normal horizontal display of 30 feet high, is the equivalent of five men, 6 feet tall, stacked one atop the other. The flag was made to fly from a 90-foot flagpole, so it had to be big. It took Mrs. Pickersgill and her workers six weeks to make the flag in July and August 1814, and Mrs. Pickersgill turned it over to Armistead on Aug. 19. On Oct. 27, she was paid \$405.90 for it, which is about \$3,400 today.

The making of the Baltimore flag is thoroughly documented, but its construction is not nearly so well fixed in the public mind as the tale of Betsy Ross's making the very first American flag in Philadelphia. But the story of the Baltimore flag has the advantage of being true, provable by accounts of the day and even the preservation of the bill of sale. The Betsy Ross story, on the other hand, is now believed by historians to have been concocted—or at least greatly exaggerated—by her descendants. The official history of the flag by the Daughters of the American Revolution, which ought to know about these things, says that because the records are faulty, "it is difficult to confirm many of the claims as to the flag's original designer, maker, or displayer." Betsy Ross, the DAR says, "was paid for making flags for the government as early as May 1777," or sometime after the first one is known to have been made.

THE POET'S VIEW

During the 25-hour bombardment, Francis Scott Key, still held hostage on a British boat in Baltimore Harbor, got a terrifying picture of Fort McHenry under attack. The bombshells that were part of the British attack were designed to detonate as they neared their targets, the "bombs bursting in air," as Key was to write soon after the battle. Key's "rockets' red glare" came from the British use of the Congreve rocket, which was invented in 1804 by Sir William Congreve, a British artillery officer, but had its roots in 13th-century China. Congreve was inspired by fireworks, and today's Fourth of July rockets are similar to Congreve's. A Congreve rocket had a long stick attached to it. The stick was placed in a pipe held upright by a frame; the rocket was ignited and it burst out of the pipe. It was basically a big and deadly bottle rocket. The rockets were not very accurate but could be fired in a devastating barrage. Thirteen-inch mortar shells fired from cannons added more devastation to the "bombs bursting in air."

With the rain and the smoke from the bombardment, Key and his American friends had no way of knowing how the battle was going. He waited for the dawn. "At last," he later wrote,

it came. A bright streak of gold mingled with crimson shot athwart the eastern sky, followed by another and still another, as the morning sun rose in the fullness of his glory, lifting the "mists of the deep," crowning a "Heaven-blest land" with a new victory and grandeur.

There was not yet a national anthem, so when it became clear that Fort McHenry had withstood the British attack, a huge star-spangled banner was run up the flagpole to the tune of "Yankee Doodle."

Contrary to popular belief, that flag is not the one that flew over Fort McHenry during the British bombardment. It was raining then, and forts did not fly their prized flags in the rain. Instead, the flag flying at Fort McHenry that night was a smaller and less valuable banner called a "storm flag." By dawn's early light, if we may borrow a bit of poetry here, the rain had stopped and Armistead had a magnificent new flag (opposite page) that had just been made for Fort McHenry run up, and that is what Key then saw. That version is supported by an eyewitness account from a young British naval officer, Robert J. Barrett, who wrote that, as the British sailed away, the Americans "hoisted a most superb and splendid ensign on their battery."

Key described the events of that day in a speech in Frederick, Md., years later:

I saw the flag of my country waving over a city, the strength and pride of my native state, a city devoted to plunder and desolation by its assailants. I witnessed the preparation for its assaults. I saw the array of its enemies as they advanced to the attack. I heard the sound of battle. The noise of the conflict fell upon my listening ear and told me that the brave and free had met the invaders.

There is an old legend in American history that Abe Lincoln scribbled the Gettysburg Address on the back of an envelope. This is not true. But is this the source of the legend? Key began to write "The Star-Spangled Banner" on the back of a letter he had in his pocket. After the British left, Key

wrote more during the trip from the harbor to Baltimore City and wrote the rest of it in the Indian Queen Hotel.

Key's brother-in-law, Judge Joseph H. Nicholson, the second in command at Fort McHenry, was very much taken with Key's poem and took it to a local printing shop, where it was set in type and printed in handbill form. The copies were circulated around Baltimore under the title "The Defence of Fort McHenry," a name evidently given to it by Nicholson.

A descendant of Key's, Francis Key-Smith, took up the story in a biography of Key that he wrote:

Copies of the song were struck off in handbill form and promiscuously distributed on the street. Catching with popular favor like prairie fire, it spread in every direction, was read and discussed, until, in less than an hour, the news was all over the city.

Picked up by a crowd of soldiers assembled, some accounts put it, about Captain McCauley's tavern, next to Holiday Street Theater, others have it around their tents on the outskirts of the city. Ferdinand Durang, a musician, adapted the words to the old tune of "To Anacreon in Heaven," and, mounting a chair, rendered it in fine style.

On the evening of the same day it was again rendered upon the stage of the Holiday Street Theater by an actress, and the theater is said to have gained thereby a national reputation. In about a fortnight it had reached New Orleans and was publicly played by a military band, and shortly thereafter was heard in nearly, if not all, the principal cities and towns throughout the country.

On Sept. 20, 1814, "The Star-Spangled Banner," by then given its new name by Key, was published as a poem in *The Baltimore Patriot* and then reprinted by other newspapers around the country. At some point, the notation "Tune: To Anacreon in Heaven" was added.

"To Anacreon in Heaven" was an English drinking song that was enormously popular in both Britain and the United States. It was first performed in Baltimore earlier in 1814 and had become so popular that people wrote many parodies of it. Key himself had used it in composing a poem in honor of Stephen Decatur, the American naval hero, and he probably had the tune in his head as he composed "The Star-Spangled Banner" because his words fit the rhythm of "Anacreon" exactly.

The use of "Anacreon" came with a price. Americans have struggled to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" ever since because its range is outside most people's abilities. Nevertheless, "The Star-Spangled Banner" increased in popularity steadily over the years and finally was adopted as America's national anthem on March 3, 1931.

It could be said that the 25-hour ordeal Fort McHenry withstood under British guns on Sept. 13-14, 1814, was the day the United States became a nation. Certainly Americans singing Key's song found a greater devotion to the union, setting into motion a love of the flag as well, although that reverence did not reach its present level until the Civil War. America does not have the kings and queens of royalty, and there is not an officially sanctioned religion. It has the greatest democratic document ever written, the Constitution, and when the nation salutes the flag or sings Key's song, there is a strength greater than any throne or church. This was Key's shining moment, his one great good deed, something that was never to be repeated. □

Eloquent Images

Using Art To Teach American History

By Debra Michlewitz

History is a great story, and it requires a great storyteller. Art can help every teacher become that storyteller.

History or current events—history in the making—inspire art. Pablo Picasso's (1881–1973) paintings reflect the events in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s, from the brutal images of his *Guernica*, a mural commemorating innocent victims of the Spanish Civil War, and his *Weeping Woman* of 1937 (right) to *Plante des tomates*, depicting a tomato plant on a wrought-iron window bearing luscious round fruit, which Picasso painted after the Allies marched into Paris at the end of World War II. The Spanish artist Francisco Goya (1746–1828) tells a tale of resistance and death during the Napoleonic Wars in his *Shootings of May Third, 1808*. Art attempts to make sense of what often defies easy analysis. It offers complex answers to students who too often have heard simple ones.

Picasso, a painter who is still difficult to read, makes students think hard. He awakens the art critic in all of them. His weeping women are not literal portraits, and students are quick to note every departure from reality: noses shown in profile and straight on, displaced eyes, fragmented faces. What is the point? I turn my profile to the class and then

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TATE, LONDON 2001 / © ESTATE OF PABLO PICASSO / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY, NEW YORK

face the students head on. I ask them in what way Picasso is depicting the truth. What do they have to do in order to see me the way they see one of Picasso's women? And what truth does that way of seeing reveal about everyone? With enough time, students can create their own portraits of weeping women or self-portraits. I've enjoyed the ones my students have drawn of me.

Students bring this questioning approach to historical paintings as we study

American history. The American Revolution and our young nation's quest for a heritage inspired many paintings that focus on the narrative elements of an event. Students start their study by looking at the work of Benjamin West (1738–1820). *The Death of General Wolfe* (opposite page) depicts the Battle of Quebec during the French and Indian War, showing figures who could be classical heroes in 18th-century dress. But it fell to West's student, Connecticut-born John Trumbull (1756–1843), to create heroic American history paintings. When students look at Trumbull's painting *The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec* (opposite page), which is set early in the American Revolution, they quickly grasp how Trumbull, an ardent patriot, appropriates West's iconography to promote the American Revolution. My students think Trumbull's painting is great propaganda for the American cause.

Students look at thematic and historical aspects of both paintings, identifying the artistic devices that reinforce the



YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY, TRUMBULL COLLECTION

*(Opposite) Weeping Woman
by Pablo Picasso.*

*(Above) The Death of
General Montgomery in the
Attack on Quebec
by John Trumbull.*

*(Right) The Death of General
Wolfe by Benjamin West.*



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THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF JOHN STEWART KENNEDY, 1851



THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, LICENSED BY VAGA, NEW YORK

(Top) *Washington Crossing the Delaware* by Emanuel Leutze. (Above) *Washington Crossing the Delaware* by Larry Rivers. (Right) *George Washington at Princeton (detail)* by Charles Willson Peale. (Top right) *General George Washington Before the Battle of Trenton* by John Trumbull.



YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY, GIFT OF THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI IN CONNECTICUT

THE WHITE HOUSE COLLECTION, COURTESY OF THE WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

drama on the canvas: turbulent skies, diagonal compositional elements, and moody palettes. They then write historical analyses of the paintings, discussing the way in which the historical events are depicted and speculating about the reasons for the artists' choices. Some students, using stick figures, try their hand at creating their own representations of historical events. They decide who would be participating in the event (and who would not), how the actors would be arranged, and the exact moment to portray.

Next, students “read” portraits of George Washington to gain a deeper understanding of our first president. Pictures of Washington often portray both the man and the historical moment on a single canvas. Students comment on the differences between Charles Willson Peale’s full-length portrait of *George Washington at Princeton*, painted in 1779 (left), and John Trumbull’s *General George Washington Before the Battle of Trenton*, from 1792 (above). They learn that Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828) painted more than 60 versions of George Washington the president, depicting a reserved, self-contained man at the same time as he rendered inspiring homage to Washington. (See the Gilbert Stuart portrait of Washington, page 7.) When I ask my students why Stuart painted the same face in the same way so many times, I give them a broad hint: Stuart called these paintings his “hundred dollar bills.” They laugh.

Students compare two versions of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, Emanuel Leutze’s 1851 history painting with Larry Rivers’s 1953 version of the same event (opposite).

Setting the Scene

Paintings or other images can often be used to engage students in a lesson that involves a complicated train of events. For example, at a Gilder Lehrman Institute Summer Seminar at Brown University, we discussed the precedent George Washington established for the executive branch's enforcement of law, specifically during the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, and I later adapted this discussion for my history class.

Frederick Kemmelmeyer's (1788-1816) *Washington Reviewing the Western Army at Fort Cumberland, Maryland*, provides an introduction to the lesson. Without telling students the name of the picture, I ask them what details in the painting might help them identify the historical moment and how they could try to confirm their surmises.

I next distribute excerpts from James Thomas Flexner's *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (Little, Brown, 1994) to give them more information about the critical issues involved in the Whiskey Rebellion.

It occurred Flexner tells us, when "foreign problems were...quiescent. But at home trouble broke loose. The ostensible cause was an excise tax on whiskey.... The legislation was accepted everywhere but on the frontier." On the following pages, Flexner offers a wonderful narrative which, with the aid of a mini-dictionary prepared by the teacher to assist with the challenging vocabulary, can be relished by the students. It makes for excellent reading aloud or silently. Finally, copies of Washington's letters to Thomas Jefferson, his secretary of state, and Alexander Hamilton, his secretary of the treasury; the actual proclamation asserting executive branch authority to enforce the Whiskey Tax; and a cover letter bemoaning the inadequacies of the Postal Service and the need to send the proclamation by messenger—directions to Monticello included—can be excerpted from *The Writings of George Washington from Original Manuscript Sources: 1745-1799* (available online) and dis-

tributed. The students now have a moment of history spread out on their desks.

Once the event and the significance of Washington's action are clear, the class can discuss the importance of this precedent. Another component is the clause in Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution which states that the president "shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed." This gives students the information they need to understand and comment on Washington's action. As a final application, the class can do research about executive enforcement of laws in our history. For example, President Dwight David Eisenhower's actions at Little Rock, Ark., in September 1957, when he sent federal troops to enforce a court order for the desegregation of the local high school; and the federal actions at Waco, Texas, on April 19, 1993, when a fire in a compound held by a religious group known as the Branch Davidians resulted in the deaths of more than 80 people.



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF EDGAR WILLIAM AND BERNICE CHRYSLER GARRSCH, 1963.

