

AMERICAN **Educator**

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
SPRING 2000



'You Can Always
Look It Up'
...or Can You?

By E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

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SANDRA FELDMAN
President
American Federation of Teachers
Elizabeth McPike
editor
Marcia Reecer
deputy editor
Sandra Hendricks
production coordinator
Laura Baker
copy editor
Eugene Fischer
production support staff
Andrew Bornstein
design consultant

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LETTERS

TEACHING MATH

I wish to applaud you for three articles published in the Fall 1999 *American Educator*. The articles by Professors Askey, Wu, and Stahl provide points of view that make sense, that are rooted in research, and that run counter to those pervasive in most professional development workshops and conferences for teachers. Wu's article gives one of the best arguments I have seen for teaching the standard arithmetic algorithms; it also begins to describe a good way of teaching those algorithms. We teachers would do well to heed the advice of these thoughtful authors before hastily accepting new and untried theories and curricula.

—PAUL M. MUSIAL
*Instructor in Mathematics
Richard J. Daley College
Chicago, Illinois*

THE SAT

In the solution Clifford Adelman (Winter 1999-2000) proposes for what he perceives to be deficiencies in the College Board's Scholastic Assessment Test, he commits a very serious, common error in logic by attributing causation to what is merely correlation or association. Correlation in and of itself tells nothing about the existence or direction of causation, a philosophically and scientifically difficult concept. For example, does the test-anxious student score poorly on certain tests because he is anxious about taking tests, or is he anxious because he knows he scores poorly on tests, or is some third or fourth variable the "cause"? A coefficient of correlation between anxiety scores and test scores sheds no light on this, other than to suggest relevant manipulation of promising variables or holding them constant.

Similarly, the fact that students who choose to take difficult courses in high school tend to perform better in college than those who don't does not necessarily mean that students *forced* to take

such courses would also perform better. They might even become frustrated and achieve less well than if left to their own selection of courses. Almost surely, students who succeed in the tougher courses are better motivated, more diligent, and more effective learners than those who elect not to do so. These factors, rather than the courses themselves, may well be the "cause." Much careful research will be needed to find out whether requiring the more difficult courses helps more than it hurts.

—JULIAN C. STANLEY
*Professor Emeritus of Psychology
and Director of the Study of Mathematically
Precocious Youth
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland*

THE TRACKING DEBATE

James Rosenbaum's article about detracking high school social studies classes (Winter 1999-2000) exposed many pitfalls in even the most well-intentioned efforts. What surprised me was that these experienced people could not see that their attempt would fail from the start. With the damage now done, we should examine why it flopped.
(Continued on page 50)

Do You Teach

in a school that uses the Core Knowledge Curriculum?

If so, AFT wants to hear from you. AFT is

conducting an informal survey to provide better support to members who are working (or considering working) in Core Knowledge schools.

To participate in the survey, contact Jennifer Alexander with your name, mailing address, and school name at jalexand@aft.org or 202/393-6346.

Once registered, you will receive an e-mail survey form.



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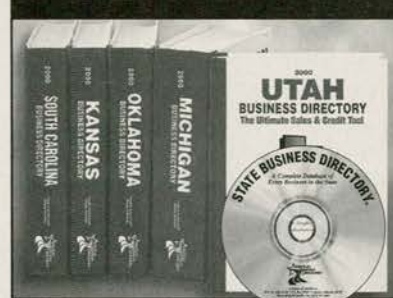
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'YOU CAN ALWAYS LOOK IT UP' ... OR CAN YOU?

BY E.D. HIRSCH, JR.

FIFTY-EIGHT YEARS ago when I was in ninth grade, I attended a progressive school in New Orleans called Metairie Park Country Day School. If you saw the movie *Auntie Mame* with its Park Avenue version of my progressive experience, you will know that progressive theories in the 1940s were mainly confined to private schools; they hadn't seeped very far into the public school domain. At Metairie Park, my entire ninth-grade curriculum consisted of two "integrated," "multidisciplinary" projects, as they would now be called. They were: participating in the school production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (I can still sing many of the solos and choruses by heart) and building a complicated scientific instrument called a "phonodyke." I was excused from ordinary classes. It was great fun. Fortunately for my education, I spent just one year at that school. My earlier years had been very fruitful ones spent in a regular public school in Memphis, Tennessee, the Lennox school, where we studied Shakespeare in fourth grade.

E.D. Hirsch, Jr. is the author of Cultural Literacy (1987) and The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them (1996). He is the founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation, which has provided inspiration and support to a growing network of Core Knowledge schools around the country, now estimated at approximately 800. The Core Knowledge Foundation is dedicated to the idea that knowledge is the great equalizer and that schools can best carry out their mission by providing all students with an explicit, sequential, rigorous, knowledge-based curriculum. This article was adapted from the closing address to the Ninth Annual Core Knowledge Conference in Anaheim, Calif., March 18, 2000. For more information about Core Knowledge, visit their Web site at www.coreknowledge.org.

The progressive theory that students should gain knowledge through a limited number of projects instead of by taking courses in separate subjects is based on the following reasoning. If you learn a bunch of facts in separate, academic courses you will passively acquire a lot of inert, fragmented knowledge. You will be the victim of something called "rote learning." But if you engage in integrated, hands-on projects you will achieve integrated, real-world knowledge. By this more natural approach, you will automatically absorb the relevant facts you need.

To pursue a few projects in depth is thought to have the further advantage of helping students gain appropriate skills of inquiry and discovery in the various subject matters. One will learn how to think scientifically, mathematically, historically, and so on. One will learn, it is claimed, all-purpose, transferable skills such as questioning, analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting, evaluating, analogizing, and, of course, problem solving—important skills indeed, and well-educated people possess them. But the consensus view in psychology is that these skills are gained mainly through broad knowledge of a domain. Intellectual skills tend to be domain-specific. The all-too-frequent antithesis between skills and knowledge is facile and deplorable.

In any case, with these abstract skills in hand, the theory goes, one is prepared for a lifetime of learning. Any specific facts that you didn't gain you can look up later in a reference book or, nowadays, on the Internet. Broad, factual knowledge, it is said, is mostly pointless because the facts will be "out of date" within five years. Last January, an education professor was quoted as saying that "detailed information need no longer be taught because it can easily be garnered from the computer and the Internet."¹ "You can always look it up" has always been a watchword of the progressive approach.



Certainly, preparation for a lifetime of learning is one of the most important purposes of schooling. In a changing world we cannot learn in school everything that we need to know in life. This has always been true and is undoubtedly even more true today. But the important question is: How do we best prepare our students for lifelong learning? Is the in-depth study of a few topics, practice with a variety of "thinking skills," and access to the Internet the best formula? Cognitive psychology suggests it is not.

There is a consensus in cognitive psychology that it takes knowledge to gain knowledge. Those who repudiate a fact-filled curriculum on the grounds that kids can always look things up miss the paradox that de-emphasizing factual knowledge actually disables children from looking things up effectively. To stress process at the expense of factual knowledge actually hinders children from learning to learn. Yes, the Internet has placed a wealth of information at our fingertips. But to be able to use that information—to absorb it, to add to our knowledge—we must already possess a storehouse of knowledge. That is the paradox disclosed by cognitive research.

Take for example some research conducted by Professor George A. Miller and his colleagues, who studied what happens when children actually do look things up. Miller is one of the great pathbreaking figures in cognitive psychology. In 1987, he and Patricia Gildea published a report on children's learning that included some experiments in their use of a dictionary to learn word meanings.²

The normal child's aversion to doing this, Miller found, was amply justified. In the time it took children to find the dictionary word and construe its meanings, they usually forgot the original problem context and never found their way back. They mainly experienced frustration. That difficulty was exacerbated by the inherent uncertainties and ambiguities of word definitions. As a consequence, children consistently produced sentences like:

"Mrs. Morrow stimulated the soup." (That is she stirred it up.)

"Our family erodes a lot." (That is they eat out.)

"Me and my parents correlate, because without them I wouldn't be here."

"I was meticulous about falling off the cliff."

"I relegated my pen pal's letter to her house."

Of course, Professor Miller is in favor of dictionaries and encyclopedias in appropriate contexts where they can be used effectively by children and adults. But those contexts turn out to be the somewhat rare occasions when nuances of meaning can be confidently understood. Reference works including the Internet are immensely valuable in those constrained circumstances. But Miller has shown very well why, outside those circumstances, adults use reference resources so infrequently. His observations are well supported by other areas of cognitive psychology.

For instance, there is a domain of cognitive science called "expert-novice studies." Two of its leading figures are Herbert A. Simon, the Nobel Prize winner, and Jill Larkin, who has co-authored articles on this

subject with Simon. Their studies provide an insight into the paradox that you can successfully look something up only if you already know quite a lot about the subject. In these studies, an expert is characteristically a specialist who knows a lot about a field—say a chess master or a physicist, whereas a novice knows very little. Because the expert already knows a great deal, you might suppose that she would learn very little when she looked something up. By contrast, you might think that the novice, who has so much to learn, ought to gain a still greater quantity of new information from consulting a dictionary or encyclopedia or the Internet. But, on the contrary, it's the expert who learns more that is new, and learns it much faster than the novice. It's extremely hard for a novice to learn very much in a reasonable time by looking things up.³

Simon and others point out that one reason the novice has this difficulty is that the human mind is able to assimilate only three or four new items before further elements evaporate from memory. The expert has already assimilated most of the elements being looked up, and therefore need pay attention only to one or two novel features that can easily be integrated into his prior knowledge. In a famous experiment by de Groot, a chess expert could learn a complex new chess position after just a few seconds exposure, whereas novices could remember very little. That was because the novices had to remember *all* the unfamiliar positions (which the human mind simply can't do) whereas the experts had to notice only a few salient departures from a wealth of positions they already knew.⁴

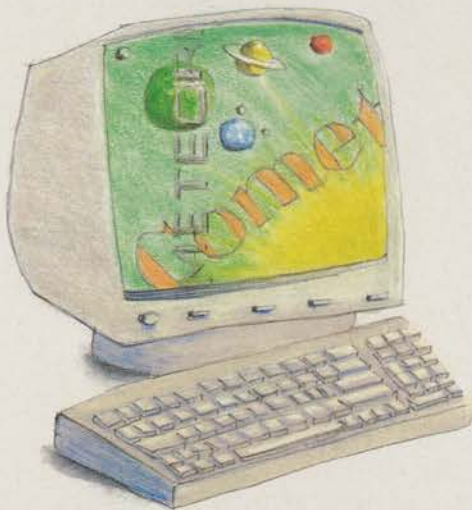
The analogy between the chess experiment and looking things up is quite apt. Imagine an expert and a novice looking up the entry "planets" on the Internet and finding the following:

planet—any of the non-luminous bodies that revolve around the sun. The term "planet" is sometimes used to include the asteroids, but excludes the other members of the solar system, comets, and meteoroids. By extension, any similar body discovered revolving around another star would be called a planet.

A well-informed person would learn a good deal from this entry, if, for example, he was uncertain about whether asteroids, comets, and meteoroids should be called planets. A novice, even one who "thinks scientifically," would learn less. Since he wouldn't know what planets are, he probably wouldn't know what asteroids, comets, and meteoroids are. Even the simple phrase "revolving around another star" would be mystifying, because he probably wouldn't know that the sun is a star. Equally puzzling would be the phrase "other members of the solar system," since the term "solar system" already requires knowing what a planet is. An imaginative novice would no doubt make some fortunate guesses after a rather long time. But, looking things up turns out to have an element of Catch 22; you already need to know something about the subject to look it up effectively.

THERE'S a third area of research that is relevant to looking things up, and it's especially interesting to those who are concerned with helping schools narrow the achievement gap between social classes and ethnic/racial groups. It is recent work on vocabulary. The

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biggest academic gap between groups in the early years—a gap that grows ever bigger—is the vocabulary gap. It's hard for a child or adult to look things up if vocabulary limitations keep them from making basic sense out of the words in a reference book or on the Internet.

Betty Hart and Todd Risley, in their important book *Meaningful Differences*, have shown that enormous vocabulary differences develop between children be-

fore they reach kindergarten. In the absence of compensatory schooling, this initial disadvantage will grow, because the low-vocabulary child will learn less than the high-vocabulary child when exposed to the same lessons.⁵

To reduce this difference requires better parenting, better preschooling, and more systematic teaching of school subjects in the early grades. Vocabulary is a reflection of knowledge. Only when children learn subjects in a cumulative way can they build their vocabularies rapidly, and remedy their deficiencies. Specialists in vocabulary estimate that in order to understand something that is read or heard or looked up, the percentage of already-known words necessary for comprehension is around 95 percent. That's a rough, if simplified, principle to keep in mind. To make it worthwhile to look something up, you already need to know 95 percent of the words.⁶

There are two other research programs that it is useful to know about when you hear slogans about looking things up. Thomas Landauer is a brilliant psychologist at the University of Colorado who, with his colleagues, has made a lot of progress in devising a workable computer model of how children's minds manage to learn the meanings of as many words as they do. Many aspects of the model reflect what we know children in fact do, and it is the only successful model of the astonishing rate at which children learn the meanings of words.

Landauer's work is complicated and highly mathematical, but its essence is this: We learn and refine word meanings that we have experienced in the past even when we are not experiencing those words in the present. The mind unconsciously assigns a word that it encounters to a domain of related words, and on each occurrence of the word, the mind not only refines the meaning of the word being encountered but also the meanings of other, previously experienced words that belong near its domain.⁷

The mind is constantly modulating and readjusting all of these neighboring words, even when we're not paying attention to the process. That's the key insight about the rapid rate at which we learn words over time. Although the average rate is amazing, the process is gradual and cumulative as we experience thousands of words a day. The words that I am paying attention to refine and calibrate the meanings of previously experienced words that I'm *not* attending to.