Washington Reviewing the Western Army at Fort Cumberland, Maryland, by Frederick Kemmelmeyer.



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ARTHUR HOPPOCK HEARN FUND, 1950; ESTATE OF GRANT WOOD/LICENCED BY VAGA, NEW YORK

(Above) The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere by Grant Wood.
(Right) John Brown Going to His Hanging by Horace Pippin.



COURTESY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS, PHILADELPHIA, JOHN LAMBERT FUND.



THE SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

(Above) *The County Election* by George Caleb Bingham.
 (Right) *Election Night* by Jack Levine. (Opposite) *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* by Ben Shahn.

Students are often familiar with the Leutze version since the gallant general sailing to victory is reproduced on many schoolroom walls (though they might not be aware that the actual crossing took place in the dead of night during a blizzard). “But what is Rivers trying to say about America?” students ask. Comparing these two paintings leads to spirited discussions of the meaning of patriotism then and now.

Other presidents have also been rendered by various artists. The portraits of Abraham Lincoln tell human and engaging stories about the man, the myth, and the president. Photography (which was then a new medium) adds another interesting dimension to students’ appreciation of Lincoln. When they compare an 1860 photograph by Alexander Hesler with one taken in 1864 by Matthew Brady, they see the terrible suffering etched on Lincoln’s face, and they understand the toll the war took on Lincoln personally. The 20th-century American artist, Robert Indiana (b. 1928), takes an entirely different approach to presidential portraiture. His symbolic portraits, like the one of Jimmy Carter, which proclaims *An Honest Man in the White House*, use words and facts to make a portrait that is reminiscent of a commercial logo. Students can use this technique to create portraits of any president or other historical



THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART/LICENSED BY VAGA, NEW YORK

figure, choosing and incorporating dates, place names, colors, maps to help define the person.

Many important 19th- and 20th-century American artists abandoned the tradition of patriotic narrative painting in favor of an art involving social and political commentary. For example, Grant Wood’s (1892–1942) *The Midnight*



WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART / © ESTATE OF BEN SHAHN / LICENSED BY VAGA, NEW YORK

Ride of Paul Revere (see page 17) and Horace Pippin's (1888–1946) *John Brown Going to His Hanging* (see page 17) lead students to questions about the artist's attitude toward the event depicted. They find Wood's aerial view of a tiny Paul Revere in a doll-like landscape particularly intriguing. And they wonder about the anger that Ben Shahn (1898–1969) often reveals in his portrayals of contemporary events and issues. What exactly is he criticizing in his *Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* (see page 19), for example? In anticipation of Election Day, I have shown my classes George Caleb Bingham's (1811–1879) *The County Election* and Jack Levine's (b. 1915) cynical *Election Night* (see page 18). The Bingham, with its detailed,



vigorous, and admiring portrayal of the electoral process, makes for a fascinating contrast with Levine's painting of rather debauched looking people who seem to be celebrating in a night club.

Other types of paintings lead students to reflect on class differences and the daily lives of ordinary people in 19th- and early 20th-century America. Comparing Maurice Prendergast's (1859–1924) *Central Park* and John Sloan's (1871–1951) depictions of the elevated train and the backyards of tenements, for instance in *Sixth Avenue Elevated at Third Street*, make these differences very clear. Paintings by Eastman Johnson (1824–1906) form an extended text about many aspects of the daily life and aspirations of African-American slaves and newly freed slaves and provide an important gloss on the primary sources of that era. *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves* (above), for example, can be seen as a moving illustration for the Emancipation Proclamation. Winslow Homer's (1836–1910) *The Veteran in a New Field* (opposite), depicting a Civil War soldier's return to farming, makes a fitting illustration of the sentiments expressed in Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. The 60 panels in Jacob Lawrence's (1917–2000) *The Migration of the Negro*, convey the 20th-century experiences of African Americans who left their lives in the rural South to become part of the urban culture of the North. (See opposite page, top.)

The remaining problem is identifying and locating the art, but, in fact, there are now many sources:

- The postcard racks at museums offer some solutions.
- Old, new, and discarded history textbooks are a valuable resource.
- Museum Web sites often link to mini-galleries that can provide virtual visits if the museum is off your beaten track.
- Art is posted all over the Internet. Searches using artists' names and subject keywords usually yield good results.
- The University of Virginia at xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/Field/intro.html showcases Erastus Salisbury Field's (1805–1900) *The Historical Monument of the American Republic*. The painting allegorically recounts the history of the nation on the occasion of its centennial. It depicts 10 towers covered with historical allusions and details. An essay explicates the painting. It is a wonderful site.
- Many great historical paintings hang in local and state historical societies. I'm currently waiting for a postcard depicting Peter Rothermel's (1812–1895) *Banishment of Roger Williams*.
- An invaluable resource is *Index to Reproductions of American Paintings*, a two-volume work by Lyn Wall Smith and Nancy Dustin Wall Mouri, which indexes paintings in various categories. For example, the American West, historical subjects, portraits, and genre works. Citations direct you to other sources where the paintings are reproduced. It is published by Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, N.J., 1977.



THE PHILIP COLLECTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, BEQUEST OF MISS ADELAIDE MARTON DE CEROT (1876-1947), 1947.

(Opposite) *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves* by Eastman Johnson. (Above) *The Migration of the Negro Panel No. 3* by Jacob Lawrence. Lawrence's full caption to the panel reads: "In every town Negroes were leaving by the hundreds to go North and enter into Northern industry." (Left) *The Veteran in a New Field* by Winslow Homer.

■ Many schools still have slide sets produced by the Center for Humanities. There are two carousel trays called "Painting in America" and a third one called "The American Dream." The selection provides many excellent choices.

Paintings can fulfill many different pedagogical purposes. They can illuminate historical events and characters and bring them to life. Paintings and other images can also make students aware of a point of view—the artist's commentary—that enriches and modifies the history they find in

books and documents.

In the aftermath of Sept. 11, artistic vision provided a wonderful and much-needed moment for my classes. I showed them a rendering in the *New York Times* of *Towers of Light* by John Bennett, Gustavo Benevardi, Julian La Verdiere, and Paul Myoda, a huge light projection that will be created on the site of the World Trade Center towers. The spirit in the classroom changed. The image expressed feelings and desires and freed students to think of a better future, the best goal of history. □

A Confrontation with the Past

The Japanese Textbook Dispute

By Burton Bollag

This past summer an unusual battle was fought out at school districts across Japan. At issue was whether to adopt a new history textbook for junior high school, which was written by nationalist historians. The text, its supporters say, is intended to promote self-pride and reverse the “masochist” approach to history education, which teaches Japanese schoolchildren their country was an evil aggressor during its recent history.

Nobukatsu Fujioka, a professor of education at the University of Tokyo, is the founder of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, which is promoting the new textbook. An amiable, even charming, former Communist and later pacifist, he was reborn 10 years ago as a nationalist.

“Japanese children are only taught that their country has done bad things,” he explained to me recently at the university’s graduate school of education where he works. “They are not taught anything they can be proud of. The current textbooks only teach them how to apologize.”

The controversial book, entitled *New History Textbook*, was published by the small, recently founded Fuso publishing company. It presents Japan’s military occupation of other Asian countries in the years before and during World War II in a more positive light than do other texts. The book justifies the colonization of Korea, from 1910 to 1945, as necessary to protect Japan’s security and economic interests. It suggests that Japan’s subjugation of other Asian peoples was at least in part positive because it helped hasten their liberation from Western colonial rule; and it ignores the sexual slavery forced on tens of thousands of young women, the germ warfare experiments on prisoners, and other atrocities

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committed by Japan’s Imperial Army.

Japan’s neighbors reacted angrily, especially to the fact that Japan’s education ministry approved the Fuso textbook for use in public schools. The issue provoked strong diplomatic protests from South Korea and China. In a compromise gesture in October 2001, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi agreed, during a summit meeting with his South Korean counterpart, to establish a joint committee to propose revisions to the controversial textbook.

The issue illustrates how painful and difficult it can be to confront the more shameful parts of a country’s past, even in a nation where the rules of good behavior require the utterance of the phrase “I am sorry” many times a day.

An Uproar in Tochigi

During the summer, Japan’s 543 central textbook boards, each comprising on average six school districts, chose the textbooks they will use for the next four years. Normally, this is a rather routine affair. Each board examines texts from a list of titles approved by the education ministry. The boards make their choices according to the style and educational approach they consider best suited to their communities.

But this year was different, observes Kazuo Fujimura, executive director of the Japan Textbook Research Center, which represents the interests of many of the country’s textbook publishers. “This time, political groups have been trying to influence the choice,” Fujimura says, “They say we should rather use textbooks which give us more self-pride.”

Well before the summer, support for Fuso’s *New History Textbook* became a rallying cry of Japan’s resurgent nationalist right wing. School boards across the country were lobbied by the right wing of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. Nationalist groups joined the campaign, as did the





conservative Sankei media group, which includes a major national newspaper and several television stations.

Tochigi prefecture, a quiet, hilly agricultural area about 70 miles north of Tokyo, made news this summer when one of its central textbook boards first chose the controversial Fuso book, then reversed itself after a storm of local protest. The board, which chooses the textbooks for the public schools of the prefecture's 10 towns, divides the task according to subjects. The five members of the 23-member board who had the job of recommending social studies texts proposed one of the uncontroversial history books. But at a stormy meeting July 11, a majority of the entire board voted to overturn the recommendation and pick the Fuso text instead. One member, a superintendent of education from one of the towns, who asked not to be identified, says the board was swayed both by the right-wing campaign in favor of the nationalist text and by several conservative senior board members.

The next day, all hell broke loose. Parents, representatives of the teachers' union, journalists, and other local people began besieging the public education offices of the 10 towns, protesting the decision. They called, sent faxes, and showed up personally to complain. The superintendent, who requested anonymity, showed me several knee-high stacks of manila envelopes, piled up on the floor next to his desk, containing 1,800 faxes that had arrived at his office alone. Outraged residents staged a protest demonstration in the district's biggest town. Then the municipal school boards of each of the 10 towns voted individually to reject the Fuso book.

Clearly the 23-member board had not anticipated this groundswell of opposition. Two weeks after its original decision, the board met and voted to reverse itself, choosing one

(Above) Demonstrators at the city hall of Suginami, a ward in the city of Tokyo, protesting the adoption of a controversial nationalist history book. (Right) Professor Saburo Ienaga, the Japanese teacher and historian who repeatedly sued the Japanese government to protest its censorship of his history textbooks.

of the uncontroversial texts instead. "It was really confusing for two weeks," remarked the superintendent. "But in the end we got it right."

There were many small demonstrations across Japan, in which people demanded that their local authorities not choose the Fuso book. In Suginami, a ward of Tokyo, several hundred people staged a noisy demonstration at the local town hall, beating drums and cymbals and forming a human chain around the square, gray, seven-story building.

Naoko Tomita, who cares for residents of a state institution for mentally handicapped people, was one of the protesters. She says that when her two college-age children were in public school, "they learned only part of the truth" about Japan's role before and during World War II. Japan's invasions of its neighbors were coyly referred to as "advances," and her children hadn't learned about the "comfort women," the name Japanese authorities at the time gave to the tens of thousands of young women from Korea and other occupied countries who were forced into military-run brothels, where they had to provide sex to large numbers of Japanese soldiers daily.

"The Japanese government wants to hide the truth about the comfort women," she said. "They may want another war."

Despite all the public anxiety, almost no one chose the Fuso text. When the deadline for choosing textbooks passed at the end of August, only three of the 543 central textbook



ITSUO INOUE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

boards had chosen it, and then only for their schools for disabled children. Several private schools also picked the text. In the end, it appears that only about 10 out of more than 10,000 junior high schools in Japan plan to use it.

The result was a setback for the nationalists. But their movement to transform history education continues, and even received a boost, when Prime Minister Koizumi made a controversial decision to end a taboo and visit Tokyo's Yasukuni shrine in August. It is the most important Shinto shrine honoring Japan's war dead, including the soldiers and commanders of the Imperial Army. So what is behind this current resurgence of nationalist feelings?

In part, it appears to be a response to a loss of confidence due to almost a decade of economic malaise, including record unemployment, bank failures, and a stubborn recession. If the Japanese economic miracle is coming undone, some people feel, this is a time for history lessons to teach children to be proud of their country, not guilty about its past.

At the same time, many observers see support for the

Fuso text as a backlash against gradual moves over the last two decades to make history textbooks—and the official government position—more open about the past.

Talking About the Past

In the first years after Japan's defeat in World War II, the education authorities, then under the supervision of the American occupation forces, produced a new history curriculum. It was very different from the prewar lessons, which had taught that Japan had an almost divine right to rule over its neighbors.