This means that dismissive talk about "mere facts" is hugely oversimplified. Facts, like words, are rarely inert or isolated. A child's (or adult's) mind is in a constant flurry of subterranean integration and hypothesis-making. And a person's success rate in making sense of words and facts increases with a person's knowledge.

This fascinating work of Landauer's brings into relief a critical characteristic of human learning—its gradual and cumulative nature. We extend and refine our knowledge and our vocabulary slowly over time—but only to the extent that we have the opportunity to do so. We cannot extend our knowledge if we are not being exposed to new knowledge. Most of the unusual words that educated people know are words that are

rarely heard in ordinary conversation. They are picked up in reading. We should encourage children to read in a wide diversity of topics in order to build up their treasury of knowledge and words. We should take great care in the books we make available, assign, and recommend. The ongoing, cumulative process of building knowledge and vocabulary cannot be replaced by brief incursions into the dictionary or the Internet.

An advantaged 17-year-old high school graduate usually knows about 80,000 words. That means, from age one, 80,000 words have been learned in 5,840 days, which averages out to about 13 new words a day. Of course that's the average rate for an advantaged child after 16 years, not the actual rate at which new word-meanings are acquired at the end of each day. The child as listener, reader, and speaker is experiencing thousands of words every day, and is gradually enlarging and mapping a huge continent of word/meaning associations.⁸

To the extent that other forms of learning follow this same slow pattern of accretion, these results argue in favor of a broad curriculum in the early grades, and one that would also, of course, encourage children to probe deeply into subjects that interest them. A broad curriculum builds vocabulary. The critical academic difference between advantaged and disadvantaged children is a difference in vocabulary size. Imparting broad knowledge to all children, starting in preschool, is the best way to enable all children to acquire a broad vocabulary, and, more generally, achieve equality of educational opportunity.

This evidence for a broad-gauged curriculum in the earliest grades is strengthened by the finding that students cannot learn or probe deeply into material that is largely new to them. Studies show that the most effective learning environment is one that guides a student through manageable, incremental advances in knowledge. Other studies show that the most effective learning materials are those that offer the student a relatively small proportion of new content.⁹

THE PROGRESSIVE idea of pursuing a few projects in depth is not an implausible theory. The breadth-versus-depth problem in education is perennial and real. So is the problem of the integration of knowledge. Any teacher of science who fails to offer concrete experiences that manifest the feel and heft of things is missing a big opportunity for helping students gain conceptual insight. Any teacher of early math who doesn't challenge students with real-world problems that require a translation back and forth between the physical world and the abstract relations of math is leaving out an essential element of good math teaching.

But teachers prove every day that lively teaching techniques that motivate students and enhance their active participation in learning are entirely consistent with imparting broad knowledge effectively to young children. The best teaching methods do not have to be coupled with an anti-fact or anti-academic mentality. Lively teaching is quite consistent with making sure that a broad yet selective array of topics is taught and learned in each subject, so that students will not be ignorant at graduation of key topics like photosynthesis.

We must start early,
in preschool, to build
the fund of knowledge
that provides the only real
chance for bridging the
'digital divide' at its more
profound level.



Unfortunately, this moderate position on combining lively teaching techniques with broad knowledge is considered a cop-out by progressivists who caricature the teaching of facts as "rote learning," and "inert" knowledge.

Teachers at Core Knowledge schools, where there is an emphasis on broad factual knowledge, as well as on lively teaching, have uniformly observed that their students haven't become rote-learning robots after all. On the contrary, factual knowledge has made them more engaged and curious than they were before. On museum visits, teachers notice the difference between kids who formerly ran around randomly pushing buttons, and saying "gross" when they saw invertebrates, and children who become deeply absorbed in the mu-

seum experience because they have learned what vertebrates and invertebrates are.

Breadth, as it turns out, is not the enemy of depth. According to independent evaluations of Core Knowledge schools conducted by Johns Hopkins University researchers, Core Knowledge students use the library and look things up more than control students, because they have gained selectively broad knowledge in history, and science, and literature. Knowing about the Nile River makes the Core Knowledge students want to learn more about the Nile, and their breadth of knowledge enables them successfully to look things up. Because they already know something about the Nile and Egypt, they are able to contextualize what they find out when they do look it up.

This brings me to the last example of research on looking things up. One of the most important principles of psychology is that knowledge builds on knowledge. The more you know, the more readily you can learn something new, because you have a lot more analogies and points of contact for connecting the new knowledge with what you already know.

Another way of stating this is simply to say that the more you know, the smarter you are. Our students become more intelligent when they know more. So does everybody. Researchers have been telling us this fact about human intelligence for many years. Intelligence increases with knowledge. General knowledge is the best single tool in a person's intellectual armory. It's often asserted that a student's home environment and socioeconomic status are the dominant factors in determining school achievement. But it turns out that an even more important factor is a student's breadth of general knowledge. The correlation between academic achievement and socioeconomic status (.42) is only about half the correlation between academic achievement and general knowledge (.81). "Mere facts" indeed! General knowledge proves to be more important for learning than parents, peers, and neighborhood combined (though of course those factors influence one's breadth of knowledge).¹⁰

So I'll close with a little anecdote. A few days ago, a student asked me to fill out a recommendation form for admission to my university's school of education, where disparagement of "mere facts" may still be heard. Nonetheless, the very first item on the admissions form asked for an estimate of the candidate's breadth of knowledge. This is standard practice on admission forms, because studies have shown that general knowledge is the single most reliable index to a person's ability to perform a variety of tasks. I wouldn't have noticed this glaring inconsistency if I hadn't been writing this piece, and clearly the contradiction hasn't struck anyone in the education school.

To avoid contradiction, our schools of education will need to change their anti-fact slogans or they will need to change their admission forms. It's clear from the consensus of scientific opinion that it's the anti-fact slogans that ought to be changed.

In sum, anti-fact slogans and the polar oppositions between breadth and depth are misleading. Readiness to learn means already knowing a lot of what you are trying to learn. Learning to learn is not an abstract skill. It entails already having the preparatory knowl-

edge that enables further learning to occur. Possession of this enabling knowledge is the most reliably accurate meaning that can be attached to the term "learning to learn."

Hence the current discussion of the "digital divide"—the inequalities in access to computer technology—does not go deep enough. To give all children a chance to take advantage of the new technology means not only seeing to it that they have access to the technology but also ensuring that they possess the knowledge necessary for them to make effective use of it. Our responsibility as educators is to define the knowledge our students need and—through a lively variety of pedagogical techniques—to help them master it. If we don't, the Internet will only exacerbate the "Matthew effect." Those who know a lot will be able to learn a lot more. Those who know little will add little, and will face instead a frustrating confusion of information that they will be unable to sort, evaluate, or absorb. We must not let that happen. We must start early, in preschool, to build the fund of knowledge that provides the only real chance for bridging the digital divide at its more profound level.

If we teachers convey general knowledge to our students in a coherent and effective way, and encourage them to read widely, we will give them the tools they need for lifelong learning. We will truly enable them to look things up. □

I am grateful to Professors Thomas Landauer, George A. Miller, and Herbert A. Simon for their comments on the text. Any errors that remain are entirely my own.

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WHAT WE MEAN BY THE WEST

BY WILLIAM H. MCNEILL

THE SUBJECT today is the meaning of "the West" in the sense of Western civilization. The first and most obvious point to make is that the meaning of the West is a function of who is using the word. Those who feel themselves to be part of the West—who think of the West as "we"—will surely have flattering things to say about their civilization. Those who think of the West as the "other" are likely to define it in less flattering terms. The basic meaning of the word is "where the sun sets"—one of the cardinal directions. Chinese geomancers drafted elaborate and codified rules about what that direction meant as opposed to the East, North, or South. But we in the West have nothing so precise as the Chinese: To us the West connotes all sorts of characteristics desired by some, eschewed by others.

In the United States, for instance, the West conjures up the Wild West of our historic frontier, a place of freedom, open spaces, new starts, and a certain manliness. But it was also a place where danger, loneliness (largely due to the paucity of women), and lawlessness often prevailed. At the same time, Americans have habitually embraced a contradictory meaning of the West. For inasmuch as all North America was the West vis-à-vis the Old World that colonists and later immi-

grants had left behind, the West was considered a "more perfect" place conducive, not to danger and lawlessness, but to liberty, equality, and prosperity. Americans were "new men under new skies," as Frederick Jackson Turner proclaimed.

And yet, at the same time, Americans undeniably brought much of the Old World with them to the New. Hence, whatever qualities were to be found in both worlds tended to unite them and bespeak a broader notion of the West. At first, it encompassed the Atlantic littoral of Europe (the British Isles, Scandinavia, the Low Countries, France, and Iberia) plus America. In time, it came to encompass Australia, New Zealand, and all other European overseas settlements. The West, therefore, could be imagined as a civilization independent of locale. Finally, one hears today of a West that includes not only nations populated by European stock, but also non-Western nations that have assimilated Western institutions, techniques, and to some extent values: Japan, for instance.

What the West means in a given context, therefore, depends entirely upon who is invoking the term and for what purpose. But it is fair to say that virtually all definitions of Western civilization drew a line somewhere across Europe placing Germany (at times), Poland and Eastern Europe (at times), and Russia and the Balkans (at all times) beyond the pale of Western civilization. A Briton might joke that "the Wogs begin at Calais," a Frenchman dub the Rhine the frontier of civilization, a German insist that "at the Ringstrasse the Balkans begin," and a Pole that Asia begins with the westernmost Orthodox church; but wherever drawn, that line is the most enduring political/cultural demarcation in the history of Europe.

Against seemingly impossible odds, the Greeks ultimately prevailed over the Persians in 480-479 B.C. The classical explanation offered by Herodotus was that free men fight better than the slaves of an absolute monarch.

Image at right is a detail from Crossing at Thermopylae: Massimo d'Azeglio (1823). Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Turin, Italy.

William H. McNeill taught history at the University of Chicago from 1947 to 1987. During that time he wrote a good many books, the most important of which were The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community (1963), Plagues and Peoples (1976), Pursuit of Power (1982) and, in retirement, Keeping Together in Time (1995). He is currently professor emeritus of history at the University of Chicago.

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The meanings we give to the West today, in the United States, are by and large translated from the usage of Western Europeans in the late 19th century: the era when the British and French colonial empires bestrode the world and Germany and Italy were, by comparison, marginalized. But the outskirts of this Anglo-French core—Germany to the east and America to the west—might demand to be recognized as part of the West at the same time as they rivaled Western Europe for power and influence. The story of Western civilization in the 20th century, in fact, might be organized around the theme of the alternative visions of Western civilization that Germany and the United States each pressed, by force, on the Euro-Atlantic core.

Perhaps the most profitable way to proceed, therefore, is to trace so far as possible where this Western European self-conception came from, how it was received in the United States around the turn of this century, and how it was subsequently embodied in our own high school and college curricula.

The Classical Cradle

The birth of a concept of a West as opposed to an East can be dated exactly to events that occurred on either side of the Aegean Sea in the years 480 and 479 B.C. That may seem exceedingly strange—to wit, that the West of Anglo-French imagination sprang from a Persian imperial invasion of Greece some 2,500 years ago—but it is nonetheless so. The army of the Persian Empire crossed the Hellespont to assault a ragged confederacy of some 20-odd city-states. The imperial side deployed perhaps 60,000 professional soldiers with an abundant supply train stretching 1,500 miles. The Hellenic side could field mere militia forces composed of citizen-soldiers. And yet, against all odds and apparent reason, the Empire lost and the militias won. That they did so posed a logical quandary even for the Greeks. But the classical answer offered by Herodotus was simply that free men fight better than “slaves.” This classical explanation of Greece’s deliverance was so powerful, persuasive, and it must be said, flattering to the Greeks that it echoed throughout the rest of Mediterranean antiquity. The only life worth living, it held, was that of a free citizen who might take part in the public deliberations that affected his fate up to and including the risk of death in battle in defense of freedom. So mighty was this ideal that it survived the conquest of the city-states themselves and entered into the public consciousness of their conquerors, Macedon first, and then Rome. And even though those empires liberated the Greeks themselves from their internecine warfare, the Greeks never ceased to mourn their lost freedom.

The republican spirit born of the love—and power—of liberty pervaded most of the classical texts that have come down to us: not only the histories of Herodotus, Tacitus, and Livy, but the oratory of Demosthenes, Cicero, and Cato, and the theater and poetry of Greece and Rome. The same spirit burst forth again in Renaissance Italy when city-states similar to those of the ancients reemerged, and in time it came to infuse the educational systems of all western Eu-

rope thanks to the Humanist revival of the classics. Indeed, that spirit could still be described in the early 20th century, playing on the minds and the feelings of Europe’s elites, calling them to honor its collectivized ideal of heroic virtue.

I say “collectivized” because the republican spirit always extolled, not personal heroism, but heroism and sacrifice in the service of polity and country. To live, and perhaps to die, for the *patria* was the only way to fulfill human destiny in its most complete sense. So it was that the French revolutionaries would consciously imitate the Roman Republic, 19th-century Germans consider their land the modern equivalent of ancient Greece, and the British Empire invoke the universality and virtues of ancient Rome.

But the phrase “so it was” is a loaded one. It may indeed appear natural that Renaissance Italy would notice its resemblance to Classical Greece, but trans-Alpine Europe was a region of dynastic territorial states, even national kingdoms, and thus hardly an analog to the original West of Athens, Sparta, and republican Rome. What is more, the Christian heritage, which was much stronger in northern Europe than in Italy (“the nearer the papacy, the farther from God,” quipped Machiavelli), was utterly at odds with the heroic republican ideal of antiquity. The Church taught obedience and humility as the paths to holiness and salvation, and a life and death given to God, not the state. How was it then, that republican *virtù* born at Thermopylae and reborn in Italy’s glorious *quattrocento*, in effect inspired the West as 19th-century English and French defined it?