The Japanese were exhausted and sick of war, which had brought them not the glory they were promised, but destruction, defeat, and humiliation. The country's new history curriculum branded Japan the aggressor during the just-ended war. But the curriculum was, above all, pacifist: It stressed the horrors of war in general and how much the Japanese people had suffered because of it.

By the mid-1950s, however, the approach to curriculum began to change. Japan had become a key Cold-War ally of the United States; it was an important rear base for American forces during the Korean War; and in 1954 the two countries signed a mutual defense-assistance pact. History lessons that inculcated in young people too much of a sense of pacifism were no longer deemed appropriate. Often against the objections of teachers, who tended, then as now, to be left-leaning, the education ministry began screening textbooks, requiring them to tone down their criticisms of Japan's role during the war, and insisting they promote students' patriotic feelings.

A few textbook authors tried to include specific references to atrocities Japan had committed during World War II. The education ministry invariably sent the texts back demanding that the references be deleted. Many writers censored themselves to avoid long negotiations with ministry officials or possible rejection of their books. It was not until the early 1980s that the policy changed again and the authorities gradually began allowing textbooks to address the unsavory aspects of Japan's foreign policy in the 1930s and 1940s.

The turning point came in 1982, when the ministry issued guidelines for textbook publishers, saying texts now had to show "concern for neighboring countries." Those countries—for example, South Korea, China, and the Philippines—were growing stronger and becoming increasingly important export markets for Japanese goods. "The Japanese government couldn't help paying more attention to their interests," says Yutaka Yoshida, a professor of history at Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo and co-author of a junior high school history textbook that probably goes the furthest in speaking openly about Japan's war crimes.

This period was also marked by the start of a slow dance in which successive Japanese leaders circled painfully round and round, moving ever closer to apologizing—though never quite managing to do so—for Japan's invasions and brutal occupations of its neighbors. In 1986, then-Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone publicly admitted for the first time to "invasive aspects" in Japan's actions during World War II. Finally, in August 1995, with the whole world

watching what Japan would say on the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, then-Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama went further. He expressed deep regret—but still could not quite bring himself to apologize—for the “great damage and suffering” Japan had caused other Asian peoples through its “invasion” of their countries.

Ienaga's Battle

While political leaders were grudgingly making it more permissible to talk about the past, developments on several other fronts forced the authorities to allow more of the truth into school textbooks. One factor was several lawsuits claiming it was unconstitutional for the education ministry to censor references to atrocities committed by the Imperial Army. The most famous court action was by Saburo Ienaga, a historian. He first filed suit in 1965 after the ministry ordered him to delete or rewrite passages about wartime atrocities in a textbook he had written.

His court battle continued for 32 years. Finally, in 1997, Ienaga won a major victory when Japan's Supreme Court ruled in his favor. While dozens of his supporters in the packed courtroom rose and applauded, Ienaga, then 83, smiled and bowed deeply. The court decided that the ministry had acted illegally when, in 1980 and 1983, it had removed from a textbook Ienaga was writing a description of biological experiments Japan carried out on 3,000 soldiers and civilians taken prisoner in northern China during World War II. In the experiments, conducted by the army's

infamous Unit 731, victims were allowed to die without treatment after being injected with diseases like typhoid, or dissected without anesthesia. However the victory was only partial. The court rejected Ienaga's claims that the ministry had illegally censored seven other portions of his textbook. During his long legal fight, Ienaga had at times required police protection from right-wing thugs who felt he had disgraced Japan and its old Imperial Army.

Another factor was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. With many former Communist countries coming clean about their past misdeeds, it seemed increasingly incongruous for Japan to refuse to do the same. Even more so since, in the last few years, a number of old Japanese soldiers have come forward publicly and admitted to having taken part in massacres, rapes, and other crimes. Furthermore, some of the elderly surviving “comfort women” ended nearly a half century of silence and began speaking out about their painful ordeals as sexual slaves and the physical and emotional scars they carried for the rest of their lives. The first to speak publicly was a South Korean woman, Kim Hak-Son, in 1991. Others followed, from all over Asia and as far away as Holland. Tokyo long denied that the Imperial Army was responsible, claiming that prostitution was a private business. Then, a researcher in Japan unearthed documents proving the army's responsibility. In 1993, the prime minister's office admitted as much and apologized. But the government has refused to accept legal responsibility or pay compensation to survivors.

Taking Responsibility: Japan vs. Germany

Japan's efforts to deny or minimize war time atrocities contrast sharply with Germany's postwar behavior. Why did it take so long—a half century—for Japan to acknowledge its guilt? Part of the answer lies in the fact that Japan, which carried out such harsh subjugation of its neighbors, had nonetheless become a solid democracy after the war. As Manabu Sato, a professor in the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Education, points out, until about a decade ago Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, and other Asian countries were dictatorships that jailed people for publishing information unfavorable to their governments. This weakened the moral force of their demands that Japan come clean about its wartime conduct.

A defeated Germany, on the other hand—at least its western half—had as its neighbors the community of democratic Western European nations. There were several other signifi-

cant differences in the fate of Japan and Germany after the war. These differences help explain why, while Japan still resists taking responsibility for its war crimes, and quibbles over what took place, Germany has long since acknowledged the full horrors committed by the Nazi regime, and made that information part of its standard school curriculum.

At the end of the war, the victorious allies set about to destroy Germany's ruling Nazi apparatus, which had been responsible for the war. The rest of society could then begin rebuilding a democratic system. But unlike Germany, prewar Japan had not been usurped by a Fascist party. On the contrary, the war had been prosecuted by the country's long-standing power structure: the emperor, the imperial government, and the army. The United States forces occupying a defeated Japan decided, in the name of a peaceful transition, to leave the emperor on his throne—at least as a fig-

urehead—and concentrated on prosecuting a small number of army leaders. The result was that Japan did not make—indeed could not have made—as clean a break with its wartime past as did Germany.

Ian Buruma, author of a 1994 book, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, points to another factor. Germany was occupied by the United States, Britain, and France (with the Soviet Union occupying the eastern part of the country) and quickly began to find its place among the Western European democracies. But Japan was occupied by the United States alone. “The trouble was that virtually all the changes were made on American orders,” writes Buruma. “This was, of course, the victor's prerogative, and many of the changes were beneficial. But the systematic subservience of Japan meant that the country never really grew up.” And never took full responsibility for confronting its past.

"The survivors feel insulted a second time," said Yayori Matsui, when I met her in her small downtown office where one takes off one's shoes before entering. Matsui is a determined former journalist and author who now heads a group fighting against the rape and abuse of women during war. "The most important thing for them is to establish that this was a war crime against women."

These various pressures culminated in 1996 to produce a crop of seven approved junior high school history textbooks that, for the first—and perhaps the last—time, all included information the nationalists had tried to keep out: the basic facts about Japan's actions toward its neighbors during the 1930s and 1940s, as understood by most historians around the world. All the books said, without equivocating, that Japan had been the aggressor. They all made note, for example, of the "comfort women," the cruel biological experiments, and the Nanking massacre. The latter refers to the slaughter of up to 300,000 people by the Imperial Army in that southern Chinese city in the winter of 1937-38.

The Unsettled Story

Even with the rejection of the Fuso book, the right-wing campaign has had a definite impact on what children are taught. All textbooks used in public and private schools must be screened and approved by the education ministry every four years. (This year's screening process came five years after the last one in order to coincide with the introduction of curriculum changes.) All of the seven junior high school history texts approved by the ministry in 1996 mentioned Japan's major war crimes. But this year, publishers "have tried to tone down" those references in response to the pressure for the Fuso book, says Fujimura, of the textbook research center. For example, each of the seven books mentioned the "comfort women" in 1996; this year only three do.

This backsliding was made possible by a lack of commitment on the part of the government to face up to the past, says Professor Yoshida, the historian and textbook author from Mitsubishi University in Tokyo. With their gradual and grudging acknowledgments of past war crimes, the Japanese authorities have often appeared to be giving in to pressure, rather than leading the nation with a principled stance, he says. "The Japanese government started expressing regret to Korea and China in the 1980s before getting consensus among the Japanese people. So people are confused."

The Fuso text, as nationalistic as it is, was even more so in the version submitted to the ministry for screening. For example, the text claimed the invasion and annexation of Korea "proceeded legally according to the basic rules of international relations of the days when it was carried out." The text raised serious doubts about whether the Nanking massacre took place: "...there could have been some killings, but the incident was nothing like the Holocaust."

Ministry officials demanded changes to these and 135 other passages before approving the text. The other seven textbooks each required between 13 and 41 changes. Keita Sasata, the education ministry official in charge of screening social sciences textbooks, says Fuso's text focused too much

on the suffering of the Japanese people. He says he told Fuso: "You should try to understand; we were not the only victims."

I asked Professor Fujioka, head of the society promoting the Fuso book, for his reaction. "The U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki," he said. "Do American textbooks say the United States was evil for doing this? No. Yet the atomic bombings were the worst crime of World War II. All we are trying to do," argues Fujioka, "is to write a textbook with an interpretation of history that is similar to the way the United States, Great Britain, and other countries approach their own histories."

What about the fact that the Fuso book plays down or excludes mention of most of the war crimes widely accepted to have been committed by Japan? That is the "Tokyo trials perception of history," he told me. In other words, the version based on testimony at the trials of high-ranking Japanese military leaders during the American occupation, which he feels distorted history to suit the American victors.

Fujioka and his co-thinkers brush off Japan's responsibility by clinging to shreds of doubt. The Nanking massacre? There was heavy fighting, but there is no convincing proof that a massacre took place. Survivors were encouraged, even paid, to give false evidence against the Japanese. The testimony of scores of former "comfort women"? Their words are not backed up by documentary proof. The horrible biological experiments? There may be some truth to it, but nothing has been definitively proven yet.

One of the groups in the forefront of the fight to teach students more about Japan's war crimes is the Japan Teachers' Union. With 400,000 members, it is the main association of teachers in the country. Its national headquarters in Tokyo occupies a large crowded floor with scores of people working in small cubicles. There, Hiroshi Higuchi, the union's vice president, told me the Fuso textbook "should never be put in the hands of children."

A survey of more than 2,000 adults carried out last year by Japan's large state television broadcasting company, NHK, found that 51 percent agreed with the statement that during World War II, Japan had carried on a "war of aggression." That was exactly the same proportion who agreed in a similar survey in 1982. However, the polls found that young adults are increasingly unsure. In 1982, 11 percent of people in their 20s said they didn't know or gave no response; last year, 37 percent said they didn't know.

Higuchi says that as old people with firsthand experience of the horrors of the last war die out, public education must ensure that younger generations don't forget what happened. "As Japanese, we don't even know the facts. How can people who don't know the past cooperate with the victims?"

During the decades of conquest and war that culminated in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan's school teachers played a central role in preparing young people to follow the orders to fight. In 1951, still living in the ruins of their bombed-out cities, and under American occupation, the teachers' union adopted a slogan that Higuchi says is still a guiding principle for the group today: "Never again send our children to the battlefield." □

Why Science Should Warm Our Hearts

By Colin Tudge

I love science. It is what I have always done. I remember the warmth I nursed for weeks when, aged 13, I qualified for an advanced science program, already specializing at that tender age. I can still get the same thrill from some books and laboratories, when ideas are neat and properly decorated.

Science is not an innately arrogant pursuit. Sir Isaac Newton said that science was for the glory of God—the God-given intellect dedicated to the glorification of God's works. We need not embrace the theological language of the 17th century, but the sentiment is precisely right. It is shared by many a modern scientist: that the true purpose of science is not to change the universe or to make it more comfortable but to appreciate it more fully. Science has risen gloriously to the challenge: The universe that is now revealed, and the creatures within it, are infinitely more various and intricate than human beings ever conceived of without the help of science, and best of all is the realization that so much is still to be done.

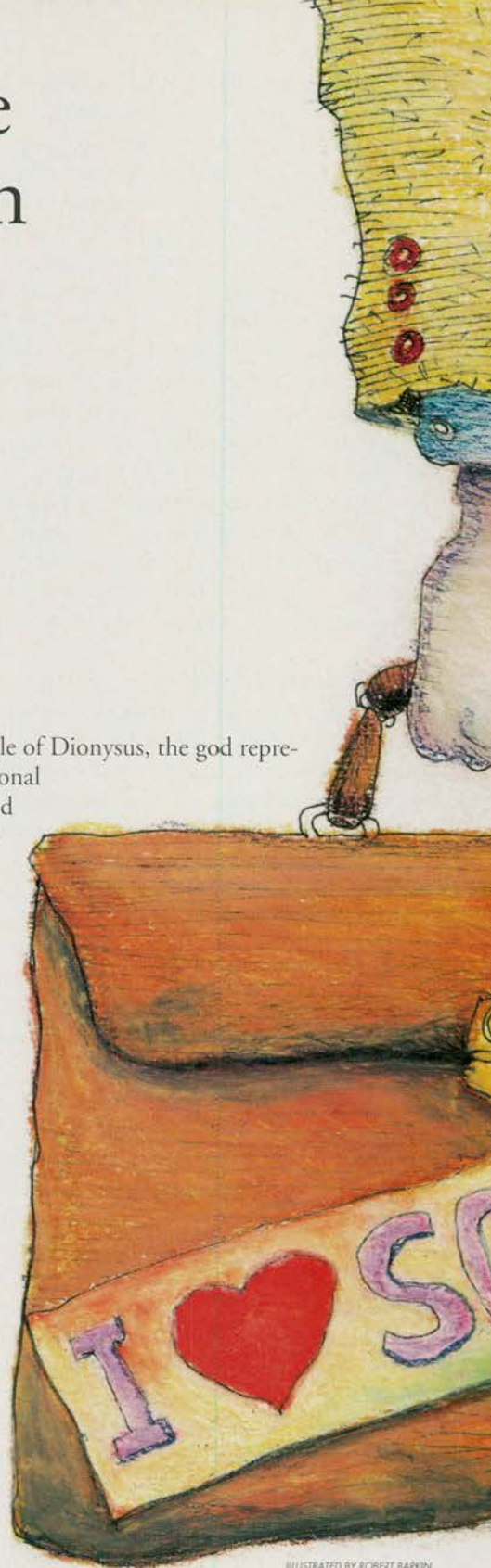
Science, in short, should be heartwarming, encapsulating precisely that love of scholarship for its own sake (or, as Newton and many a rabbi and mullah would say, for God's sake), which runs through all civilization.

Other people don't see it like this. Science has a macho, gung-ho image. Understanding is not for its own sake but is presented as the means of "conquest"—of the stars, of disease, of whatever. It comes across as a nuts-and-bolts pursuit: regrettably necessary, but posing various threats to the human spirit through its intemperate attacks on traditional beliefs and through its ruthless rationality. We are still

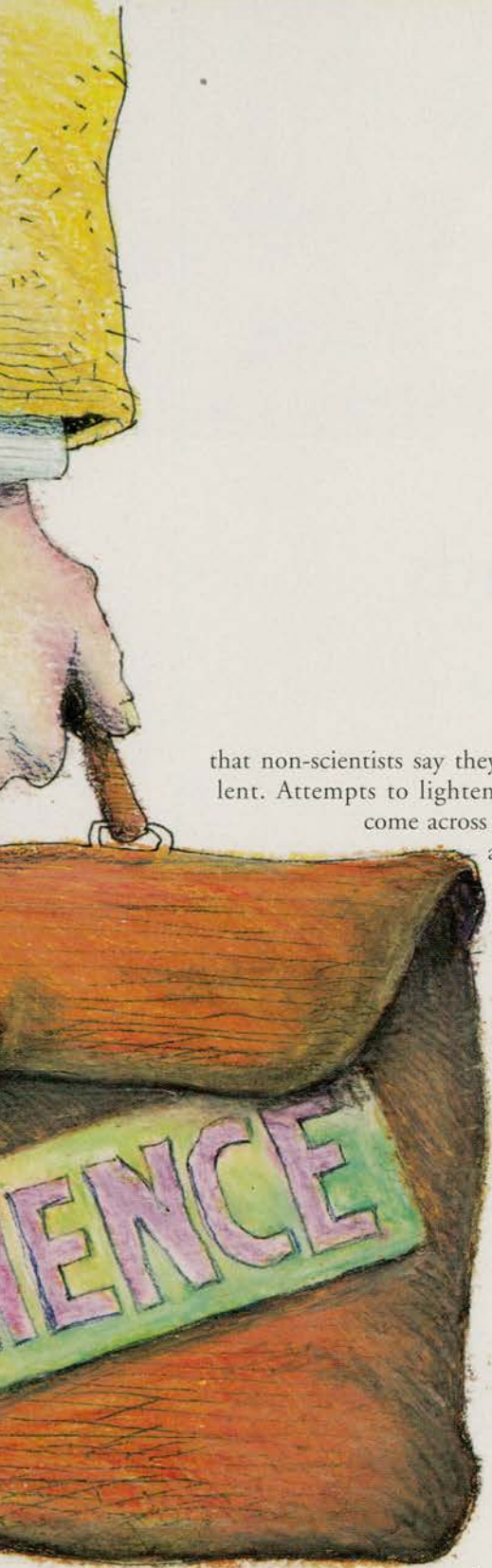
Colin Tudge is the author of In Mendel's Footnotes: Genes and Genetics from the 19th Century to the 22nd (Jonathan Cape, 2001). This is a somewhat abridged version of an article that first appeared in The New Statesman and is reprinted with permission.

locked in the battle of Dionysus, the god representing the irrational and ecstatic, and Apollo, the deity of the rational intellect, with Apollo now cast as a blend of nerd and Dr. Strange-love. Schoolchildren turn away from science, and teachers must be bribed to take it up. For all this, scientists blame the media for their hype and general mischief (although science journalists are excellent); "the public" for its fecklessness and its "ignorance"; and the subject itself because it is too difficult and can properly be understood only by the officially initiated subsection of the intelligentsia.

What I want to suggest—in a spirit of friendliness—is that most of the fault lies with the scientists themselves and, in particular, with those who have tried hardest to be its advocates. Too often, they make science seem arrogant, threatening, pompous but, in the end, naive: all those qualities



ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT BARKIN



that non-scientists say they find most repellent. Attempts to lighten it up frequently come across as clownishness—a

dangerous quality to link to such obvious power. To some extent, this is just bad PR: There is no need for scientists to attack Christianity or Islam, for example. But the flaw runs deeper. It cannot be put right with a course in media training. The startling truth is that some of the most conspicuous spokespeople for science horribly misrepresent it: what it is, what it is like,

what it can helpfully

comment upon, and where it should be silent. They have, in fact, misconstrued the nature of their own craft.

What science is was beautifully summarized by the philosopher Karl Popper. An idea can belong to science, he said, only if it is testable. Science is thus composed of testable hypotheses. He went on to say that hypotheses can, in principle, be shown to be false but cannot be shown unequivocally to be true, so “testable hypothesis” became “falsifi-

able hypothesis.” Various philosophers have taken him to task for this—pointing out that it can be just as hard to falsify as to verify. But “testability” carries the day.

This idea is simple but far-reaching. It suggests immediately that science is not anchored, as many perceive it to be, in subject matter: It is not just the sum of chemistry, physics, and biology. Rather, it is a method, an approach, that can include the psychology and behavior of human beings or the policies of a government. Everything is within the compass of science, provided it is testable.

From Popper’s notions, too, science emerges as an innately humble pursuit. Science is not an edifice of truth, built stone by stone. It is a landscape painting, never finished: Each addition, each fresh wheelbarrow and bathing goddess, changes the balance of the whole, sometimes beyond rescue so the whole must be started again.

Science’s perceived arrogance is doubly unfortunate: It drives people away, and it misrepresents the subject. Even if we reject Popper’s strict principle of falsifiability, we see that the “truths” of science, its theories, must always be both partial and provisional. Every idea, no matter how satisfying and complete it seems, is waiting to be knocked off its perch, or at least improved upon. We can be certain, at any one time, only that there is more to know. All suggestions in the past that such-and-such a subject has been sewn up were invariably followed by the rudest of shocks. A.A. Michelson measured the speed of light in the late 19th century and declared that physics was over but for the dotting of i’s; in a decade or two came Einstein and then Max Planck, leading on to quantum mechanics, and the whole universe was up for grabs, as it still is.

At any one time, it is logically impossible to know how much is not known—whether science has already lit up the universe like a football stadium, or merely laid a trail or two across the darkness. Non-scientists who fear that God’s

(Continued on page 46)



Making Standards Matter, 2001

The AFT was an early advocate for standards-based education. In 1992, in response to national concerns that students in the United States were not learning enough to compete in a global economy and that there was an intolerable gap between the achievement of whites and blacks, the late Albert Shanker, then president of the AFT, urged states to take a lesson from other high-achieving countries and set clear and rigorous academic standards for all students; develop curriculum, professional development, and assessments based on these standards; and do whatever else was necessary to make sure that all children could meet the higher standards.

Standards-based reform as articulated by the AFT is an ordered process that includes well-developed standards and a curriculum to support their implementation; professional development for teachers; new assessments aligned to the standards; and fair incentives and sufficient resources to help students make the grade. Over the past decade, the states have been involved in creating standards-based systems, and AFT has been monitoring this process. *Making Standards Matter, 2001* is the sixth in a series of AFT studies commenting on the progress of the standards movement. Like the others, it is based on data supplied by the states. The following article summarizes the findings of the latest study and recommends mid-course corrections we think necessary to the success of the standards movement.

The full report is on the AFT Web site (www.aft.org/edissues/standards/msm2001) or it can be ordered with prepayment of \$10 per copy or \$8 per copy for five or more copies (includes shipping and handling), from the AFT Order Department, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001.

WHAT WE FOUND

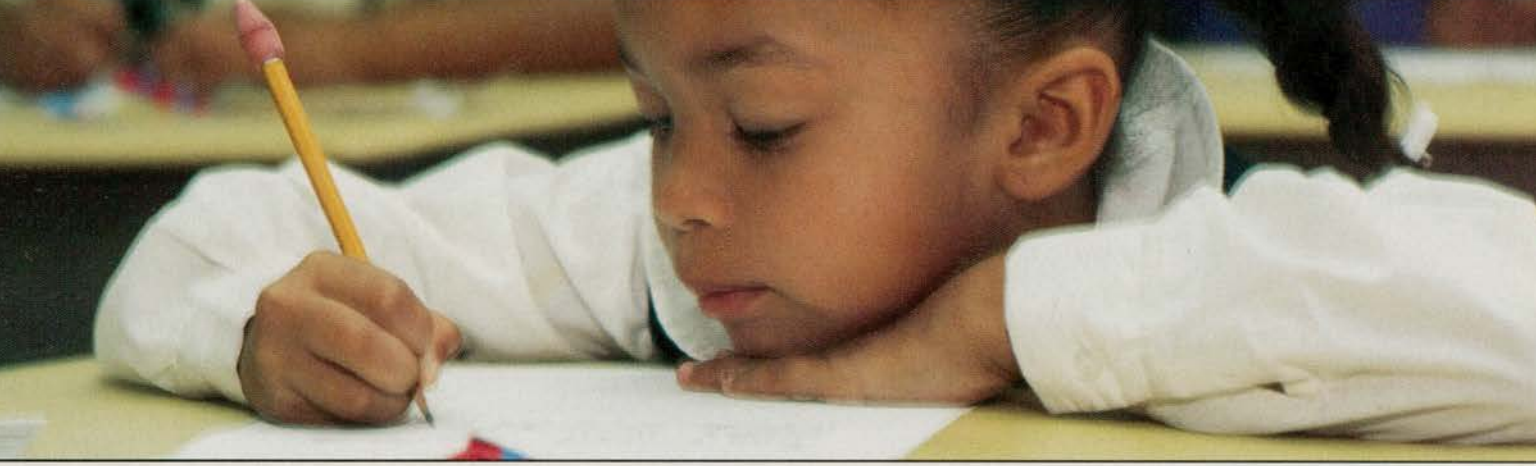
Standards

■ States' commitment to standards-based reform remains strong. Every state and the District of Columbia have set or are setting common academic standards for students. With the exception of Rhode Island, which is not setting standards for social studies, all states have or are developing standards in each of the four core subjects: English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

■ The overall quality of the state standards continues to improve. Thirty states—up from 22 in 1999—have standards that meet AFT's common core criterion—that is, they are detailed, explicit, and firmly rooted in the content of the subject area. Many states with generally strong standards can still benefit from some fine-tuning, and it is encouraging to note that in the past two years, 44 states have developed new or revised standards, or additional documents that clarify their standards.

■ However, most states have more difficulty setting clear and specific standards in English and social studies than in math and science:

1. Twenty-five states, up four from 1999, have English standards that meet the AFT criteria at all three levels—elementary, middle, and high school.
2. Math standards in 44 states, up three from 1999, are generally clear, specific, and grounded in content across all three levels. In fact, 47 states meet our criteria at the elementary level, 46 states meet them at the middle level,



and 44 states meet them at the high school level.

3. In science, 39 states—a nine-state jump since 1999—meet the AFT criteria at all three levels. Forty-three states do so at the elementary level, 46 at the middle level, and 42 at the high school level.
4. Although there has been considerable improvement since 1999, social studies standards remain weak, and tend to lack specific references to United States and/or world history. Only seven states have social studies standards that are clear, specific, and grounded in content across all three levels of schooling. Twenty-seven states meet these criteria at the high school level, 28 at the middle level, and just 13 at the elementary level.

Curriculum

■ State efforts to develop curriculum have just begun. We believe that a fully developed curriculum must contain the following components: a learning continuum, instructional resources and strategies, performance indicators, and lesson plans. No state has in place a curriculum that meets standards, and 41 states and the District of Columbia have developed less than 50 percent of the curriculum components.