The West of the Renaissance

To address that question, however inadequately in a short talk, we must stretch our minds back beyond even Athens and Sparta to the megalithic cultures of the second millennium B.C. Little is known about them and their mysterious monuments, but it is clear that they spread around the shores of Europe from the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic, carrying with them the message that when a human being died, the soul migrated west to the Isles of the Blessed, to follow the sun and, like the sun, to rise once again. This doctrine of immortality most likely originated in Egypt, but it took root among many peoples, the Celts especially.

In time, of course, an overlay of Christianity obscured the older megalithic cultures of Western Europe, but the dream of the West as a sort of heaven, the place one goes to escape the crowding, pain, and heartaches of mortal life in an imperfect East, lived on. To the peoples residing near the coast of Atlantic Europe, folk wisdom taught that the West is always a better place, a place whither one’s ancestors went, a place to be reborn.

To view the East as impure, even dark, could not have clashed more sharply with the early Christian aphorism *ex oriente lux*: enlightenment comes from the east, the land of the rising sun. And indeed the initial political cleavage between a self-conscious West and East dates from the division of the Roman Empire under Constantine, the first Christian emperor, in the

fourth century A.D., and the removal of the imperial capital from Rome to Constantinople (Byzantium). Within a century and a half the Western Roman Empire fell before the barbarians, but the Eastern Roman (or Byzantine) Empire survived for a thousand years as a center of power, wealth, and Classical culture.

The West, by comparison, was laggard, poor, and soon divided into semicivilized Germanic or Celtic kingdoms. Even after Charlemagne revived the Western empire in the late eighth century, Western Europeans remained threadbare country cousins to the magnificent, grandiose Byzantines. And yet, as is always the case when less "civilized" peoples encounter comparatively richer, mightier, and more highly skilled cultures, the West felt a deep ambivalence toward the East. Yes, those "Greeks"—as they referred to the Byzantines—may be grander than we in material terms, but they are also decadent, corrupt—and heretical. For whatever its other shortcomings, the Catholic West could boast of the papacy and the maintenance of true religion and virtue. The pope, as successor to Peter the Prince of the Apostles, was the guardian of correct Christian doctrine both in theory and, as ecumenical councils invariably recognized, in practice as well. The papacy, therefore, became the sole principle of unity and authority and the focus on consciousness and self-assertion in Catholic Europe, and the line that resulted from the peripatetic activity of missionaries from Rome on the one hand and Byzantium on the other came to divide Europe more deeply and lastingly than any geographical, ethnic, political, or economic one. The West meant Latin, Catholic Christendom, and a balance between church and state; the East meant Greek Orthodoxy and caesaropapism.

But however much the reach of papal authority defined the West, the very tension between spiritual and secular authority in a disunified West meant that the papacy had to cope with enemies within. The Holy Roman Empire, ruled by Charlemagne's heirs, embodied the imperial principle in the West; the autonomous city-states of Northern Italy (that grew rich, ironically, off the Crusades) embodied the republican principle, and both opposed papal pretensions to Western unity based on a hierarchical church and dogmatic faith. Their long-simmering rivalries boiled over in the Renaissance and split all northern Italy into the warring camps of the pro-papal Guelfs and pro-imperial Ghibellines, purporting to incarnate the civic humanism of the ancients.

What made the conflicts of Renaissance Italy of surpassing importance to Europe and the world was that the Italians of the 14th and 15th centuries were the cultural, intellectual, and, not least, economic leaders of all Europe and the Mediterranean (the Byzantine Empire having shrunk to a rump besieged by the Turks). The Italian project was nothing less than to organize the western promontory of the Eurasian landmass into a single, integrated market economy through commerce, specialized production, new credit mechanisms and new means of mobilizing capital such as the joint-stock company. The city-states themselves pioneered tax systems that allowed them to mobilize relatively enormous resources, floating public debt that al-

lowed them to amortize the cost of wars and public works over decades, and efficient new political/military administrations that magnified the power of civil government (in Florence and Venice at least; in Milan the military escaped civilian control).

This was the achievement—this congeries of skills enhancing power and wealth—that accounts for the otherwise anomalous fascination for things Italian that gripped trans-Alpine Europe from the 15th to 17th centuries. The kingdoms of Spain (and through Spain, the Low Countries), France, and England imported Italian methods and so developed such powerful central monarchies that the Italian city-states themselves were soon eclipsed. The French invasion of 1494 sounded the death knell for Italian independence, and yet the wars that followed only hastened the diffusion of Italian knowledge to the north and west of Europe, including the Classics, the ancient philosophies about how to lead a good life, the ideal of collective patriotic effort in war and in peace, a curiosity about (and glorification of) the natural world, and the pursuit of Humanist, not strictly Christian, virtue.

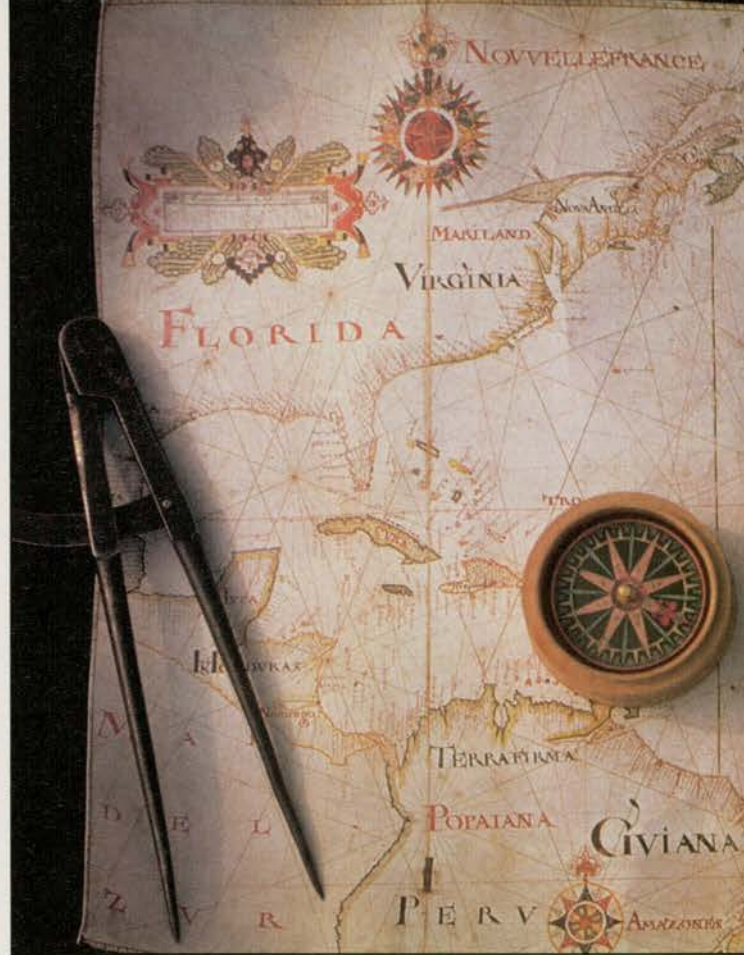
Not surprisingly, this spreading and eager embrace of what appeared to be secular values provoked a backlash among the pious. We call it the Reformation, and it occurred just where one would expect, in the region of Europe that had not absorbed nor benefited from the new Italian ways of life, but in fact felt exploited by them: Germany. Luther thus represented a reactionary movement, but even so, he and Calvin employed Humanist literary techniques in their effort to elevate the authority of Scripture. The imperatives of survival in the so-called Religious Wars that lasted more than 150 years then forced Protestant and Catholic states alike to learn and use the tools of power forged in the Renaissance. But the concepts of citizenship and republican virtue were the special province of Calvinists, first in Geneva, then in the Dutch Republic, and in Cromwellian England.

All the while, of course, the great Age of Exploration, the invention of printing, and all the discoveries of the Scientific Revolution gradually persuaded Western Europeans, for the first time in history, that they might actually know more than the ancients, and if so, know more than anyone in the world! To be sure, those annoying Ottoman Turks seemed to belie this new Western conceit. The largest and most enduring of the "gunpowder empires" of the Early Modern centuries, Ottoman Turkey swallowed almost all of Araby, Byzantium, and the Balkans, and cast its shadow over Central Europe. A religious interpretation of the Ottoman phenomenon might dismiss it, not as a sign of Western inferiority, but as God's scourge for the sins of the Christians. Certainly, neither the Turks nor the Europeans believed they had aught to learn from the other and an intense mutual *disregard* was their preferred posture. But whether one viewed the Turks as punitive agents of God or (like Voltaire) as an interesting, if frightening Asian apparition, no Westerner doubted that his civilization was freer, truer, and in the long run stronger than that of the East, notwithstanding the fact that Protestants and Catholics within the West fought for differing definitions of freedom, truth, and strength.

Birth of the Anglo-French West

Now, so far as the future United States is concerned, the intense (or intensifying) conflict between a definition of the West based on republican virtue and liberty, and a definition based on true doctrine as upheld by the papacy, threw up two major landmarks. They are utterly familiar to Anglo-American audiences, but still worth recalling. The first was the series of English Revolutions from 1640 to 1660 and 1688. In one sense these were as reactionary as Luther's revolt in that they rejected the efficient "modern" royal government crafted by the Tudors and Stuarts in the name of Parliament's medieval powers, not to mention sectarian strife. Yet in another sense—by one of those sleights of hand by which history is so often turned inside out—after 1688 the "reactionaries" in Parliament invented what amounted to an entirely new kind of sovereignty in what came to be known as Great Britain. It was government by consent of the taxpayers, representative government that asserted rights over the crown and thus preserved a private sphere for differences of religion and much besides, that made private property sacred and thus pulled the sting from the arbitrary tax collector, and that rested, though a monarchy still, on a vigorous dose of republican virtue and liberty. For the English system could not have functioned for a season without the recognition by the enfranchised possessing classes that they must pay, they must serve, as the legal forms of parliamentary consent prescribed. The Glorious Revolution proved to be a remarkably effective compromise that preserved a broad zone of personal freedoms and security against the power of the state, yet permitted the state to mobilize the nation for common action under parliamentary cabinet government.

So successful was Britain in its wars, mostly with France, after 1688, and so alluring was its economic expansion, that the British system became a model for many other European reformers. The English Revolution was a dramatic demonstration of how a movement that began by kicking against the pricks of modernity ended by inventing a sort of supermodernity that left all its foreign competitors gasping for breath. (The leaders of Japan's Meiji Restoration, who overthrew the shogunate in the name of seclusion only to launch a crash modernization campaign, provide a later example.) By the late 18th century, therefore, the French in particular recognized that the institutions established by the Bourbon kings were hopelessly superannuated, laying the groundwork for the second great landmark, the French Revolution. Many Enlightenment thinkers, such as Montesquieu, proposed that France reform its institutions along British lines, but others sought to get to the very roots of things, which is what being "radical" means. What the British called "the rights of Englishmen" the French radicals set out to improve upon by invoking "the rights of all mankind." Where British liberalism meant oligarchical rule by taxpayers, French radicalism would mean democratic rule by all male citizens, displaying (even imposing) the republican ideals of Athens and Rome: a worship of reason, virtue, liberty, equality, and fraternity. And where the British practiced a certain tolerance and reconciled their freedom



with an established Christian church, the French revolutionaries explicitly repudiated the Christian tradition and replaced it with a secular, civic cult.

The excesses and contradictions of the French Republic of Virtue need no elaboration. But it must not be forgotten that the methods of military and financial mobilization employed by the French Republic (and later by Napoleon) were so shockingly successful that Britain, Prussia, and the Austrian Empire had no choice but to copy French techniques or perish. In fact, the demonstration of what democratic government *à la française* could achieve in war was so compelling that even after Waterloo no part of the Western world could afford to neglect it. Taking the common people into active partnership with government and catering to social elites became, quite simply, an imperative of success and even survival in the competition among sovereign powers. Even tsarist Russia and Tokugawa Japan, after their respective humiliations at the hands of the Anglo-French in 1856 and by the Americans in 1854, were obliged to abolish legal inequality and embrace Western methods of national mobilization with all their implications for "citizenship." Indeed, we may say that the mobilization of the masses became the principal political agenda of the 19th and 20th centuries.

And that, of course, was the essence of the West—the Anglo-French West—that imposed itself on the rest of the world between 1750 and 1914, and loomed as a model when America's national career began. It was a model to be imitated, but it also struck Americans as a seat of the corruptions that they yearned to cast off as they crossed the Atlantic and breathed Western air.



The inventions and skills borrowed from China, including the compass, printing, gunpowder, and the notion of meritocracy, were key elements in the rise of the West.

The United States would be better, purer, freer, even though more ignorant, crude, and clumsy: the same ambivalence Medieval Europe felt toward Byzantium, that northwestern Europe felt toward Renaissance Italy, that Germany felt toward France.

But the United States caught up expeditiously. Favorable geopolitics permitted it to realize Manifest Destiny and build a continental state of enormous proportions by comparison to anything in Western Europe. It did not occur painlessly, as the Civil War graphically proved, but Americans caught up with the core European West by the late 19th century and developed that chip on the shoulder born of an inability to decide whether we ought to imitate or repudiate the Old World. The crisis point came with the First World War. Should the United States join the Anglo-French West in its fight against Eastern barbarians and so merge into the West once and for all, or stay out? Under Woodrow Wilson, Americans chose to engage: And at that moment what we think of as Western civilization, Western Civ, was born.

The West of American Schools

The courses and curricula in the history of Western Civ that became ubiquitous from about 1930 to 1960 were first crafted in response to U.S. belligerence in

1917. Initially, at least at Columbia University, Western Civ was designed to teach soldiers what it was they would be fighting for in Flanders Fields. Imitations proliferated, textbooks were written to accommodate them, and the texts bred a certain standardized interpretation, which in turn formed the intellectual bedrock for two generations of American college students and governing elites. The West as understood in the United States, therefore, was a product of what those students heard in the lecture hall, read in the texts, and expressed in their own words in the essays and examinations assigned in Western Civ courses.