■ It is not surprising to discover that English, with an emphasis on the foundational skills of reading and writing, would receive the most attention in early efforts by states to create curriculum. Fifteen states have at least three of the curriculum components in English at all three levels of schooling, 11 states have at least three of the curriculum components in math at all three levels, and nine states have at least three in science and social studies at all three levels.

Assessments

■ States are doing a lot of testing:

1. Every state but one tests students at all three levels in English and mathematics. Twenty-eight states test students in English, mathematics, science, and social studies at least once at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
2. Thirty-two states assess science at the elementary level, 35 at the middle level, and 40 at the high school level; comparable figures for social studies are 28, 31, and 35 respectively.
3. Sixteen states annually test reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8.

■ Every state is committed to aligning tests with the standards, an important step in systemic reform. However, only nine states have aligned tests in the four core subject areas at all three education levels. States use a mixture of commercially developed, off-the-shelf standardized tests, and their own “home-grown” assessments to measure and report on student achievement:

1. Thirty-one states are administering one or more tests that do not meet our criteria for alignment.
2. States are more likely to specify what standards will be assessed in English and math—28 do so in English and 26 in math—than in science and mathematics, where 12 and 11, respectively, do so.

Accountability

■ Only 25 states, a decrease of three states since 1999, re-

Is the System Coherent?

	Are existing tests aligned with standards?	If yes, are all of those tests based on strong standards?	Is there at least a basic curriculum in each of the aligned test areas?	If there are promotion/graduation policies, are they all based on aligned tests?	If there are promotion/graduation policies, do they all include intervention?
ALABAMA	No		Yes	No	Yes
ALASKA	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
ARIZONA	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
ARKANSAS	No		No	Yes	Yes
CALIFORNIA	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
COLORADO	Yes	Yes	No		
CONNECTICUT	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
DELAWARE	No		No	No	No
D.C.	No		No	No	No
FLORIDA	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
GEORGIA	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
HAWAII	No		No	No	No
IDAHO	No		Yes		
ILLINOIS	Yes	Yes	Yes		
INDIANA	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
IOWA	No		No		
KANSAS	No		No		
KENTUCKY	Yes	No	Yes		
LOUISIANA	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
MAINE	No		No		
MARYLAND	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
MASSACHUSETTS	No		Yes	Yes	No
MICHIGAN	No		No		
MINNESOTA	No		No	No	No
MISSISSIPPI	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
MISSOURI	Yes	No	No		
MONTANA	No		No		
NEBRASKA	No		No		
NEVADA	No		No	No	Yes
NEW HAMPSHIRE	No		No		
NEW JERSEY	No		Yes	No	No
NEW MEXICO	No		No	No	No
NEW YORK	No		Yes	No	Yes
NORTH CAROLINA	No		Yes	No	No
NORTH DAKOTA	No		No		
OHIO			SYSTEM UNDER DEVELOPMENT		
OKLAHOMA	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
OREGON	Yes	No	No		
PENNSYLVANIA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
RHODE ISLAND	No		No		
SOUTH CAROLINA	No		No	No	No
SOUTH DAKOTA	No		No		
TENNESSEE	No		No	No	No
TEXAS	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
UTAH	No		No	No	No
VERMONT	No		No		
VIRGINIA	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
WASHINGTON	No		No		
WEST VIRGINIA	No		No		
WISCONSIN	No		No	No	No
WYOMING	No		No		
TOTALS	19	7	10	16	11

If the relationship is aligned, there is a "Yes"; if the relationship is not aligned, there is a "No"; if the relationship doesn't exist, the space is empty.



quire *and* fund academic intervention programs in at least one subject at one level for students who are struggling to meet the standards. To help all students reach high standards, schools must identify those students who are having trouble and give them the extra help they need to succeed.

Early intervention can prevent problems from snowballing, and it represents a more promising option for addressing underachievement than either retention or social promotion, the practice of passing students from grade to grade regardless of whether they have mastered the standards. Programs can take a variety of forms—after-school tutoring, one-on-one tutoring, and Saturday school, to name a few—but whatever the form, intervention must reach struggling students early. Identifying and providing intervention to underachieving students is an expensive undertaking. States, at a minimum, should share that cost with districts:

1. Although 38 states require districts to provide intervention to students who are struggling, only 22 provide funding to districts earmarked specifically for intervention. Furthermore, intervention may not begin early enough. For example, Minnesota does not fund intervention before the eighth grade.
2. Twenty-eight states require and/or fund intervention in the four core subjects, and 23 of these states do so at all three educational levels.

■ Seventeen states have policies for ending social promotion. When we first began to monitor promotion policies in 1996, only three states based promotion in part on student achievement. Today, 17 states do.

■ Graduation exams are the most common way for states to hold students accountable for learning. This year, 27 states have committed to linking their high school diploma to achieving the standards in at least one subject area, and nine states measure student performance in all four core subjects. This development must be watched closely because there is some evidence to suggest that imposing high school exit exams drives up the dropout rate. States that have graduation policies should be vigilant to ensure that they are providing services to students to keep them in school.

■ Thirty states, up from 23 in 1999, have or are developing incentives like advanced diplomas or free college tuition to

motivate students to achieve a higher standard than that required of all students:

1. Twenty-four states have or will have advanced diplomas for students who reach more than the minimum required for graduation.
2. Fifteen states, up from just eight in 1999, offer college admissions, free tuition, and/or stipends to students who meet a higher standard on state assessments and/or who take advanced courses.

Do States Have Coherent Standards-Based Systems in Place?

The AFT has called on states to develop coherent, standards-based systems. Although there has been considerable progress in states' efforts to develop these systems since we first began monitoring the process in 1995, states still have a long way to go.

■ Almost a third of the tests are based on weak standards: 11 percent of the math testing, 12 percent of the science testing, 38 percent of the English testing, and 48 percent of the social studies testing.

■ Many state assessment programs use tests that are not aligned to their standards. To judge fairly and accurately how well students or schools are doing in meeting state standards, the tests must assess what students are supposed to learn:

1. Forty-three percent of the elementary tests, 46 percent of the middle school tests, and 44 percent of the high school tests are not aligned with the standards.

■ A number of states use results from nonaligned tests to hold back students or to deny them a diploma. If the state is going to impose sanctions for not meeting the standards based in part on test results, then it is essential that the tests measure what the standards call for. Thirty-three percent of tests used as part of a determination for promotion or high school graduation are not aligned to the standards.

■ Many states impose sanctions on students but fail to mandate interventions and to provide the resources to help them:

1. Fifty-four percent of the states that use tests as part of the

(Continued on page 47)

Something There Is That Doesn't Love a List

By Carol Jago

In his poem "Mending Wall," Robert Frost explores our love/hate relationship with walls. On the one hand, we believe that "good fences make good neighbors." At the same time, we worry about who is being walled in and walled out. Book lists inspire a similar ambivalence. No sooner is one constructed than forces on every side begin marshalling arguments either to augment or bring it down. Personally, I think book lists make good reading.

However authoritative a book list pretends to be, most are actually quite arbitrary. Lists include and exclude texts based upon criteria that are sometimes unclear even to the list makers. When the Modern Library released its selection of the hundred best novels written in English in the 20th century, the list was met with outrage. How could James Dickey's *Deliverance* be better than anything Joseph Conrad ever wrote? How is it possible that not a single book by Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer, Patrick White, Toni Morrison, or John Updike appears? Is *Ulysses* really the best novel written in the 20th century? So make your own list, said the publishers of the Modern Library, and then proceeded to provide a Web site where readers could create alternative lists. I like that response. Readers enjoy making lists of "best" books almost as much as they like poking holes in other people's lists. Besides, lists are fair game. The fact that they inspire challenges is part of their value. Criticizing someone else's list helps us refine our own criteria for what makes a book worthwhile.

California's Department of Education recently created a new book list, *Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (<http://goldmine.cde.ca.gov/ci/>

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literature). The list is descriptive rather than restrictive. It is designed to provide guidance for teachers, parents, and publishers about the kinds of books children should be reading. But no sooner was the site containing the new list up and running than criticism began pouring in. As one of the contributors responsible for creating the list, I feel compelled to defend our choices, but the teacher in me longs to scrawl across the top of the page in red ink, "Needs more work!" Though the list was intended to be a living document and a work in progress, without funding to support revision, it is likely to remain in its present state for some time to come. What is needed is a clear plan, with dollars attached, to provide for an annual review of the list, not only to delete out-of-print books and add new titles but also to take advantage of criticisms and suggestions about what should be on the list.

The California recommended reading list was designed to replace an outdated 1987 list. It was compiled, over the course of a year, by a group of approximately 25 teachers, librarians, and consultants from the Department of Education, who met every six to eight weeks in Sacramento. Members of the committee were nominated by professional organizations like the California Association of Teachers of English and the California Reading Association and were sorted into subcommittees by grade level: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Noticeably missing from our group were university literature professors. They should have been among us.

It does not impugn the expertise of the five people sitting around the table in my working group for grades 9-12 to say that we were bound to make mistakes. Most embarrassingly, authors like Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Fenimore Cooper, and Jonathan Swift are nowhere to be found. How can any list be considered authoritative without William Butler Yeats, Dante Alighieri, or Aristophanes? I don't remember ever making the decision not to include Eugene



O'Neill or Abraham Lincoln, yet they don't appear either. And how could we forget Nobel Prize winners Isaac Bashevis Singer, Saul Bellow, and Joseph Brodsky? While Asian-American titles are well represented, Asian writers are not. The trouble was, so much depended upon so few readers. Early in the process, I suggested that we include the whole of the Penguin paperback classics catalogue. However, we only felt able to include books that someone at the table had read, which eliminated many great books. Then, too, every title submitted needed to be annotated by someone from the committee. How could we find the time to fill in the unfortunate gaps in our reading of the classics *and* write 2,700 short plot summaries? The practical problems involved in compiling a list to be published by California's Department of Education and carry the authoritative title "Recommended Literature" were sometimes overwhelming.

Tough Choices

One of the greatest challenges the group faced was determining the criteria for choosing books. The mandate that the list should be a "collection of outstanding literature for children and adolescents and reflect the quality and the complexity of the types of material students should be reading both at school and outside of class" left a great deal of room for individual judgment. What makes a book "outstanding"? The committee very much wanted to include contemporary and multicultural titles, particularly those of literary worth and likely to become tomorrow's "classics." Some teachers wished to weight the list heavily in favor of the kinds of books that their students loved—science fiction, romance, young adult titles. Others were adamant that the list needed to include a broad selection of classic literature. There was widespread agreement about the need for books with multicultural themes. But when we talked about including picture books at every grade level, discussions sometimes became heated. So did discussions about books in languages other than English. We listened to one another. We compromised.

We knew that many teachers were unfamiliar with literary classics and hoped that the list would offer ideas for their own reading as well as for classroom instruction.

There was strong support for the inclusion of young adult titles, books with teenage protagonists facing teenage dilemmas. My position was that any list for young people should include two very different kinds of books, serving different purposes in a reading program. One kind acts as a mirror—it reflects students' own experiences with peers, parents, sex, drugs, and school. Young people need stories in which someone who looks and thinks as they do handles the problems they face, for better and for worse. Apart from a lively book talk to interest them in picking up the volume, teenagers shouldn't need a teacher's help with "mirror" books. In fact, our penchant for discussions about foreshadowing, symbolism, and themes tends to ruin such stories for kids.

Students also need books that act as windows. These stories offer readers access to other worlds, other times, other cultures. Few young people think they have much in common with Odysseus until an artful teacher helps them see

A list succeeds or fails not on the basis of a book that's on or is missing but because of the range it suggests.



how we are all on a journey toward self-discovery. Few relate to Pip until they walk for a while in Dickens' fictional world and begin to understand their own great expectations. It's not a matter of either/or. Students need both kinds of books. Of course, teenagers need help looking through the window of most classic texts. At first glance a classic seems opaque, full of incomprehensible references and unfamiliar language. It is the teacher's job to clear the windowpane so that students can peer through—helping them learn to unpack inverted sentences, approach unfamiliar vocabulary, and pronounce characters' names. Often students need background information about foreign customs and cultures.

Many well-intentioned teachers have abandoned the classics for what they think will be more user-friendly titles. This is a mistake. Just because students can't read a book on their own doesn't mean they can't and shouldn't read it with help. Instead of choosing more seemingly "relevant" stories, we should be showing all our students how classic heroes struggled with the very same monsters we face today.

A Window Worth Opening

If I were in charge of the world, I would mandate that every ninth-grader read Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. How better to help young people

consider the dark side that lurks within us all? The short novel is rich and layered, unfolding like a mystery story. Teachers shouldn't be put off by the fact that many students would find the text difficult. I have stopped telling students, as I hand out books, that they are going to love this text and instead tell them that what they are about to read may at first seem quite hard. I even warn them that, at first, they may hate it. I promise to help them through and also assure them that in my professional opinion, they will ultimately feel that the struggle was worthwhile. Stevenson's first sentence describes the story's narrator, the dour Mr. Utterson:

Mr. Utterson the lawyer was a man of rugged countenance, that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty, and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary, and yet somehow lovable.