Now, by the time I myself took such a class in the 1930s, Western Civ had evolved (at the University of Chicago and elsewhere) into a powerful and frankly missionary enterprise. The curriculum was based upon a systematic polarity between reason and faith—"St." Socrates versus St. Paul—and the notion that truth was an evolving, discovered thing rather than a fixed, dogmatic certainty laid down once for all in the Bible or church doctrine. The effect of this on young people was to give them a sense of emancipation from old religious identities, often ethnically transmitted, a sense of common citizenship and participation in a community of reason, a belief in careers open to talent, and a faith in a truth susceptible to enlargement and improvement generation after generation.

This was indeed a liberating message for many Americans in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s: It conveyed membership in the great cultivated, reasonable, sophisticated world of "us," the heirs of a Western tradition dating from Socrates and surviving all the tribulations of the Medieval and Early Modern eras. World War II and the cold war only intensified, even as they perhaps narrowed, the agenda of a unified West led by America fighting for freedom and reason and tolerance, and mobilizing itself through an appeal to republican virtue, against new Eastern tyrannies, be they German or Russian.

Yet, oddly, the 1960s were the very moment when college courses in Western Civ began to be abandoned. One reason for this was that young teachers of history, be they graduate teaching assistants or junior faculty, simply refused to become apprenticed by their elders to serve as "slave labor" in the sections of large Western Civ courses. Instead, they tended to stake out their little private kingdoms built around the subjects of their Ph.D. theses. It does not really matter what one studies, they insisted, for one piece of history is as good as another. What is more, the senior professors always teach courses around their projected next book, so why shouldn't I? After all, I must write books, too, in order to get promoted to tenure. So how dare you indenture me to somebody else's course whose naïve ideas I do not want to propagate anyway?

That attitude was, I believe, a highly destructive and narrowly careerist response to what were real deficiencies in the way Western Civ was taught at the time. But more recently, perhaps since the late 1970s, the debate has taken a different twist as more and more historians agree that the overspecialized "smorgasbord" curricula of the 1960s were disastrous, but disagree about the nature of the survey courses that

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MERITS AND PERILS OF TEACHING ABOUT OTHER CULTURES

BY WALTER A. McDougall

NOTHING IN my experience sums up the merits and perils of studying other cultures better than an appalling week I spent at Fort Sill in February 1969. Almost all of us recent graduates from artillery school had orders for Vietnam, and so we were subjected to a week of what the army called "In-Country Orientation." A model Vietnamese fortified hamlet had been constructed there on the Oklahoma plains, and our instructor, a butter-bar lieutenant no older than I, insisted that its defenses were impregnable, as if none of us had ever heard the frequent news reports of villages overrun. We were also told what to do in case of an ambush: which is not to get pinned down, but charge right into the enemy's guns. And we learned all about the poisonous serpents and insects we could expect to encounter. In sum, far from boosting our morale and making us gung-ho, the course left us feeling utterly terrified and unprepared. But worst of all was when they herded hundreds of us into an auditorium to hear a lecture on Vietnamese culture and society. The instructor was not a scholarly expert, or a native Vietnamese, or perhaps a Green Beret who knew Vietnamese and had lived with the people. Rather, the teacher was a grizzled drill sergeant who paraphrased a manual, stumbling over his words. "Awright, you

Walter A. McDougall, who won a Pulitzer Prize for The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age, is Alloy-Ansin Professor of International Relations and History at the University of Pennsylvania, co-director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute's (FPRI) History Academy, and the editor of Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs.

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mens, listen up! You will now git orientated into Vit-mese so-ciety. Da mostly thing y'all gots to know is dat Vit-nam is a Confusion society. Dat means that ever'body is in a kind of high-arky: like the chillun obey deir parents, and the womens obey deir mens, and ever'body obeys the guv-ment. It's sorta like da army chain o' command."

I must have stopped listening, because that is all I remember. But looking back, I can imagine that orientation as a metaphor of the whole U.S. enterprise in Southeast Asia. As our current fiasco in the Balkans demonstrates anew, Americans make a habit of declaring a war, sending over massive firepower, then expressing amazement when the locals do not bend at once to our will. Only then do we finally decide that it might be a good idea to learn something about the history and culture of the people we are trying to bludgeon, help, and change. Not that a common soldier needs an advanced degree in multicultural studies, but it would help if our policymakers took time to study the world over which they profess to exercise a benevolent hegemony.

The value of studying other cultures is not something we Americans, or Westerners in general, discovered only recently, as a consequence of having our consciousness raised by the multiculturalists. Medieval Christians were fascinated by their Muslim adversaries. The Age of Exploration inspired Europeans to collect information about the strange lands they discovered, think of themselves as one civilization among many, and ask what caused the differences, as well as similarities, among cultures. The Enlightenment systematized the study of non-Western peoples, giving birth eventually to world history (Voltaire), encyclopedias (Diderot), and comparative politics (Montesquieu). In the 19th century, archaeology, cultural anthropology, comparative religion, and a new burst of European imperialism enriched the study of other civilizations, however much solipsistic Westerners took for granted the superiority of their own ways and assumed that all other peoples must inevitably follow in their path. As



Walt Whitman wrote,

One thought ever at the fore
That in the Divine Ship, breasting time and space
All peoples of the globe together sail,
sail the same voyage
Are bound to the same destination.

Today's radical multiculturalists accordingly disparage what they call Europe's "Enlightenment Project" as a campaign to explore, subdue, and study the whole world for the purpose of controlling it, exploiting it, and ultimately making it an extension of Western civilization. That is highly tendentious, but does have a measure of truth. At Amherst College in 1964, all of us freshmen were obliged to take History 1, a course that developed themes in world history rather than Western Civ, and as such was very progressive. But the themes chosen were invariably Western themes projected onto the history of other civilizations. One early block of material dealt with the conquest of Mexico by Cortes. To be sure, we were taught about pre-Columbian cultures, but whereas I remember a good deal about the Spanish side of this culture clash, literally all I remember about the Aztec side was their belief that a hummingbird on the left was an omen of good luck—or was it bad luck? Anyway, "hummingbird-on-the-left" became a stock laugh line for Amherst students.

A later instruction block compared the Mexican, Chinese, and Young Turk revolutions of the early 20th century, a truly interesting exercise. But the theme uniting them was "paths to modernization," so it was not the essence of historic Mexican, Chinese, or Islamic culture that was at issue, but rather the struggles of those civilizations to come to grips with their backwardness and adopt Western ways. Indeed, I do not think I ever studied other cultures on their own terms—independent of Western intrusions—until my graduate years at Chicago, when I read the books of William H. McNeill, beginning with *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*. To be sure, Amherst and Chicago had many professors who specialized in other cultures and offered courses on them. But those of us in mainstream fields such as European and American history were not exposed to true multicultural education in the survey courses of high school and college.

McNeill was a tireless advocate for the study of world history and other cultures long before it became fashionable. But alas, no sooner did his campaign for world history, as opposed to Western Civ surveys, begin to gain ground than the whole movement was captured by the ideological multiculturalists, Afrocentrists, ethnic lobbies, and victim groups who substituted curricula that depicted Western Civ as a story of progress for curricula that damned Western Civ as a story of plunder, rapine, imperialism, exploitation, and slavery. In other words, the focus was *still* on the West, with other cultures appearing mostly as virginal victims.

Another expression of the multicultural trend is less subjective, but anodyne, and that is the "non-Western" requirement that so many college majors, including the International Relations program I direct, impose on their students. We feel we must make a bow to-

ward multiculturalism, so we just insist that students take one or two courses that are non-Western in focus. The implicit purpose would seem to be to sensitize students to other cultural traditions and alert them to the astonishing fact that there is a whole world out there beyond Great Neck, Long Island, and Newport Beach, California. (I recently asked an I.R. major if he had had any experience traveling abroad. He proudly said yes, he had been to Cancun.) But what good does one course on sub-Saharan Africa or Ming China really achieve? It is not enough to make one really conversant in African or Chinese history, religion, and society, and it certainly tells one nothing about the variety of human cultures. Ultimately, instead of acquiring new categories to use in thinking about human nature and history, the student merely receives a smattering of knowledge that is *bors de categorie*: outside Western norms, and therefore just strange. Rather, it is like the high school athletic program that—in between major sports—schedules two days of lacrosse and handball just to let students know that those games exist.

Should we teach our students about other cultures? Absolutely! But do we succeed? I think most of us do not. First, because few of us are qualified to teach about Islam, or India, or traditional China or Japan. We may do better than that drill sergeant, but do we risk just conveying new stereotypes to students, rather than getting beyond stereotypes? And how do we integrate non-Western material into existing courses? The recent debate over the National History Standards reveals the difficulty in doing this, even leaving aside all political controversy. The easiest way is to retain the old Western Civ chronology, but to insert flashback sections on other cultures at the moment Europeans first come into contact with them. Needless to say, that is still Eurocentric. Another way is to grant Western Civ merely an equal status, and to study each culture in turn: a month on China, a month on India, a month on Europe, and so forth. But that artificially disconnects civilizations from each other, ignoring perhaps the most powerful theme in McNeill's works, which is the cross-cultural borrowing, challenge, and response mechanism that is so often the engine of historical change.

What is more, the teacher who goes into some depth about other cultures on their own terms, clearly a good thing on the face of it, runs the risk of offending someone's self-esteem and landing in the principal's or dean's office on charges of insensitivity or even racism! But if we are going to teach about other cultures on their own terms, and not just as targets for Western imperialism, then we must stress the bad and ugly as well as the good: the oppression, slavery, and reciprocal racism and brutality among Asian and African peoples themselves. We must teach about the binding of girls' feet in China, the forced suicide of widows in India, the Islamic texts that place women somewhere above goats but below cattle, the genital mutilation of women in Africa. Now, we can try to deflect criticism by drumming into children's heads that they must not make value judgments, especially ones based, after all, on Western traditions: the Bible and the Enlightenment. But to try to be value-free about, for instance, Aztec human sacrifice, slavery in the Is-

Only multicultural history can teach students the ways all human beings are alike.

lamic world, or the barbaric tortures practiced by the Comanches and Apaches, is to do exactly what we all say must *not* be done with regard to the darker chapters of Western history. Thus, even as we try to explain to students why the Spanish Inquisition was set up, or how the Nazis could come to power in Germany, we quickly add that whereas we must try to understand the past on its own terms, to understand is not to forgive: *zu verstehen ist nicht zu vergeben*. So we cannot just give all other cultures a “pass” when it comes to their inhumane practices. But to condemn the “bad” in other cultures is by definition to impose a Western standard of good and bad.

Above all, to treat other cultures in isolation, to censor aspects of their history that might damage some student’s self-esteem, or to refrain from making any moral judgments at all, is to cheat students of the one thing they need to learn most, and which only multicultural history can teach them: And that is the many ways in which all human beings, all cultures and civilizations, are alike. For no real toleration among peoples can exist unless they are given a reason to imagine themselves and others as “we,” and not just as “we” and “they.” In what ways are all people alike? They are all *Homo sapiens*, they are all conceived and born the same way, and they all face the certainty of death. They all live on the same planet and need food and shelter. They all wonder about the meaning of life, love, tragedy, and what if anything happens after they die. They have different answers to the eternal questions, and they invent different political and social forms to order their brief and toilsome time on this earth. But at bottom they are all alike. Thus, Chinese are not angels, but neither are they aliens.

I have no solution to the curricular issues, except to insist that all high school students take at least three full years of history—one being world history. Alas, in many states the trend is to cut back, not expand, history requirements. But I did hit upon a technique this semester for handling the “self-esteem” issue, which seemed to work. (At least, I have not as yet been summoned to the office of the Penn ombudsperson.) In my last lecture in the modern history survey, I asked students to recall a question that I had posed in the first lecture: not why people and societies so often do bad things, but rather why on occasion they do good things, why on occasion people have taken risks and made sacrifices in order to improve the lot of others. Evil is banal and universal. What is shocking and in

need of explanation in history is the good.

Thus, I granted that European and American civilization has been imperialistic and exploitative. But so has every other civilization in history. What is unique about the West is that it invented *anti-imperialism*. I granted that the West practiced slavery. But so has every other civilization in history. What is unique about the West is that it gave rise to an *anti-slavery* movement. I granted that the West has waged war on a ferocious scale. But so has every other civilization at one time or another. What is unique about the West is that it tried over and over to devise international systems that might prevent war. I granted that women were in a subordinate status throughout Western history. But so were they in every other civilization. What is unique about the West is that it spawned a movement for female equality. And I granted that the West has known tyranny and indeed totalitarianism of the most brutal sort. But forms of tyranny and even genocide have appeared in all other civilizations. What is unique about the West is that it alone has declared certain human rights to be universal and tried to devise governments that expand, not crush, liberty.

What is needed to ensure that multicultural education can be a glue and not a solvent of American community is dedicated, knowledgeable, and above all honest teaching. All civilizations are worthy of celebration by dint of their being civilizations, that is, extraordinary examples of collective human invention. But all have also been horribly flawed by dint of their being human creations. If Western civilization appears to have done more nasty things in recent centuries, it is not because it is worse than others, but only because it has lately been the most powerful. What is more, the three ways in which people from all the world, while cherishing their diversity, can nevertheless identify themselves as part of a single human community are themselves gifts of Western civilization. Those unifying forces are science and technology, the Enlightenment doctrine of natural law and natural rights, and the astounding Judeo-Christian theology to the effect that all human beings are children of one and the same loving God.

Unfortunately, the radical multiculturalists denounce science and technology as an evil, masculine “discourse” that oppresses the weak, pollutes the environment, and privileges “linear thinking.” They attack the “Enlightenment Project” as an ideological cover for Western cultural imperialism. And they hate the Bible for promoting patriarchy and heterosexism. In so doing, they are attempting to destroy the very principles under which toleration of diverse cultures has in fact the best chance of flowering! In so doing, the multiculturalists help to perpetuate the tragedy that Alexander Solzhenitsyn called “A World Split Apart.” Asked to deliver the Harvard commencement address in 1978, Solzhenitsyn, a survivor of the Soviet gulag, shocked his audience by proclaiming that the line that divides the world does not run between communism and capitalism, or along the boundaries between nations, races, social classes, or genders. The line that splits the world apart runs straight through the middle of each human heart. □

THE TEENING OF CHILDHOOD

BY KAY S. HYMOWITZ

A KID'S GOTTA do what a kid's gotta do!" raps a cocksure tyke on a 1998 television ad for the cable children's network Nickelodeon. She is surrounded by a large group of hip-hop-dancing young children in baggy pants who appear to be between the ages of three and eight. In another 1998 ad, this one appearing in magazines for the Gap, a boy of about eight in a T-shirt and hooded sweatshirt, his meticulously disheveled hair falling into his eyes and spilling onto his shoulders, winks ostentatiously at us. Is he neglected (he certainly hasn't had a haircut recently) or is he just street-smart? His mannered wink assures us it's the latter. Like the kids in the Nickelodeon ad, he is hip, aware, and edgy, more the way we used to think of teenagers. Forget about what Freud called latency, a period of sexual quiescence and naïveté; forget about what every parent encounters on a daily basis—artlessness, shyness, giggling jokes, cluelessness. These media kids have it all figured out, and they know how to project the look that says they do.

The media's darling is a child who barely needs childhood. In the movies, in magazines, and most of all on television, children see image upon irresistible image of themselves as competent sophisticates wise to the ways of the world. And maybe that's a good thing too, since their parents and teachers appear as weaklings, narcissists, and dolts. That winking 8-year-old in the Gap ad tells the story of his generation. A gesture once reserved for adults to signal to gullible children that a joke was on its way now belongs to the child. This child gets it; it's the adults who don't.

There are plenty of signs that the media's deconstruction of childhood has been a rousing success. The enthusiastic celebration of hipness and attitude has helped to socialize a tough, "sophisticated" consumer child who can assert himself in opposition to the

tastes and conservatism of his parents. The market aimed at children has skyrocketed in recent years, and many new products, particularly those targeting the 8-to-12-year-olds whom marketers call tweens, appeal to their sense of teen fashion and image consciousness. Moreover, kids have gained influence at home. In part, this is undoubtedly because of demographic changes that have "liberated" children from parental supervision. But let's give the media their due. James McNeal, who has studied childhood consumerism for many decades, proclaims the United States a "filiarchy," a bountiful kingdom ruled by children.

Lacking a protected childhood, today's media children come immediately into the noisy presence of the media carnival barkers. Doubtless, they learn a lot from them, but their sophistication is misleading. It has no relation to a genuine worldliness, an understanding of human hypocrisy or life's illusions. It is built on an untimely ability to read the glossy surfaces of our material world, its symbols of hipness, its image-driven brands and production values. Deprived of the concealed space in which to nurture a full and independent individuality, the media child unthinkingly embraces the dominant cultural gestures of ironic detachment and emotional coolness. This is a new kind of sophistication, one that speaks of a child's diminished expectations and conformity rather than worldliness and self-knowledge.

Nowadays when people mourn the media's harmful impact on children, they often compare the current state of affairs to the Brigadoon of the 1950s. Even those who condemn the patriarchal complacency of shows like *Father Knows Best* or *Ozzie and Harriet* would probably concede that in the fifties parents did not have to fret over rock lyrics like *Come on bitch. . . lick up the dick* or T-shirts saying KILL YOUR PARENTS. These were the days when everyone, including those in the media, seemed to revere the protected and long-lived childhood that had been the middle-class ideal since the early 19th century.

But the reality of fifties media was actually more ambiguous than the conventional wisdom suggests. The fifties saw the rise of television, a medium that quickly opened advertisers' and manufacturers' eyes to the

Kay S. Hymowitz is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a contributing editor at City Journal, and an affiliate scholar at the Institute for American Values. This article is adapted from her recent book, Ready or Not. Copyright © 1999 by Kay S. Hymowitz. Reprinted by permission of The Free Press, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, Inc.



The images that appear on this page and the pages that follow capture the assault on traditional childhood spearheaded by the media and by commercial interests seeking new markets. The "teening" of those we used to call preadolescents—and whose childhoods we used to protect—shows up in almost everything kids are urged to wear and do. Many of the ads and logos reproduced on these pages come from a magazine that, according to its publisher, "is targeted to 9-to-12-year-old females," with demographics indicating that "8-year-olds are also buying it."



possibility of promoting in children fantasies of pleasure-filled freedom from parental control, which in turn fertilized the fields for liberationist ideas that came along in the next decade. American parents had long struggled to find a balance between their children's personal drives and self-expression and the demands of common life, but television had something else in mind. It was fifties television that launched the media's two-pronged attack on the pre-conditions of traditional childhood, one aimed directly at empowering children, the other aimed at undermining the parents who were trying to civilize them. By the end of the decade, the blueprint for today's media approach to children was in place.

The first prong of attack was directed specifically at parents—or, more precisely, at Dad. Despite the assertions of those who see in *Father Knows Best* and *Ozzie and Harriet* evidence that the fifties were a patriarchal stronghold, these shows represent not the triumph of the old-fashioned family but its feeble swan song.¹ Dad, with his stodgy ways and stern commandments, had been having a hard time of it since he first stumbled onto television. An episode of *The Goldbergs*, the first television sitcom and a remake of a popular radio show featuring a Jewish immigrant family, illustrates his problem: Rosalie, the Goldbergs' 14-year-old daughter, threatens to cut her hair and wear lipstick. The accent-laden Mr. Goldberg tries to stop her, but he is reduced to impotent blustering: "I am the father in the home, or am I? If I am, I want to know!" It is the wise wife who knows best in this house; she acts as an intermediary between this old-world patriarch and the young country he seems unable to understand. "The world is different now," she soothes.² If this episode dramatizes the transgenerational tension inevitable in a rapidly changing immigrant country, it also demonstrates how television tended to resolve that tension at Dad's blushing expense. The man of the fifties television house was more likely to resemble the cartoon character Dagwood Bumstead ("a joke which his children thoroughly understand" according to one critic)³ than Robert Young of *Father Knows Best*. During the early 1950s, articles

began to appear decrying TV's "male boob" with titles like "What Is TV Doing to MEN?" and "Who Remembers Papa?" (an allusion to another early series called *I Remember Mama*).⁴ Even *Ozzie and Harriet* was no *Ozzie and Harriet*. Ozzie, or Pop, as he was called by his children, was the Americanized and suburbanized papa who had been left behind in city tenements. Smiling blandly as he, apparently jobless, wandered around in his cardigan sweater, Ozzie was the dizzy male, a portrait of grinning ineffectuality. It is no coincidence that *Ozzie and Harriet* was the first sitcom to showcase the talents of a child character, when Ricky Nelson began his career as a teen idol. With parents like these, kids are bound to take over.

Still, the assumption that the first years of television were happy days for the traditional family has some truth to it. During the early fifties, television was widely touted as about the best thing that had ever happened to the family—surely one of the more interesting ironies of recent social history. Ads for the strange new appliance displayed a beaming mom and dad and their big-eyed kids gathered together around the glowing screen. It was dubbed the "electronic hearth." Even intellectuals were on board; early sociological studies supported the notion that television was family-friendly. Only teenagers resisted its lure. They continued to go to the movies with their friends, just as they had since the 1920s; TV-watching, they said, was family stuff, not an especially strong recommendation in their eyes.

IN ORDER to turn television into the children's oxygen machine that it has become, television manufacturers and broadcasters during the late forties and early fifties had to be careful to ingratiate themselves with the adults who actually had to purchase the strange new contraption. Families never had more than one television in the house, and it was nearly always in the living room, where everyone could watch it. Insofar as the networks sought to entice children to watch their shows, they had to do so by convincing Mom that television was good for them. It was probably for these reasons that for a few short years children's television was more varied and of higher quality than it would be for a long time afterward. There was little to offend, but that doesn't mean it was bland. In an effort to find the best formula to attract parents, broadcasters not only showed the familiar cowboy and superhero adventure series but also experimented with circus and science programs, variety shows, dramas, and other relatively highbrow fare, for example, Leonard Bernstein's *Young People's Concerts*. Ads were sparse. Since the networks had designed the earliest children's shows as a lure to sell televisions to parents, they were not thinking of TV as a means of selling candy and toys to kids; almost half of those shows had no advertising at all and were subsidized by the networks. At any rate, in those days neither parents nor manufacturers really thought of children as having a significant role in influencing the purchase of anything beyond, perhaps, cereal, an occasional cupcake, or maybe a holiday gift.

This is not to say that no one had ever thought of advertising to children before. Ads targeting youngsters had long appeared in magazines and comic strips.

Thirties radio shows like *Little Orphan Annie* and *Buck Rogers in the Twenty-Fifth Century* gave cereal manufacturers and the producers of the ever-popular Ovaltine a direct line to millions of children. But as advertisers and network people were gradually figuring out, when it came to transporting messages directly to children, radio was a horse and buggy compared to the supersonic jet known as television, and this fact changed everything. By 1957, American children were watching TV an average of an hour and a half each day. And as television became a bigger part of children's lives, its role as family hearth faded. By the mid-fifties, as television was becoming a domestic necessity, manufacturers began to promise specialized entertainment. Want to avoid those family fights over whether to watch the football game or Disneyland? the ads queried. You need a *second* TV set. This meant that children became a segregated audience in front of the second screen, and advertisers were now faced with the irresistible opportunity to sell things to them. Before television, advertisers had no choice but to tread lightly around children and to view parents as judgmental guardians over the child's buying and spending. Their limited appeals to kids had to be more than balanced by promises to parents, however spurious, of health and happiness for their children.

That balance changed once television had a firm foothold in American homes and advertisers could begin their second prong of attack on childhood. With glued-to-the-tube children now segregated from adults, broadcasters soon went about pleasing kids without thinking too much about parents. The first industry outside of the tried-and-true snacks and cereals to capitalize on this opportunity was, predictably, toys.⁵ By the mid-fifties, forward-looking toy manufacturers couldn't help but notice that Walt Disney was making a small fortune selling Mickey Mouse ears and Davy Crockett coonskin hats to the viewers of his *Disneyland* and *The Mickey Mouse Club*. Ruth and Eliot Handler, the legendary owner-founders of Mattel Toys, were the first to follow up. They risked their company's entire net worth on television ads during *The Mickey Mouse Club* for a toy called "the burp gun"; with 90 percent of the nation's kids watching, the gamble paid off bigger than anyone could ever have dreamed.

It's important to realize, in these days of stadium-sized toy warehouses, that until the advent of television, toys were nobody's idea of big business. There simply was not that big a market out there. Parents themselves purchased toys only as holiday or birthday presents, and they chose them simply by going to a specialty or department store and asking advice from a salesperson. Depression-traumatized grandparents, if they were still alive, were unlikely to arrive for Sunday dinner bearing Baby Alive dolls or Nerf baseball bats and balls. And except for their friends, children had no access to information about new products. At any rate, they didn't expect to own all that many toys. It's no wonder toy manufacturers had never shown much interest in advertising; in 1955 the "toy king" Louis Marx had sold fifty million dollars' worth of toys and had spent the grand total of \$312 on advertising.

The burp gun ad signaled the beginning of a new era, a turning point in American childhood and a deci-

ROLL YOUR MOUSE OVER THE ICONS TO THE RIGHT!



sive battle in the filiarchal revolution. Toy sales almost tripled between 1950 and 1970. Mattel was now a boom company with sales rising from \$6 million in 1955 to \$49 million in 1961.⁶ Other toy manufacturers who followed Mattel onto television also watched their profits climb.

But the burp gun ad was also a watershed moment, because it laid the groundwork for today's giant business of what Nickelodeon calls "kid culture," a phenomenon that has helped to alter the dynamic between adults and children. Television transformed toys from a modest holiday gift enterprise mediated by parents into an ever-present, big-stakes entertainment in-

dustry enjoyed by kids. Wholesalers became less interested in marketing particular toys to adults than in the manufacturer's plans for promotional campaigns to seduce children. In short, the toy salesman had pushed open the front door, had crept into the den while Mom and Dad weren't looking, and had whispered to Dick and Jane, without asking their parents' permission, of all the happiness and pleasure they could have in exchange for several dollars of the family's hard-earned money.