I invite students to think about why it makes good sense that this tale of extraordinary horror should be told by such an utterly reliable narrator. I also help them negotiate Stevenson's complex sentences. We talk about his word choice and define unfamiliar vocabulary. Together we picture Victorian London in our minds' eyes. I call this teaching.

It seems wrong to me that schools should reserve the classics for honor students. Ignoring the elitism that such a curricular decision betrays, teachers defend a watered-down reading list for "regular" students by explaining to themselves and others that most teenagers simply can't understand the difficult vocabulary. Besides, they argue, today's kids won't read anything that is old. I worry that in our determination to provide students with literature they "relate to," we end up teaching works that students actually don't need much help with. And I worry that we do this at the expense of teaching classics that students most certainly do need assistance negotiating. This is not to suggest that we stop putting contemporary literature into students' hands, but only to urge that we teach in what Lev Vygotsky calls the "zone of proximal development." He wrote that, "The only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it." If students can read a book on their own, if it is a mirror book, it probably isn't the best choice for classroom study. Classroom texts should pose intellectual challenges to young readers. These texts should be books that will make students stronger readers, stronger people for having studied.

When an excerpt from Jack London's *White Fang* appeared on California's 2001 exit exam, many teachers argued that their urban students didn't have the background information to read the passage with comprehension. I would argue that few of us have been out in the Alaskan wild or had much experience with wolves. We acquired our "background knowledge" from books. If the only stories students are reading are ones set in their own time and their own milieu, how will they ever know the rest of the world? How will they know history? If we only hand students books containing words they already know, how will they learn new ones? Any recommended list of books worth its salt should include titles that challenge students and encourage teachers to help young people stretch.

Sins of Omission

It seems to me that a list succeeds or fails not on the basis of a book that's on or is missing but because of the range it suggests. Tim Rutten, the *Los Angeles Times* culture correspondent, is evenhanded with his praise and blame. He describes the California recommended literature list as

an imperfect but serious 2,700-book blueprint for "peace with honor" in the cultural conflict.... Earnest and obviously well-intentioned, the state's list is nonetheless diffident and so self-evidently tentative in insisting on where quality resides, that it is difficult to deduce the standards applied.

The committee paid careful attention to offering a balance of male and female authors, contemporary and classic texts, and to ensuring ethnic diversity. The list includes titles in five languages other than English: Spanish, Hmong, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Filipino. The selection committee's sins were of omission rather than commission.

In a provocative editorial for the *Sacramento Bee*, Peter Schrag decries the "omission of almost any of the great affirmative themes of American or Western history." Schrag points out the omission, other than books about the Japanese internment camps or the Holocaust, of stories about the main figures and events of World War II. He continues:

Look under independence, and there's a biography of Gandhi, but nothing about Thomas Jefferson; look under American Revolution or liberty and the only notable work is Esther Forbes' novel *Johnny Tremain*; *Magna Carta* and Churchill get you nothing.... The only view of Columbus is through the eyes of an Indian boy trying to warn his people about the white man.

I took Schrag's criticism to heart and came to a couple of tentative conclusions. The committee did not start out with any themes in mind. We thought in terms of books and genres—and this probably contributed to the limitation Schrag describes. Also, there was only one man on the selection committee, Armin Schultz, and his specialty was children's literature. Without stereotyping male and female readers unduly, it is my experience that women tend to read fiction more than nonfiction, and novelists tend to prefer social and psychological themes to the heroic themes Schrag may be thinking about. Once again, the committee members omitted books they had not read.

California's recommended literature list could be an awesome document. But to be so, it will need constant revision by teachers, scholars, librarians, parents, and students. Like the wall in Robert Frost's poem, a list needs constant attention. "The gaps I mean, / No one has seen them made or heard them made, / But at spring mending-time we find them there." A Web-based list should be easy to mend.

Good lists make good readers. □

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Cheating

Why Students Do It and How We Can Help Them Stop

By Donald McCabe

School cheating is not news. Parents and teachers have been worrying about it for generations. Unfortunately, there is evidence that cheating has increased in the last few decades, and the Internet is likely to intensify the problem. It's also unfortunate that the people who worry about cheating often contribute to it. Well-intentioned parents who want their children to be successful in school can place so much pressure on the kids that they resort to cheating. Students believe that many teachers who see cheating look the other way, sending the message that cheating is acceptable. To which a teacher might reply, with considerable justice, that school boards, superintendents, and principals often fail to back them up when they are faced with angry parents whose child has been accused of cheating. And almost daily, the media give big play to all kinds of cheating carried out by adults in positions of authority: politicians, lawyers, business people, clergy, and educators. As a high school junior recently observed: "Cheating is the American way. Businessmen do it, politicians do it. Why not students?" Indeed, the student who does not cheat now seems to be the exception in many schools.

This past year, I surveyed 2,294 high school juniors at 25 schools across the country—14 public schools and 11 private schools. The results were discouraging. Many students told me they know cheating is wrong, and they are not proud of their behavior. However, they feel they have to cheat to get the grades they need. On the other hand, student comments led me to believe that many students who are self-confessed cheaters would be willing partners in any reasonable strategy to deal with the most serious kinds of cheating.

The Prevalence of Cheating

Whatever we might want to believe, the evidence is unequivocal. The problem starts early and increases as students move through school. It has also increased sig-

nificantly at almost every level of our educational system in the last few decades. For example, 39 percent of the sixth-graders surveyed in a 1985 study conducted by the California State Department of Education admitted to one or more instances of copying from another student during a test, and 41 percent admitted to plagiarism. With high school students, the numbers jumped to 75 percent admitting to copying and 51 percent to plagiarism. A 1989 study sponsored by the Girl Scouts confirms these findings, as does an unpublished study of New Jersey middle school students and high school juniors done in 1998.¹

The increase in cheating over time is confirmed by studies conducted in 1969, 1979, and 1989 by Fred Schab at the University of Georgia. The number of students who admitted using a cheat sheet on a test doubled from 34 percent in 1969 to 68 percent in 1989. Students who admit-



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ted to letting others copy their work grew from 58 percent to 98 percent. The number of students who acknowledged they had copied material, word for word, out of a book grew more modestly, from 67 percent in 1969 to 76 percent in 1989.² My recent survey of 2,294 high school juniors confirms earlier findings and indicates that high levels of cheating are a nationwide phenomenon. Table 1 presents some of my basic findings.

In addition to confirming that most kinds of cheating are extremely common, I found that self-reported cheating among public school students is consistently higher than among private school students. This could be, at least in part, a function of school size. Public schools are generally larger than private schools, and this was true of schools in my study. The often-noted anonymity of big schools may make it easier for students to disguise cheating from fellow students and, more important, from teachers—e.g., a teacher grading a large number of essays would be less likely to detect similarities between two papers or a sudden and unexplained improvement in a student's writing, and a teacher in a large class would be less likely to observe a student cheating on a test. Common sense suggests that students who do not fear detection are more likely to cheat, and prior research confirms this.

It's also true, however, that the private schools in my survey seemed to be more concerned about academic honesty. For example, several either had or were discussing an honor code, which ensures greater visibility for the issue of academic honesty in a school community. While there is no guarantee that such attention reduces cheating in a high

school, honor codes at the college level seem to do exactly that.

Who Cheats and Why?

There are a number of possible explanations for the rise in cheating between elementary school and high school. Increasing pressure from parents as students prepare to apply to college is one; the increasing difficulty of the material being taught is another. I believe that the growing influence of peers—and declining influence of parents and teachers—is even more important. Unfortunately, it appears that many parents and teachers are doing little to combat this trend. Forty-seven percent of the respondents reported that teachers in their school sometimes ignore cheating. The most frequent explanation for such behavior, mentioned by 26 percent of students, was that teachers often don't want to accuse a student of cheating because of the bureaucratic procedures involved in pursuing such allegations. Other explanations offered by students include the belief that teachers don't care about cheating (11 percent); the student is an athlete or a student the teacher likes (8 percent); or the teacher feels sorry for the student and doesn't want to cause him or her additional trouble (6 percent). Parents may send a similar message, not only by putting too much pressure on their children, but also by failing to emphasize the importance of academic honesty. Some parents even look the other way when they think their child may have cheated, or they blindly defend their child if a teacher accuses the youngster of academic dishonesty. And of course the 20 percent of students who say they have turned in assignments on which

Table 1
Common Forms of Cheating Among High School Juniors

Behavior	% of students self-reporting one or more incidents of this behavior		
	Public Schools	Private Schools	All Schools
Copied from another on test/exam	66%	57%	63%
Used crib notes on test/exam	45%	28%	39%
Got questions/answers from someone who had taken test	75%	81%	77%
Helped someone cheat on test/exam	62%	55%	60%
Copied almost word for word from a source and submitted as own work	37%	29%	34%
Turned in work copied from another	75%	55%	68%
Turned in assignment done by parents	21%	17%	20%
Worked on an assignment with others when asked not to	77%	75%	76%
Copied a few sentences without citation	63%	56%	60%
Let another copy homework	90%	80%	86%
Turned in paper obtained in large part from a term-paper mill or Web site	18%	13%	16%
Copied a few sentences from a Web site without footnoting them	53%	51%	52%

their parents did most of the work are receiving a clear message that cheating is sometimes acceptable.

Boys are more likely to cheat: True or False? The California Department of Education's 1985 study found that high school boys used crib notes and copied from other students during a test at almost twice the rate of girls. And in the hypothetical cheating scenario used in the Girl Scouts research, almost twice the number of boys said they would try to copy answers, although almost equal numbers of boys and girls admitted they would probably "glance" at another student's paper "for ideas." Greater levels of cheating have generally been observed among male college students as well.³

However, this difference appears to be eroding, and some recent studies have reported similar rates of cheating for female and male students. Despite evidence that girls have a greater tendency to follow rules and fear of the consequences if they are caught, women may have a growing sense that they have to cheat to compete with the male students they see cheating in their classes. This tendency seems especially true at the college level in historically male-dominated majors such as business and engineering.

The effect of extracurricular activities. Many people believe that athletes are more likely to cheat than non-athletes, especially at the college level. However, recent studies have not found big differences between the two groups. For example, although a 1993 study conducted at nine large state universities found a significant statistical correlation between participation in athletics and reported cheating, the actual differences were small to modest.⁴ And among the high school students I surveyed, there were no significant differences. However, there was a perception among non-athletes—it was strong at some schools—that athletes receive preferential treatment, both from the faculty and administration. Unfortunately, it appears that non-athletes more than occasionally use such perceptions to justify their own cheating. As in college, these perceptions of favoritism seem to center most strongly on the boys' football and basketball teams.

It was encouraging to find, in my survey, that cheating was somewhat lower among students involved in other extracurricular activities. For example, 79 percent of students who participated in no extracurricular activities reported one or more instances of serious test cheating, in contrast to 68 percent of those who were involved in some activity. On the other hand, students holding jobs outside of school seemed more likely to resort to cheating than students who did not: 79 percent vs. 71 percent. While all of these levels of cheating are far too high, the differences do suggest that efforts to involve students in the life of their school could help reduce cheating.

Cheating among high achievers. Research has generally found that students with low grade-point averages cheat more frequently than "A" students. Since these students probably have a greater need to cheat and less interest in mastering the subject matter than high achievers, this would not be surprising. However, high-achieving students also do their share of cheating. Both the California Department of Education's study already cited and a survey done for Who's Who Among American High School Students suggest that top students may actually cheat more frequently than

others.⁵ Given the extreme level of competition among able high school students for admission to selective colleges and universities, frequently driven, as already noted, by parental pressures, this finding makes sense. As a student in a recent high school focus group noted, "I think people are going to cheat so it will help them to get to [an Ivy League school]."⁶ Another insight into cheating among the academically gifted comes from a member of an AP calculus class who participated in this focus group:

I'm in there with some of the smartest people in the school, number one and two in the class. They are, like, always ready to cheat. Let's do this, whatever.... [The teacher] leaves most of the teaching up to the students and he'll throw, like, a chapter out there, like a couple of chapters. You gotta learn this.... It just drives people to cheat.