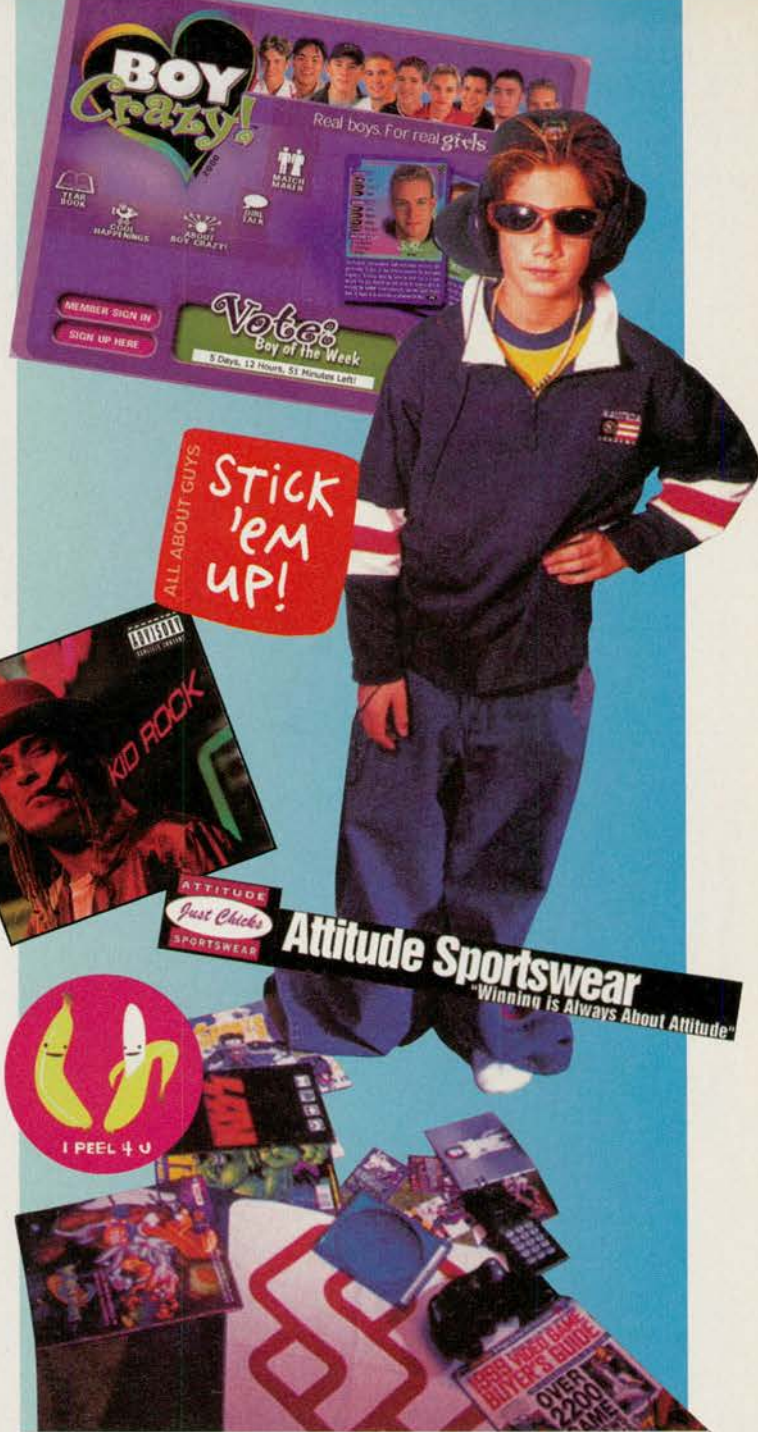
That the burp gun had advanced more power to children became more apparent by 1959, when Mattel began to advertise a doll named Barbie. Barbie gave a hint as to just how far business was ready to take the filiarchal revolution that had been set in motion by the wonders of television. Regardless of the promotional revolution it had unleashed, the burp gun was a familiar sort of toy, a quirky accessory to the battlefield games always enjoyed by boys. But Barbie was something new. Unlike the baby dolls that encouraged little girls to imitate Mommy, Barbie was a swinger, a kind of Playboy for little girls. She had her own Playboy Mansion, called Barbie's Dream House, and she had lots of sexy clothes, a car, and a boyfriend. The original doll had pouty lips—she was redesigned for a more open California look in the sixties—and she was sold in a leopard skin bathing suit and sunglasses, an accessory whose glamour continues to have iconic status in the children's market. In fact, though it isn't widely known, Barbie was copied from a German doll named Lili, who was in turn modeled on a cartoon prostitute. Sold in bars and tobacco shops, Lili was a favorite of German men, who were suckers for her tight (removable) sweater and short (removable) miniskirt.

Barbie has become so familiar that she is seen as just another citizen of the toy chest, but it's no exaggeration to say that she is one of the heroes in the media's second prong of attack on childhood. She proved not only that toy manufacturers were willing to sell directly to children, bypassing parents entirely, but that they were willing to do so by undermining the forced and difficult-to-sustain latency of American childhood. According to marketing research, mothers without exception *bated* Barbie. They believed she was too grown-up for their 4-to-12-year-old daughters, the toy's target market. The complaint heard commonly today—that by introducing the cult of the perfect body Barbie promotes obsessive body consciousness in girls, often resulting in eating disorders—is actually only a small part of a much larger picture. Barbie symbolized the moment when the media and the businesses it promoted dropped all pretense of concern about maintaining childhood. They announced, first, that they were going to flaunt for children the very freedom, consumer pleasure, and sex that parents had long been trying to delay in their lives. And, second, they were going to do this by initiating youngsters into the cult of the teenager. If this formula sounds familiar, it's because it remains dominant today. Barbie began the media's teening of childhood; today's media images and stories are simply commentary.

ADS TARGETING children make perfect companion pieces to stories of family rot and children savvy enough to roll their eyes amusingly through all the misery. In ads today, the child's image frequently appears in extreme close-up—the child as giant. Appealing to children's fantasies of omnipotent, materialistic freedom, advertisers portray an anarchic world of misrule in which the pleasure-seeking child reigns supreme.⁷ Spot, the red dot on the logo of containers of 7 Up, comes to life, escapes from the refrigerator, and tears through the house causing riotous havoc.⁸ A Pepsi ad shows screaming teens and preteens gorging themselves with cake, pouring Pepsi over their heads, and jumping on the bed with an electric guitar. "Be young, have fun, drink Pepsi," says the voice-over.⁹ Adult characters—even adult voice-overs and on-camera spokespeople—have been banished in favor of adolescent voices in the surfer-dude mode.¹⁰ Any old folks left standing should prepare to be mocked. Perceived as carping, droning old-timers who would deny the insiders their pleasure or fun, adults are the butts of the child-world joke. They are, as the *New York Times*' Charles McGrath noted after surveying Saturday morning cartoons, "either idiots, like the crazed geek who does comic spots on 'Disney's 1 Saturday Morning,' or meanies, like the crochety, incompetent teachers and principals on the cartoons 'Recess' and 'Pepper Ann.'"¹¹ Teachers are, of course, citizens of the adult geekville as well: In one typical snack food ad, kids break out of the halls of their school or behind the back of dimwitted teachers droning on at the chalkboard.¹²

The misleading notion that children are autonomous figures free from adult influence is on striking display in ads like these. Children liberated from parents and teachers are only released into new forms of control. "Children will not be liberated," wrote one sage professor. "They will be dominated."¹³ Nineteenth-century moralists saw in the home a haven from the increasingly harsh and inhuman marketplace. The advantage of hindsight allows us to see how this arrangement benefited children. The private home and its parental guardians could exercise their influence on children relatively unchallenged by commercial forces. Our own children, on the other hand, are creatures—one is tempted to say slaves—of the marketplace almost immediately.

The same advertisers who celebrate children's independence from the stodgy adult world and all its rules set out to educate children in its own strict regulations. They instruct children in the difference between what's in and what's out, what's hip and what's nerdy—or, to quote the inimitable Beavis and Butthead, "what's cool and what sucks." Giving new meaning to the phrase *hard sell*, today's ads demonstrate for children the tough posture of the sophisticated child who is savvy to the current styles and fashions. In a contest held by Polaroid for its Cool Cam promotion, the winning entry, from a Manassas, Virginia, girl, depicted a fish looking out a fishbowl at the kids in the house and sneering, "The only thing cool about these nerds is that they have a Cool Cam." Polaroid marketed the camera with a pair of sunglasses,



the perennial childhood signifier of sophistication.

It should be clear by now that the pose the media has in mind for children—cool, tough, and sophisticated independence—is that of the teenager. The media's efforts to encourage children to identify with the independent and impulsive consumer teen—efforts that began tentatively, as we saw, with Barbie—have now gone into overdrive. Teenagers are everywhere in children's media today. Superheroes like Mighty Morphin Power Rangers and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are teenagers. Dolls based on the TV character Blossom; her suggestively named friend, Six; and her brother, Joey, portray teenagers, as do the dolls based on the TV series *Beverly Hills 90210*, not to mention the ever-popular Barbie herself. Even the young children dressed in baggy pants who sing A

kid's gotta do what a kid's gotta do for Nickelodeon are, for all intents and purposes, teenagers.

By populating kids' imaginative world with teenagers, the media simultaneously flatters children's fantasies of sophistication and teaches them what form those fantasies should take. Thus, the media's "liberation" of children from adults also has the mischievous effect of binding them more closely to the peer group. In turn, the peer group polices its members' dress and behavior according to the rules set by this unrecognized authority. In no time at all, children intuit that teens epitomize the freedom, sexiness, and discretionary income—not to mention independence—valued in our society. Teens do not need their mommies to tell them what to wear or eat or how to spend their money, nor do they have sober responsibilities to restrain them from impulse buying.

These days, the invitation to become one of the teen in-crowd arrives so early that its recipients are still sucking their thumbs and stroking their blankies. During the preschool lineup on Nickelodeon one morning, there was a special Nickelodeon video for a song entitled "I Need Mo' Allowance." In this video the camera focuses on a mock heavy metal rock band consisting of three teenaged boys in baggie pants and buzz cuts who rasp a chorus that includes lines like *Mo' allowance to buy CDs!* A dollar sign flashes repeatedly on the screen. This video was followed by an ad for a videotape of *George of the Jungle*. "This George rides around in a limo, baby, and looks great in Armani," jeers the dude announcer. "It's not your parents' *George of the Jungle!*" Change the channel to *Sesame Street*, and although the only ads you'll get are for the letter *H* or the number 3, you may still see an imitation MTV video with a group of longhaired, bopping, stomping muppets singing *I'm so cool, cool, cool!* That few 3-year-olds know the first thing about Armani, limos, or even cool is irrelevant; it's time they learned.

Many companies today have "coolhunters" or "street teams," that is, itinerant researchers who hang out in clubs, malls, and parks and look for trends in adolescent styles in clothes, music, and slang to be used in educating younger consumer trainees. Advertisers can then broadcast for children an aesthetic to emblazon their peer group identity. Even ads for the most naive, childlike products are packed with the symbols of contemporary cool. The Ken doll, introduced in 1993, has hair tinted with blond streaks and wears an earring and a thick gold chain around his neck. The rock and roll which accompanies many of these ads is the pulsing call to generational independence now played for even the youngest tot. The Honey Comb Bear (in sunglasses) raps the virtues of his eponymous cereal. The 1998 *Rugrats* movie is accompanied by musicians like Elvis Costello and Patti Smith. With a name like Kool-Aid, how could the drink manufacturer continue its traditional appeal to parents and capture today's child sophisticate as well? The new Mr. Kool Aid raps his name onto children's brains.

As math or geography students, American children may be mediocre, but as consumers they are world-class. They learn at prodigiously young ages to obey the detailed sumptuary laws of the teen material world, a world in which status emanates out of the cut

of a pair of jeans or the stitching of a sneaker. M/E Marketing Research found that kids make brand decisions by the age of four.¹⁴ *Marketing to and Through Kids* recounts numerous stories of kids under 10 unwilling to wear jeans or sneakers without a status label. One executive at Converse claims that dealers inform him that children as young as two are "telling their parents what they want on their feet." Another marketing executive at Nike notes, "The big shift we've been seeing is away from unbranded to more sophisticated branded athletic shoes at younger and younger ages." At Nike the percentage of profit attributable to young children grew from nothing to 14 percent by the early nineties.¹⁵

Nowhere has the success of media education been more dramatically apparent than among 8-to-12-year-old "tweens." The rise of the tween has been sudden and intense. In 1987 James McNeal, perhaps the best-known scholar of the children's market, reported that children in this age group had an income of \$4.7 billion. In 1992 in an article in *American Demographics* he revised that figure up to \$9 billion, *an increase of almost 100 percent in five years.*¹⁶ While children spent almost all their money on candy in the 1960s, they now spend two-thirds of their cash on toys, clothes, movies, and games they buy themselves.¹⁷

The teening of those we used to call preadolescents shows up in almost everything kids wear and do. In 1989 the Girl Scouts of America introduced a new MTV-style ad with rap music in order to, in the words of the organization's media specialist, "get away from the uniformed, goody-goody image and show that the Girl Scouts are a fun, mature, cool place to be."¹⁸ Danny Goldberg, the chief executive officer of Mercury Records, concedes that teenagers have been vital to the music industry since the early days of Sinatra. "But now the teenage years seem to start at eight or nine in terms of entertainment tastes," he says. "The emotions are kicking in earlier."¹⁹ A prime example is Hanson, a rock-and-roll group whose three members achieved stardom when they were between the ages of 11 and 17. Movie producers and directors are finding it increasingly difficult to interest children this age in the usual children's fare. Tweens go to *Scream*, a horror film about a serial killer, or *Object of My Affection*, a film about a young woman who falls in love with a homosexual man.²⁰ After the girl-driven success of *Titanic*, Buffy Shutt, president of marketing at Universal Pictures, marveled, "They're amazing consumers."²¹ Mattel surely agrees, as evidenced by their Barbie ad. "You, girls, can do anything." Clothing retailers are scrambling for part of the tween action. All over the country companies like Limited Too, Gap Kids, Abercrombie and Fitch, and Gymboree have opened stores for 6-to-12-year-olds and are selling the tween look—which at this moment means bell bottoms, ankle-length skirts or miniskirts, platform shoes, and tank tops.²² Advertisers know that kids can spot their generational signature in a nanosecond—the hard rock and roll, the surfer-dude voices, the baggy pants and bare midriffs shot by tilted cameras in vibrant hues and extreme close-ups—and they oblige by offering these images on TV, the Internet, in store displays, and

(Continued on page 45)

WHY READING TO CHILDREN IS IMPORTANT



BY SUSAN L. HALL AND LOUISA C. MOATS

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. This is especially so during the preschool years.¹

from Becoming a Nation of Readers

THIS CONCLUSION, from an influential report entitled, *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*, resulted from a study sponsored by the National Institute of Education. The purpose of this review was to summarize the findings from research about reading and to make recommendations for instruction. This report, which was published in 1984, is still recognized as a landmark summary of research in reading and is frequently quoted in educators' books.

The fact that the Commission on Reading proclaimed the importance of reading to children may not surprise many parents; most parents have been told in many ways to read to their children. As a first-time parent, however, I became aware that although I had been repeatedly advised to read to my child, no one had ever explained *why* it was important.*

When my first child was born, I was working full-time and feeling very overextended. I read many popular parenting books and worried about what my child

ate, how to childproof the house, how to evaluate child-care options, and so forth. After a few months of feeling overwhelmed with how much there was to learn and do as a new parent, I decided to choose a couple of things that were important to me and do those really well. I chose two areas to concentrate on in my parenting, knowing I could not be an expert on every aspect of child rearing. Driven by interest, I made a commitment to do a particularly diligent job

Susan L. Hall's experience as the parent of a child who had difficulty learning to read led her to take an active role in the field. She is a past president of the Illinois Branch of the International Dyslexia Association and has been elected to a position on that organization's national board. Louisa C. Moats, Ed.D., is serving as project director for the District of Columbia site of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Interventions Project. She has extensive experience in the field of reading and language acquisition as a teacher trainer, diagnostician, consultant, and writer.

This article is an excerpt from the authors' book, Straight Talk About Reading: How Parents Can Make a Difference During the Early Years. Copyright © 1999. Used with permission of NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group, Inc. Available in paperback for \$12.95. (ISBN #0-8092-2857-2)

Excerpts from Curious George Gets a Medal by H.A. Rey. Copyright © 1957 and © renewed 1985 by Margaret E. Rey. Copyright assigned to Houghton Mifflin Company in 1993. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

*Whenever you see a personal segment that uses "I," it is a story told by Susan Hall. We wrote these stories in her personal voice because we knew that other parents would readily identify with her puzzlement and her worry when her own son developed reading difficulties.

with building self-esteem and getting my child ready to read. My goal was to raise a child who loved to read and who had strong self-esteem. Little did I know at the time how connected these two goals are.

My choice of parenting goals may be of interest because one is a gift my parents gave to me and the other is a gift I discovered myself. My parents were amazingly intuitive about how to parent in order to raise a child with strong self-esteem. However, my parents didn't read to me as a child, and our home contained very few books. If they had been advised that reading aloud was critical for success in school, I have no doubt that my parents would have read to me and my siblings in spite of the fact that neither parent read for pleasure. In the 1950s, the importance of reading aloud to children wasn't widely known or communicated to parents. Because reading was not emphasized or modeled at home, I did not discover reading for pleasure until my late teen years. I missed the pleasure of many classic children's stories in my own childhood; therefore, the prospect of sharing them with my own children was doubly inviting. I'd get what I'd missed; they'd get acquainted with the wonderful world of books.

Having decided that I wanted my children to be readers, I began paying close attention to anything written about how children learn to read. In my journey through all the parenting books, I was on the lookout for anything about reading. The recommendation that parents should read to their children came through loud and clear, so I began to purchase children's books and read aloud to my children. However, being an overly analytical person, I began to wonder about *why* I should read to my child and *what proof* there is that it really makes a difference. Although regularly reading aloud to our children was a habit my husband and I embraced, I was nagged with these questions and struck by the fact that I had never seen an explanation of how this activity benefits children's subsequent reading ability.

It was during my first course in a master's program in education called "Survey of Reading Methods and Materials" that the answers emerged. One summer as I sat on my deck reading the textbook for this course, it all began to make sense. The information about what reading aloud to a child accomplishes was there in the textbooks for educators. But why wasn't this information in parenting books? That was probably the moment of conception for this book.

Six Reasons Why Reading Aloud Helps

How Does Reading Stories Aloud Benefit My Child?

There are some well-researched benefits to a child whose parents read aloud to him.

BENEFITS FROM READING ALOUD

The child

- develops background knowledge about a variety of topics
 - builds his vocabulary
 - becomes familiar with rich language patterns
 - develops familiarity with story structure
 - acquires familiarity with the reading process
 - identifies reading as a pleasurable activity
-

Each of these benefits is explored in this article, along with evidence that reading aloud to our children will encourage them to be readers.

Benefit: Builds Background Knowledge

Probably the most critical benefit of all those hours of reading stories to our children is that the child gains knowledge of things, people, and places that he is less likely to acquire from any other source. Every story a parent reads to a child gives information about an envi-



ILLUSTRATED BY SONJA LAMIT

ronment and images of things that happen in that environment. It is almost as if we are creating a huge inventory of mental images of life's experiences and doing so much more rapidly than the child could experience firsthand, even in families that emphasize travel and conversation. Later, when the child reads a sentence or passage about a topic he is at least somewhat familiar with, it is so much easier for him to determine unknown words and comprehend what he is reading. Having background, or prior knowledge, about the topic when reading a new book is a critical component of later comprehension after the child has learned to read the words.

After reading about background knowledge in my education textbook, I began examining children's stories to see what kind of information is contained in them. Let's take a popular children's story and assess it from the perspective of what it provides the child. My oldest child loved *Curious George* stories written by H. A. Rey. Because I have fond memories of how much we enjoyed reading these stories, I've chosen one for an analysis of the background information provided in it.

Overview of the Story— *Curious George Gets a Medal*

In this classic children's book, a monkey named George is the center of the story. He is very curious and causes some difficulty each time he pursues his curiosity by exploring something. In this 47-page illustrated book, George, who is home alone, receives a letter. While trying to write a response, he spills ink which he is trying to pour from a bottle into a fountain pen. The mess becomes much worse as he tries to clean up the ink with soap flakes and water from a garden hose. Having partially filled a room with lather and water, he runs to a nearby farm where he remembers seeing a portable pump.

The events at the farm continue with difficulties. Because the pump is too heavy for him, he decides that he can get a farm animal to pull the pump back to his house. However, his first effort to get a pig to pull the pump results in all the pigs rushing out of the fence once he lifts the latch. He finally realizes that a cow is a better choice and begins the journey home on the cow's back with the pump pulled behind them. However, the farmers see them and a chase begins. George hides in some laundry on a clothesline and then jumps in the back of a passing pickup truck.

The truck happens to be on its way to the Museum of Science to deliver a large box. George, who does not know what a museum is, goes inside to satisfy his curiosity. He explores the rooms with stuffed prehistoric animals and eventually spots some nuts on a tree in the dinosaur exhibit. Since he is hungry he climbs onto the dinosaur's head and accidentally pulls the artificial tree over, knocking down the dinosaur. The guards catch him and lock him in a cage. His friend, "the man with the yellow hat" (who had brought him from Africa in the first book) arrives just in time to save him from being taken to the zoo.

George's friend is carrying the letter that had been delivered by the mailman at the beginning of the story. The letter was written by "Professor Wiseman," the di-

rector of the museum, to invite George to ride in a spaceship which has been built as an experiment. In order to be forgiven for the mess he made at the dinosaur exhibit, George agrees. George blasts off in a tiny spaceship and must bail out by pulling a lever when a light is illuminated inside the ship by remote control from Earth. He parachutes out just in the nick of time and receives a medal for being the First Space Monkey.

Background Information from the Story

There is an amazing amount of background information in this story. Our lovable, curious monkey demonstrates practical things, such as how fountain pens are filled with ink and what happens when soap flakes are sprayed with water from a garden hose. While George goes to the farm, he observes the pigs squealing and grunting and running away as fast as they can. He also contrasts the pigs' behavior to that of the cows, who were gentle and strong and far better candidates to pull the pump for him. All these observations provide background information for the child about the behavior of different farm animals.

George, who had never been to a museum before, makes observations about this unfamiliar environment. George observes that the large animals he sees do not move. The author writes:

They were not alive. They were stuffed animals, put into the Museum so that everybody could get a look at them.²

The book provides illustrations of the several rooms of stuffed animals, including the dinosaur exhibits. For a very young child, this may be his first exposure to a museum of this sort.

As the story continues through the spaceship scenes, there is some additional background provided. George is dressed in a space suit with a helmet, air tank, gloves, and shoes. A satellite dish and monitor screen are shown in the illustrations to explain how the people on earth communicate with the monkey in the spaceship. The blastoff scene is complete with a countdown before the rocket engine is ignited and the ship blasts off. The description of the ship continues:

He pressed the button and the ship rose into the air, slowly first, and then faster and faster and higher and higher, until they could no longer see it in the sky. But on the screen they saw George clearly all the time.³

A young child hearing this story retains an impression of the blasting off of a spaceship and continued communications with Earth.

This classic children's story was written in 1957 and offers the opportunity for a parent to explain that there were no manned space flights then, yet we have achieved enormous progress in space flight during the last 40 years. Other scenes that date the book include the use of a fountain pen with a blotter and the laundry hanging on the outdoor clothesline. These nuances provide an experience from which to launch a discussion about the differences in technology and life in the 1950s versus today.

Benefit: Builds Vocabulary

A child with a large listening and speaking vocabulary has an enormous advantage in learning to read. Reading comprehension depends more than any other sin-

gle skill on knowing the meanings of the individual words in the passage. When a child is trying to read an unfamiliar word after he has learned some phonics and word attack skills, he should begin to sound out the word. The process of relating the print to a spoken word is faster and more accurate when that word is already in the child's speaking vocabulary. For example, if a child encounters the word *museum* for the first time in print, he is likely to say the word correctly if he recognizes that it is a word he has heard and can interpret. And not only can the child figure out the new word faster, but because word recognition has required less time and effort, he has more attention to devote to comprehending the passage.

Imagine that a child who is an early reader doesn't know the word *rocket* and is reading the following sentence:

When we flash you a signal you will have to open the door and bail out with the help of emergency rockets.⁴

As he sounds out *rock-ets* he will more quickly recognize that he has read this unknown word correctly if this word is already part of his speaking vocabulary, and he knows what it means. The context will help him know that he has deciphered the word correctly, and he will have a sense that the word fits the meaning of the sentence. Having a big mental dictionary of words facilitates reading comprehension and reading fluency, and young children acquire a big mental dictionary from having books read to them.

Continuing with our *Curious George* example, let's examine the vocabulary words that appear in this children's story. During the beginning scenes at the house involving the letter writing and attempted cleanup of the spilled ink, lots of rich vocabulary is used. Then while George is on the farm, completely different words are included. The story continues with more rich experiences and vocabulary as George is asked to go up in a spaceship and bail out using a parachute to land safely.

Below is a list of 28 sample words from this book. Although some of these words may be spoken in our daily interaction with our children, many are words we

would not use regularly, and so the child's vocabulary expands. It has been proven that children do not typically learn such words from television, from each other, or simply from talking with adults. Reading books is the key to knowing words.

Benefit: Develops Familiarity with Rich Language Patterns

Not only is exposure to the background information and specific words in books important for children, but so is exposure to sentence patterns and special uses of language that are found only in books. The more exposure to complex and well-structured sentences, the more likely it is that the child will use such sentence patterns himself. Thus, the exposure helps not only comprehension but also speaking and writing ability as the child matures.

In the preschool years, children do not learn about sentence structure from being formally taught. They learn from listening to the patterns spoken around them and modeling their own language patterns after those of other speakers. The brain is hardwired to learn the rules and organization of a language system; all that is required is sufficient input for the brain to sort out the way words can be ordered to make sentences. As a child listens to sentence after sentence, he develops a familiarity with a range of possible sentence patterns and how ideas are communicated. The patterns become part of his internal rule system for putting words together. For example, he learns that questions can be made in different ways:

What did George do when he could not carry the pump?

Did George carry the pump?

(With a rising voice): George didn't carry the pump?

He learns as well that some words have to go in a certain order to fill "slots" in a sentence, and others are not bound by such rules. For example, he learns where to put an adjective that modifies a noun: before the noun, unless it is part of the verb phrase. In English we say *the curious monkey*, not *the monkey curious*, although we can say *the monkey was curious*. This part of language "learning," again, is not conscious or deliberately practiced in the preschool years; it will take place with exposure to language.

What is different about the language in books and the language of speech? Plenty. The language of books is much more complex. Sentences are complete in book language but tend to be incomplete and run-on in less formal conversations between people who are talking to each other face-to-face. Sentences tend to be longer and more complex in books—that is, they have clauses built into them, or they are joined by conjunctions that are carefully chosen to express an idea. They tend to be loaded with more modifiers—adjectives and adverbs—and to use correct grammar more than we do in casual speech. Printed language uses phrases and expressions in special ways that are peculiar to writing but uncommon in speech, such as the greetings and closings in letters. Finally, the way that sentences are ordered and strung together in writing is usually much more organized and less repetitious than the way we speak.

An example of well-written sentences from our *Curious George* book is the letter from the Professor to

Sample Vocabulary Words in *Curious George Gets a Medal*

Scenes at the House	Scenes at the Farm	Scenes at the Spaceship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • curious • fountain pen • funnel • blotter • garden hose • tap • lather • escape • portable pump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shed • loop • hurled • latch • grunting • squealing • grazing • rattling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professor • flash • signal • bail out • emergency rockets • permit • space suit • launching site • lever • groping • parachute

George, which is printed in the book, as follows:

Dear George,

A small space ship has been built by our experimental station. It is too small for a man, but could carry a little monkey. Would you be willing to go up in it?

I have never met you, but I hear that you are a bright little monkey who can do all sorts of things and that is just what we need.

We want you to do something nobody has ever done before: bail out of a spaceship in flight.

When we flash you a signal you will have to open the door and bail out with the help of emergency rockets.

We hope that you are willing and that your friend will permit you to go.