Enter the Internet

The Internet has raised new and significant problems for both students and teachers. Younger students, for whom the Internet is such a common form of communication, seem to have difficulty understanding its proper use as an academic tool. And many high school students believe—or say they believe—that if information is on the Internet, it is public knowledge and does not need to be footnoted—even if it's quoted verbatim. Table 2 shows what my survey of high school juniors in public and private schools discovered about the impact of such thinking on students' attitudes and behavior. The table also presents data from a group of 2,200 college students on 21 different campuses who participated in a similar survey in the 1999–2000 academic year.⁷

Table 2

Plagiarism and the Internet

	Students reporting behavior		Students who think behavior is serious	
	H.S.	College	H.S.	College
Plagiarism from written sources				
Copied almost word for word from a source and submitted as own work	34%	16%	70%	70%
Copied a few sentences without citation	60%	40%	39%	35%
Internet plagiarism				
Turned in paper obtained in large part from a term-paper mill or Web site	16%	5%	74%	72%
Copied a few sentences from a Web site without footnoting them	52%	10%	46%	68%

The table shows that plagiarism is more common in high school than college, and this is not surprising: High school students are typically still learning about plagiarism and proper techniques for citation. However, plagiarism that uses the Internet is dramatically higher among the high school students. They find Internet plagiarism so easy and consider it so unlikely to be detected that it is almost too tempting to resist. Although the advent of services that check for Internet plagiarism may have altered the situation, high school students who participated in these focus groups said that teachers were not as Internet savvy as their students and were unlikely to detect Internet plagiarism. Students also felt that the quality of material available on the Net was usually more than adequate for their needs.

The college students who participated in the focus groups were far less tempted to plagiarize from the Internet, either because the material there was simply not of sufficient quality to get a good grade or, if it was, there was a good chance their instructor would be familiar with it. Of course, the picture may be different on campuses where coursework is not academically rigorous. Also, these focus groups took place more than three years ago—light years in Internet time.

A third point that emerges from my surveys is the similarity of opinion among high school and college students about the seriousness of most forms of plagiarism. In other words, student attitudes about plagiarism do not explain the differences in behavior we observe. However, the fact that high school students do not take very seriously what we might call Internet “cut and paste” plagiarism is a cause for concern. High school students may be under the impression that lifting information from the Internet, even verbatim, is good research practice rather than cheating. Are we raising a generation of students who view scholarship as “borrowing” thoughts from a variety of different sources and simply assembling them into a final product?

What Can We Do?

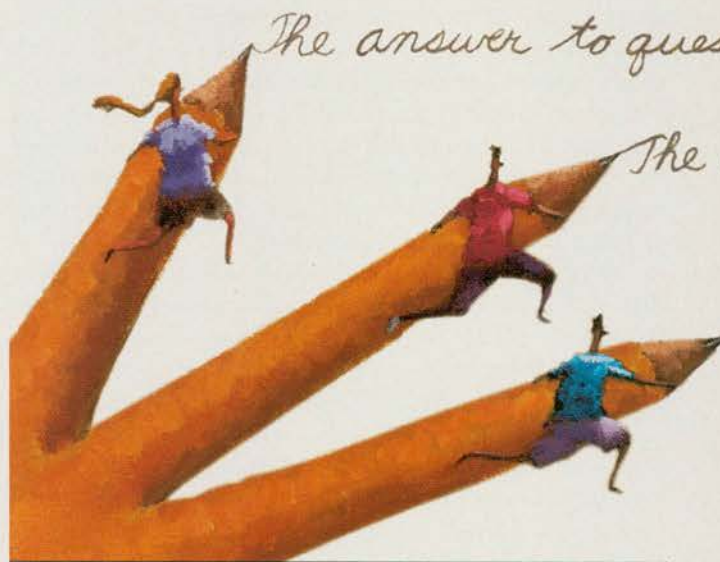
Some people believe that greater vigilance and more severe punishments are the solutions to student cheating. These tactics are likely to reduce cheating—and that is certainly a worthwhile goal—but they won't touch the attitudes that lead to cheating. To do that, schools need to change the culture that accepts cheating as a matter of course and replace it with one that places a higher value on academic honesty. The Center for Academic Honesty, a consortium of over 250 colleges based at Duke University, recommends several steps to help create this culture:

- develop standards that are communicated to all members of the school community (including parents)
- create a process for handling alleged violations
- get a commitment, especially from the school administration, to adhere to and enforce these standards.

But these steps will lead nowhere unless the school also sponsors programs that *promote* academic integrity—for instance, schoolwide discussions that grapple with questions about what encourages cheating and how to promote academic honesty.

Many teachers do not work in schools or school districts

Many students who cheat seem genuine in their distaste for what they are doing.



willing to devise such standards and programs or even to support teachers who discipline students for cheating. And if teachers don't realize the effect of a failure to react to incidents of cheating, they may be tempted to give the issue a pass. Unfortunately, as noted earlier, students often take this as a license to cheat. However, there are things teachers can do on their own to establish an atmosphere that supports academic honesty. At the very least, they need to lead frank and open discussions that deal with questions like why students cheat, how it harms them in the long run, academically and otherwise, and how it harms other students as well.

It is also important for teachers to clarify their expectations for students. For example, many teachers fail to explain what level of collaboration is permissible on assignments. When they don't, students must decide for themselves, and, more often than not, they conclude that whatever has not been specifically prohibited is acceptable. Any teacher who penalizes a student for collaboration when the teacher has not clarified his or her expectations is probably on very weak ground.

The most significant contextual factor in a student's decision to cheat or not to cheat is peer influence. Students look to other students to determine what is acceptable behavior, and acceptability depends to a large extent on the culture in their school. If the school has achieved some level of consensus that cheating is wrong—as can happen, for example, in schools that adopt honor codes—students may hesitate to cheat for fear that peers will disapprove or even report them

to the teacher. In the absence of such a culture, cheating can even create a feeling of solidarity. Students may come to view cheating from a “we” vs. “they” perspective. “We” students need to stick together to overcome the obstacles our teachers and/or the administration keep placing in our way. In this situation, rules on collaboration, plagiarism, and other forms of cheating are viewed as just another hassle by students, and bending the rules a little to overcome such obstacles is acceptable.

Students find teachers’ failings—real or supposed—useful in justifying cheating. The relevance and fairness of assessments are issues students often raise. The question here is not the difficulty of the tests or the course material. Everyone has heard students talk with pride about courses they have taken where, despite the difficulty of the course, they simply would not cheat. However, students speak angrily about teachers who give tests that cover material not discussed in class or highlighted in homework assignments, and they may find it relatively easy to justify cheating in such cases. Whatever the truth in individual student complaints, there is no question that cheating can be used to express disrespect for a teacher and defiance of the teacher’s authority.

Although promoting academic integrity is superior to policing students, teachers should do what they can to reduce the opportunities for classroom cheating. At the very least, this sends a message to students that academic honesty is considered important. Some useful techniques—none of them new and most, unfortunately, involving additional work for the teacher—include using multiple versions of a test, basing tests on essay questions rather than short-answer questions, giving different tests for different sections of the same course. Giving open-book exams, where possible, or allowing students to bring notes with them to the exam room also discourages cheating although such tests require a special kind of preparation if students are to do well on them. Barbara Gross Davis, at the University of California at Berkeley, offers an excellent compilation of classroom strategies to reduce cheating (<http://www.uga.berkeley.edu/sled/bgd/prevent.html>) and the Because We Care Education Society of Alberta, Canada, offers some very useful ideas for combating plagiarism (<http://www.2learn.ca/mapset/safetynet/plagiarism/plagiarismframes.html>).

Finally, as discussed at length earlier, the increasing use of the Internet by students is creating a serious problem. Students talk about the ease with which papers can be downloaded from the Internet and submitted with little fear of detection. Even if the Internet does not attract new cheaters, data from my high school study suggest it will lead to an increased incidence of cheating among existing cheaters because of its ease of use, convenience, and potential anonymity. Thus, teachers would be foolish if they did not develop assignments that are less vulnerable to cheating on the Internet—e.g., assigning papers that are as current and out-of-the-ordinary as possible and requiring students to interpret the information they gather. Appropriately, the Internet itself can provide much advice both in how to help students use the Internet and to detect material plagiarized from the Internet.⁸

Conclusion

It is far easier to document the prevalence of cheating than to give useful suggestions about how to reduce the incidence of cheating. In the long run, the key is to convince students that academic integrity is something to be valued. The first step is to talk with students about why academic integrity is a worthwhile goal. For example, teachers and parents should emphasize how little students learn when they cheat—how, in fact, cheating will only lead to serious problems later on when cheaters lack the foundation to succeed in advanced courses. Given the messages students get every day from their peers and the larger society, this discussion is unlikely to meet with immediate success. It will meet with even less success, however, if teachers are not prepared to address cheating that occurs in their classrooms and if parents do not support these teachers. Messages on the value of integrity carry little weight if a teacher looks the other way when cheating occurs or if parents don’t seem to consider it as important as good grades. Of course, taking a stronger anti-cheating stance will be difficult in schools or districts where the administration does not support teachers or where community pressures for student success are extreme.

The good news is that many students who cheat seem genuine in their distaste for what they are doing. As I discovered in carrying out my survey, many would be willing, and even prefer, to do their work honestly, but they are not willing to be placed at a disadvantage by their honesty. Students are looking to their teachers and schools to take the lead. Teachers and schools, in turn, must convince parents that teaching our future generation to be honest, to take pride in the work they do because it is their own, is at least as important as any academic skill youngsters learn—and certainly far more important than any grade they get. □

Endnotes

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- ⁸ For example, a recent search using www.google.com and the keywords “student plagiarism” + “Internet” yielded over 800 hits. The sites varied in their quality and usefulness, but many included helpful tips on avoiding and detecting Internet plagiarism.

Playing the Synonym Game

By Ken Bresler

We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

That was Sir Winston Churchill to the House of Commons on June 4, 1940. It's called his Speech on Dunkirk, and in it, Churchill said, "We shall fight" seven times.

Notice all the synonyms that he could have used, but didn't:

battle [as a verb]	take up arms
give battle	attack
do battle	assault
go to battle	assail
war [as a verb]	beset
war against	repel
go to war	repulse
wage war	resist
make war	withstand
take the field	stand ground

Only one word comes close to a synonym for "fight": "defend." Churchill wasn't scared of repetition, but many people are.

Gourd

The *Boston Globe* published an article Oct. 1, 2000, about a pumpkin-growing contest. The writer and editors should have faced facts: If you're going to write about a pumpkin-growing contest, you're going to use the word "pumpkin" a lot. "Pumpkin, pumpkin, pumpkin." Get used to it.

But no. The very first paragraph—before any reader could possibly be bored with the word "pumpkin"—refers to "the huge, orange produce item." Do you think that anyone goes home a few days before Hallowe'en and calls out,

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"Honey! Kids! Time to carve the orange produce item"?

A photograph accompanying the article pictured several pumpkins, and the caption referred to one of them as a "gourd." If you check the dictionary, the caption was technically correct: a pumpkin is a gourd. But who thinks of a pumpkin weighing 1,122 pounds (the one in the photo) as a gourd?

The process that leads to a pumpkin being called an "orange produce item" and a "gourd" has a few names. Theodore M. Bernstein, author of *The Careful Writer*, called it "synonymomania," and H.W. Fowler in his *Modern English Usage* called it "elegant variation."

Editors sometimes call it the "Slender Yellow Fruit Syndrome," wrote Patricia O'Connor in her book *Woe Is I*. "It is best explained by example: Freddie was offered an apple and a banana, and he chose the slender yellow fruit."

I call it "playing the synonym game."

A Rule of Thumb

Even the best writers and editors play the synonym game. In 1998, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission required mutual funds to write their prospectuses in plain English. To help implement the regulations, the SEC issued *A Plain English Handbook: How to Create Clear SEC Disclosure Documents*. I predict that the handbook will be a classic writing manual, yet its compilers—experienced and insight-



ILLUSTRATED BY BAR THORNEY

ful people—played the synonym game:

The word *principles* appears on pages 15, 16, and 67.

The word *guidelines* appears on pages 21, 32, 49, and 53.

The word *advice* appears on page 21.

The word *suggestions* appears on page 63 twice.

The phrase *a rule of thumb* appears on page 39.

The phrase *a general rule* appears on page 41.

The phrase *a safe rule* appears on page 47.

Does the word *principles* mean the same as the word *guidelines*? Is *advice* the same as *suggestions*? Are *suggestions* less important and authoritative than *guidelines*? Do *a rule of thumb*, *a general rule*, and *a safe rule* mean the same thing? A reader of the SEC's handbook is left wondering, "Is a synonym sometimes just a synonym?"

Reasons Not To Play

Playing the synonym game has at least six problems:

Call a spade a spade, not a "digging tool" or "an earth-moving implement."

It can be ridiculous, as in "slender yellow fruit."

It can be inexact. Mark Twain, the cogent commentator on language and so many other things, said that "when we have used a word a couple of times in a paragraph, we imagine we are growing tautological, and so we are weak enough to exchange it for some other word which only approximates exactness...."

It makes the writer do more work. Checking a thesaurus, even an electronic one, takes time. Devising synonyms without a thesaurus takes time.

One consulting firm wrote that it had "analyzed an S&L's operating strategy and determined the riskiness of the institution's loan and investment portfolios as part of an investigation of the causes of a large California savings and loan company's failure." In one sentence, "an S&L," "the institution," and "savings and loan company" all refer to the same thing. It took the writer some time and effort to think of those synonyms.

The writer could have written, "As part of an investigation into why a California savings and loan company failed, we analyzed its operating strategy and determined how risky its loan and investment portfolios were."

Synonyms make the readers do more work. But your job when you write is to do the readers' job for them. One consultant wrote, and I paraphrase, "We examined the market for a product. Our study identified competitors, evaluated the advantages of the product, and estimated demand. We also assessed the likelihood of new competitors entering the market."

"Examined," "identified," "evaluated," "estimated," and "assessed." Are these separate processes or the same? Some of them are probably separate; some of them are probably the same. But why did the reader have to stop and wonder?

It's unnecessary to use synonyms.

Being Pretentious vs. Being Boring

So why do people play the synonym game? People whom I teach and coach tell me, "That's how I learned to write in school" and "I don't want to be boring."

In *The Writing of Economics*, D. McCloskey wrote, "many of the rules we learned in Miss Jones's class in the eighth grade are wrong.... 'Never repeat the same word or phrase within three lines,' said Miss Jones, and because the rule fitted splendidly with our budding verbosity at age 13 we adopted it as the habit of a lifetime."

What's my response to "I don't want to be boring"? I have two responses:

If you have to choose between being pretentious, ridiculous, and inexact (by using synonyms), choose being boring.

Using the same word is not boring. Reread Churchill's Speech on Dunkirk. □

SCIENCE

(Continued from page 29)

mystery has been forever compromised need have no fears; in the end, there is always mystery. Those who suggest that it is blasphemous to probe God's intentions are themselves guilty of blasphemy. God is not a conjuror, whose tricks seem tawdry when exposed. The more you see, the more wondrous it all becomes.

In short, as Isaac Newton and most of his contemporaries saw (including Galileo, who was a good Catholic), it is remarkably simple to reconcile excellent science with religion. Much of the essence of religion is to experience first the awe and then the sense of reverence that should follow from it. Science inspires in just this way.

Why, then, does science allow itself to be seen as the natural enemy of religion, and thus antagonize so many people for no good reason at all? Yes, there are some serious conflicts. The clash between Darwin and Genesis, for example, lies not in the details of geology, for Genesis can be seen as a good first draft, made in the virtual absence of data (or any inkling of "testable hypothesis"). The clash is as the American philosopher Daniel Dennett describes it in his book *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*. Orthodox Christians of the 19th century argued, as philosopher John Locke had done in the 17th, that intelligent beings could not be made except by an even more intelligent Creator already in place; but natural selection shows how, in principle, life and then intelligence can emerge from simple beginnings, with no overseer at all. But religion as a whole does not rest on that one piece of theology; and in general, given that religion is innately untestable, it remains outside the purlieu of science. There can be spats, but there is no mortal conflict in which to engage.

Science can indeed be very hard—but for many different reasons, and it is important to distinguish them. It is hard because there is so much of it, and different bits depend on other bits, so it takes a long time to get into. But then, the same is true of any subject, from music to Spanish conversation. It is esoteric—meaning you have to know the background before you can come to grips with the matter in hand. Again, this is true of everything. Much of science, such as immunology, is complicated. But so is gardening—yet it is not innately difficult. Some science, such as quantum mechanics, is truly counter-intuitive. But scientists, too, have difficulty with this: As Niels Bohr said, if you think it is easy, you haven't understood the problem. Or as a professor of physics once told me when I asked him how he pictured a nine-dimensional universe: "You don't. You just do the mathematics." Mathematics is always a problem because the human brain is not geared to it. We are nature's word-smiths. But some spectacularly good scientists have also been spectacularly bad mathematicians. Darwin regretted his own innumeracy. Michael Faraday, a visionary physicist, pleaded forlornly for "plain words." There are very few Newtons around, able to invent a new form of mathematics (calculus, in his case) when the traditional kinds prove inadequate.

In short, scientists also have trouble with the problems in

science that are really hard. Most of them, like most of us, see only as far as the geniuses allow them to see. Indeed, take away the top 20 geniuses from the past 400 years and we would still be living in the 17th century, with the clever but stilted physics of Robert Boyle and John Ray's natural history. On the other hand, once the big ideas are explained, then some of them at least—including those of biology, which impact most directly on our lives—are actually rather easy. Natural selection can be explained in five minutes (although it has taken 140 years so far to work through the connotations); and Mendel's experiments with peas, the basis of all subsequent genetics, seem so simple that we may wonder what the fuss was about. In fact, Mendel's was the simplicity of genius. But we lesser mortals can wallow in his vision, just as we do in Mozart and Picasso. We don't have to belong to a special club to take part. Insisting on the difficulty looks very like an attempt to protect the high priesthood. But those who build walls invite graffiti.

Scientists must loosen up. It is false, for example, to suggest, as they sometimes have, that people who do not practice science have no right to comment at all and get it wrong when they do. The corollary, that scientists can be relied upon to get it right, is equally false. To be sure, there would be no science at all without scientists; but that does not mean that science belongs to them, any more than art belongs to artists, or politics to politicians. Science's greatest quality is that it does not rely upon authority, at least in principle. Its ideas are explicit, laid out for universal scrutiny. Only religion is arcane, and can make a virtue of this. To insist on the specialness of scientists, and to appeal to their authority, is to adopt the methods of religion at its most pristine, where all ideas must be filtered through the chosen few. If everyone comments on science, then many silly things will be said. But that is what it means for a subject truly to be part of culture.

When they are drawn into public debate, scientists, like all of us, should tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We have been treated again and again to the stock phrase: "There is no evidence that...." I have never heard anyone add: "But absence of evidence does not mean evidence of absence." Without that codicil, we do not have the whole truth.

Science needs a new image. Its Apollonic rationality is wonderful at its best, clear and pure. Beware, though, what has lately been called "the rationalistic fallacy." That it is rational does not make it right, or good, or necessarily better than some impassioned, if badly articulated, instinct. Besides, science has a romantic face, too. It is methodical, but it does not simply grind to its conclusions. Creativity matters at least as much as in the arts: huge leaps of imagination that come from nowhere.

All in all, we need much more than committees and professors for the public understanding of science, lectures to the unwashed masses. We need a different kind of science education. Science should not be taught simply as an apprenticeship—which, more often than not, remains the case—but as a significant slice of cultural history and a way of looking at the world. □



STANDARDS MATTER

(Continued from page 33)

decision to deny a diploma do not mandate and fund intervention for students who fail the tests.

2. Forty-two percent of the states that use test results for promotion decisions at the middle school level and 40 percent that use them at the elementary school level do not mandate and fund such programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the current context for the development and implementation of standards-based reforms, the AFT recommends the following:

■ In regard to **standards**, the states should,

1. Explain the standards they set and the performance levels they require for meeting them. Parents and teachers rightly ask, "Is the standard realistic?" States should compare their standards, assessments, and results with those of high-performing countries.
2. Make sure that social studies standards are specific about the United States and world history that students should learn at each of the three educational levels.
3. Provide examples of standards and of student work at various grades and performance levels so that teachers, students, parents, and the public all know what is expected.

■ In regard to **curricula**, states should,

1. Involve teachers in the development of grade-by-grade curricula aligned to the standards in the core subject.
2. Specify the learning continuum in the core subjects to show the progression and development of critical knowledge and skills from grade to grade.
3. Identify instructional resources—reading materials, textbooks, software, and so forth—that are aligned to the standards.
4. Provide information on instructional strategies or techniques to help teach the standards.
5. Provide performance indicators to clarify the quality of student work required for mastery of the content standards.

6. Develop lesson-plan data banks that include exemplary lessons and student work related to instruction in the standards.
7. Provide guidance and incentives to schools so that they attend to important areas of the curriculum that are not assessed—e.g., art, music, foreign languages.

■ In regard to **assessments and their use**, states should,

1. Phase in consequences related to tests to ensure that districts have adequate time to implement curricula, professional development, and intervention systems.
2. Work to improve test instruments to ensure that the results reflect students' skills and knowledge at the appropriate grade and performance level. Well-designed assessments should also provide schools and districts with useful and timely information about the strengths and weaknesses of their instructional program, enabling them to improve professional development programs and target interventions and other resources more effectively.
3. Give students multiple opportunities to pass high-stakes assessments, and develop an appeals process for high-stakes decisions.
4. Not put all the weight on a single test when making important decisions about students. Look for confirmatory evidence from other indicators of achievement including student work samples, performance assessments, other standardized tests, and the like.
5. Acknowledge and reward student achievement gains, not just absolute levels of academic achievement.
6. Report the progress of achievement in schools and districts by categories of student—e.g., grade level, racial and ethnic group, socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, special education.
7. Provide benchmarks for different levels of student performance on high-stakes assessments—thus creating the foundation for differentiated diplomas based on the results of high school exit exams. In this way, states could raise the bar for all students while providing an extra incentive for students who strive to excel beyond the standard.

■ In regard to **intervention**, states should,

1. Provide high-quality preschool programs for all students

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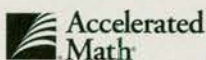
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and early intervention for students identified as at risk for not meeting the standards.

2. Provide adequate resources to ensure that students have access to any extra assistance they need to learn the material. This might require smaller classes, alternative settings for disruptive students, and extra time with a well-trained instructor, as well as access to any specialists and special services that are necessary.
3. Help to identify or develop the curricula, materials, and instructional approaches that can be used in effective intervention programs.
4. Provide the funds for continued implementation and monitoring of such programs.

In sum, if states are to achieve their goal of educating all students to a high standard, they must develop comprehensive and coherent standards-based systems. Attention must be given to the quality of the individual elements that make up the system—standards, curriculum, assessment, professional development for teachers, intervention for students. The standards must be strong because they are the bedrock of the system, and the assessments must be aligned to the standards and be credible in terms of the knowledge and skills students are expected to master. Further, states must bear in mind that in a standards-based system, the primary purpose of assessments is to ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed at the next level and to trigger assistance for those who would otherwise fall through the cracks. Therefore, the tests must identify students who need help and ensure that districts have the necessary resources they need to provide that help.

When essential elements of a standards-based system are missing or underdeveloped—as they are in many states where testing runs ahead of strong standards or where tests are not aligned to the standards—failure rates may be excessive and test scores inaccurate, and students and their parents may become frustrated and angry. If these problems persist, the promise of standards-based reform will remain unmet.

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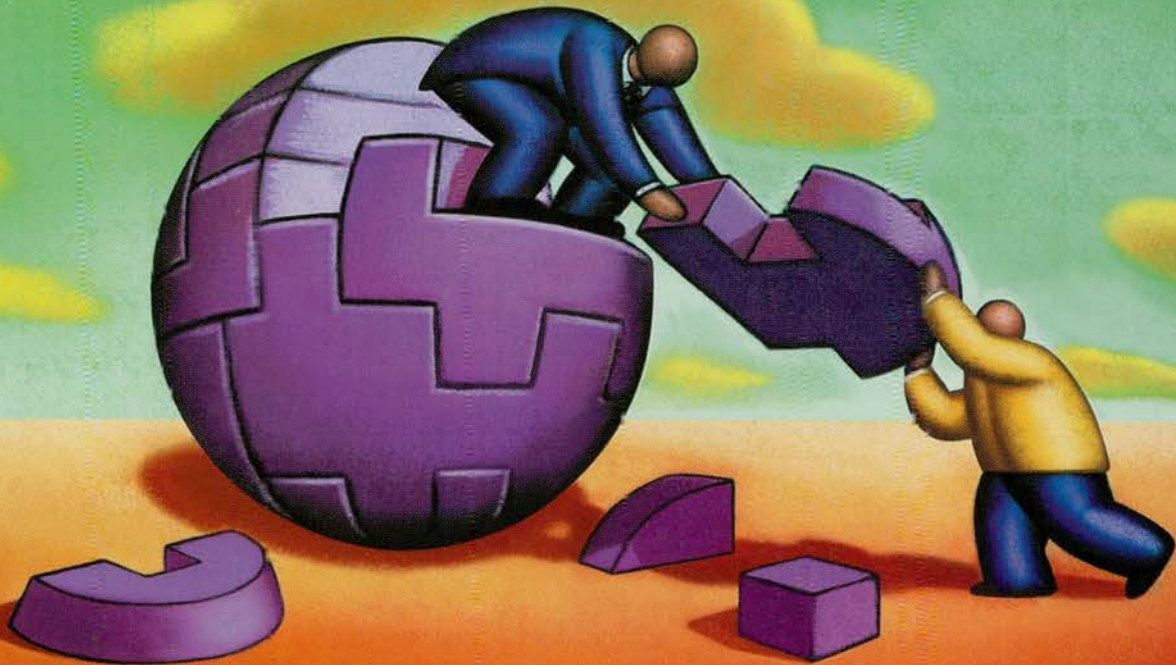
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