Gratefully yours,
Professor Wiseman
Director of the Science Museum⁵

This passage also demonstrates some fundamentals of good letter composition. The first paragraph introduces the topic and tells why the Professor is writing to the monkey. The remainder of the letter clearly explains why a man can't go in the spaceship and why George has been invited to do this job. In addition the Professor describes what George would be asked to do. The last paragraph politely expresses the Professor's recognition that George will need his friend's permission to go.

Another example of the descriptive language appropriate for preschoolers is from the scene where they are waiting for George to react to the illuminated light and pull the lever to parachute from the spaceship. The author's writing is demonstrated in the following passage:

They waited anxiously...At last George began to move. Slowly, as if in a daze, he was groping for the lever. Would he reach it in time? There—he had grabbed it!

The door opened—hurrah—George was on his way!

Out of the blue an open parachute came floating down to earth. The truck raced over to the spot where George would land.

What a welcome for George!

Professor Wiseman hung a big golden medal around his neck. "Because," he said, "you are the first living being to come back to earth from a space flight." And on the medal it said: TO GEORGE, THE FIRST SPACE MONKEY.

Then a newspaperman took his picture and everybody shouted and cheered, even the farmer and his son, and the kind woman from next door (who had worked for hours to get the water out of the room).⁶

In summary, children who have been read to have learned that there is a different language, or a different way of expressing ideas, in books from the way we speak. They begin to develop an "ear" for written English versus spoken English. As described by Canadian educator M. Spencer:

Being read to offers them [children] longer stretches of written language than at any other time, and moreover, this is language put together by someone that isn't there to be seen. The reader, adult or child, lends the text a different voice, so that "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down" becomes a language event of a particular kind.⁷

Benefit: Develops Familiarity with Story Structure

Children absorb a great deal about story structure from hearing many stories during their preschool years. This knowledge is helpful once the child begins to read and

Many words in books
are words we do not use
regularly in spoken
conversation.

Books greatly expand
a child's vocabulary.



write his own stories. It helps with reading because, knowing what to expect, children form a mental outline of the events and remember the details much more easily. It helps with writing because, knowing what the pieces are and where a story should go, the child has a mold to put his words into. Preschoolers who have been read hundreds of stories begin to understand that stories have common characteristics.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF STORIES

- The story has a title.
- There are characters, including a main character.
- The story takes places in a setting (time, place).
- The characters usually have a problem to solve.
- The action hinges on how the problem is solved.
- There is a resolution (climax) in the story, before it ends.
- Language is used to create the effect of surprise, sadness, climax, or humor.

Benefit: Acquires Familiarity with the Reading Process

Children learn about what reading is from observing others read to them. For young children, early experiences of having someone read to them gives them an experience and impression about *how people read*. Children gain an impression about what a person does when he or she reads. Since we cannot see inside the mind, which is where the process is occurring, a child must guess about what the adult is doing. The child begins to form hypotheses about the print on the page corresponding to words that are the same as those the child hears in speaking and listening. This correlation between print and spoken words is an important step in learning about reading.

A study that was completed by educator E.H. Hiebert examined what preschool children believe an adult is reading on the page. Children were shown a book with pictures and print and asked to point to what a reader should read. In this study it was found that three-year-old children believed that it was the pictures that were being read.⁸

There is a set of other things a pre-reading child must learn that educators refer to as "print awareness" or "learning about print." These concepts are learned from being read to by an adult who shows the child the book and interacts with the child as the story is being read aloud. These concepts include the following:

CONCEPTS A CHILD MUST LEARN ABOUT PRINT

- how the book is turned when it is "right side up"
 - that the print is read, not the pictures
 - where the beginning of the book is
 - the order of reading the print on a page—top to bottom—left to right
 - what to do at the end of a line
 - what to do at the end of a page
-

Benefit: Identifies Reading as a Pleasurable Activity

I can vividly remember the first time that I realized that reading was a great pleasure. It was during spring break of my senior year in high school, which my best friend and I spent in Florida visiting my grandparents. My friend, whose name was Madeline, tossed me her copy of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* after she finished it. I devoured it during that week, reading late into the night several nights. Although this first "aha" experience came late for me, reading for pleasure has been a part of my life ever since. As a parent, it is my goal for my children to experience the joy of reading early in life and hopefully begin a lifelong love of reading.

Probably the most important thing about reading aloud to a child is to allow the child to experience reading as an enjoyable activity. If the child associates reading with pleasure, the child will have a greater desire to learn to read. As Jim Trelease wrote in the first chapter of his book, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*:

Every time we read to a child, we're sending a "pleasure" message to the child's brain. You could even call it a commercial, conditioning the child to associate books and print with pleasure.⁹

There are many things parents can do to make reading pleasurable. Choose a location in the home that your children especially enjoy. My children love to read on the front porch swing during the summer; they have reminded me that we read *Charlotte's Web* one summer while waiting for the camp bus to pick them up each day. Especially in the winter my children love to cuddle up next to me while listening to a story. At an educators' conference that I attended, a European speaker showed slides of historical paintings depicting scenes about reading. His point in showing over a hundred slides of paintings was that the overwhelming majority of the paintings showed the child sitting on the adult's lap while reading a story. The proximity of closeness between parent and child while

reading has been captured in art over many centuries.

Choose a time when you can read for an uninterrupted period. My children are very vocal about how much they dislike it when I answer a phone call and leave them "hanging" in the middle of a key passage of a story we are reading. Get involved and be dramatic: Make the story more fun for you and your children by accentuating the animation of your voice for key lines.

It's important that parents allow their children to see them enjoying reading. When I was growing up the only thing I remember seeing my parents read was the daily newspaper. In fact I can vividly recall that my father always read the paper in his easy chair each evening after family dinner. Modeling that reading is pleasurable sends strong messages to our children.

Practical Tips About How To Make Reading Aloud Enjoyable

When Do I Start Reading to My Child?

Although Jim Trelease, in his book, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, advises that reading to a child should start as soon as the baby is born, my personal experience was different. Although I occasionally read to my infants when they were less than 6 months old, I found it awkward to cradle my infant and try to turn the pages of a picture book. Read to your infant if it provides stimulation for you during the sometimes tedious hours you spend holding and rocking your baby. However, don't feel compelled to read at this stage if you find it more rewarding to look into the child's eyes and talk to him instead. There's plenty of time to read later.

6-9 Months

Beginning to read to a child around 6-9 months of age is ideal. The child is sitting up and can hold small board books at this stage. It is great to allow a child to begin exploring books by himself during quiet moments in the crib or on the floor. Wonderful vinyl books are available, which are more durable when the child is slobbering during the teething stage. Place the more fragile board books with pop-out sections on the bookshelf to be saved for reading together. Keep several small books among your child's toys that are the right size and shape for him to turn the pages and carry without help from you. Rotate the books so that he doesn't grow bored with them.

12-18 Months

By the age of 12-18 months your goal is to have your child bring books to you, signaling he wants you to read him a story. It's a thrill to see your child with book in hand and arms lifted telling you that he wants to come up on your lap to hear the story he has chosen. This event signals that he enjoys listening to a story.

It is important to make reading times enjoyable ones; therefore, like so many other things in parenting, choosing the appropriate time and occasionally waiting for the child to be ready can be critical. When my active toddler son squirmed to get off my lap, I decided not to force it. Although I was anxious to begin reading to him, I decided to wait to avoid risking that his experience of reading would be negative. If your

child wants to turn the pages faster than the words can be read, abandon reading the story as written and make up a story that corresponds with the pictures. Even with the very simple small board books of about a dozen pages with few words, discuss the pictures and talk about all the things your child sees on each page. Your dialogue about each page should take longer than the actual time to read the words on the page.

2 Years of Age

Establish a routine by the time your child is two years old that you always read a story at bedtime. This routine is important because even if you spend no other time reading during the day, at least this 15 minutes per day occurs religiously. While our child still slept in a crib, our favorite spot for bedtime reading was in a rocking chair in his room with the door closed to avoid interruption. In our family the routine of a bedtime story has continued to this day, and our children are 11 and 8 years old. Our pattern is that on nights when both parents are home at bedtime, one parent reads to one child. The pair then is swapped on the following night so that Dad reads to daughter one night and to son the next night, and Mom does vice versa. Bedtime stories will hopefully continue in our house until as long beyond age 10 as possible. After that age, the child may prefer to read to himself before bed.

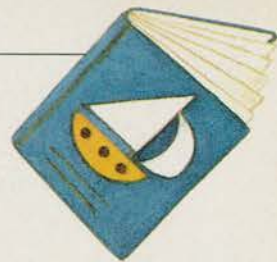
6–8 Years of Age

Once the child is able to read himself, change the routine by having the child read for 15 minutes, followed by the parent reading to the child for 15 minutes. A child needs to practice to learn to be a good reader. If your child is a reluctant reader, have him read from a book on his reading level before you read to him from a book that is somewhat above his own reading level. When children are first learning to decode the words, there will be a gap between what they are able to read themselves and what they enjoy hearing read aloud. Encourage your child to practice reading books he can read comfortably. Then, it is important for the parent to continue reading to the child from books above the child's reading level in order to expand his background knowledge and enjoyment of literature.

What If My Child Resists Being Read To?

The intimacy of shared reading is not always easy to capture. When my son was a toddler it was difficult to feel close during our regular reading time. He was a very active child who frequently squirmed to get down from my lap because he had a greater interest in gross motor activities than in sitting. If your child isn't interested in hearing a story, abandon the effort and try again at another time. Do not push the issue, and he will eventually come back to reading. Choose when to offer to read him a story, and select very short stories initially, thereby matching the child's attention span. Select books on topics about which your child is keenly interested. Ease your child into longer and longer stretches of reading time.

The children of
parents trained
for only one
hour in interactive story
reading improved
dramatically in verbal
expression and vocabulary.



When Do I Stop Reading Aloud?

Many parents believe that once their child begins to read himself, the days of reading storybooks aloud are over. However, there are some very important reasons for continuing to read to your child as he begins to learn to read. Especially in first and second grade while the child is learning to read, his listening level far exceeds his reading level; that is, he can understand passages read to him that far exceed what he is capable of reading himself. Continue to expose your child to good literature that mentally challenges him and enables his vocabulary and knowledge to continue growing. Do this as long as it is fun. Once children prefer to read silently, everyone can share a "Drop Everything And Read" (DEAR) time in the evening.

What Do I Do If My Child Wants To Look Ahead at the Pictures Before We Read?

As frustrating as looking ahead may be to the parent, most educators would encourage you to allow looking ahead at the pictures. This exercise helps the child to activate background knowledge about the setting and topic of the story. In first-grade reading instruction, teachers usually take time to introduce a story before they begin reading it. Children are taught to think about the title of the book and anticipate what the story might be about. Typically a discussion is initiated about the topic of the book. If the story is about going to the zoo, the teacher leads a discussion about what you are likely to see at the zoo. Children will name the animals found at a zoo, as well as discussing the activities one might see, such as zookeepers feeding the animals. The purpose of this discussion is to activate prior knowledge for the children who have visited the

zoo and to provide information to any child who has no prior information about this experience.

What Comes After Picture Books?

Before your child reaches age seven you will begin reading aloud chapter books that don't have pictures. *Charlotte's Web*, a story written by E.B. White about the friendship between a spider and a pig, is a wonderful example of a chapter book appropriate for this age. The vocabulary is challenging and interesting, and the story is captivating for the child. There is plenty of background knowledge presented while the child is thoroughly entertained. Other books we enjoyed included *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, *The Indian in the Cupboard*, and *The American Girl Collection* books.

After your child can read himself, continue to look for opportunities to read aloud to your child. This can be done through round-robin reading of a classic book in front of the fireplace or through alternate oral reading—first the parent, then the child, switching every page or two—to foster better comprehension. It will also enable the family to have active discussions about the characters and the author's intended meaning. Your own love of literature will continue to be communicated through shared reading activities. Remember and find the books you loved as a child. Enjoy them again as you share them with your child.

Interactive Story Reading

Have you ever felt frustrated when your child wants to stop you to ask questions while you are reading a story to him? When my children were preschoolers, I found it frustrating to be constantly interrupted by all their comments about the pictures and questions about the story. I decided that limiting the interruptions was a good thing, because when the child starts school his teacher wouldn't want to be stopped by incessant questions from 25 children. It also seemed that staying "on task" was an admirable skill to be learned.

However, this dialogue during the story reading is actually very positive and is something to be encouraged and developed. As described in *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, active discussion during reading is important:

The benefits are greatest when the child is an active participant, engaging in discussions about stories, learning to identify letters and words, and talking about the meanings of words. One researcher who observed parents reading books to their children discovered differences in the quality and quantity of informal instruction that the parents provided.¹⁰

The importance of engaging the child as an active listener, rather than the parent reading the story from beginning to end without pause, has been researched by other educators. The most interesting of these was a study completed by G. Whitehurst and his colleagues in 1988, which demonstrated the impact of active engagement. In their study they provided training to the parents of 15 middle-class preschool children from two to three years old. The parents received a one-hour training session in interactive story reading in which they were shown how to engage in this technique. They were instructed to:

- expand on the child's answers
- suggest alternative possibilities
- pose progressively more challenging questions

An example of an open-ended question is "What is Curious George doing?" or "Why do you think he is doing that?" The key is to ask questions that cannot be answered with a yes/no response. A control group was identified with children of approximately the same age and language development. The parents of both groups tape-recorded their reading sessions for one month.

The tapes confirmed that both groups read equally often (about eight times per week) and that the trained parents followed the instructions for interactive story reading. The children in both groups were tested before and after the experimental month. The results showed that at the end of one month of interactive story reading the children in this group versus the control group:

- improved 8.5 months in verbal expression, and
- were six months ahead on a vocabulary test.¹¹

The verbal expression measure assessed the child's capability in expressing ideas verbally. These are staggering results for children who have an average age of 30 months! Think what effect using an interactive story-reading approach might have over several years, versus the one month of this study.

Reading aloud to a child is a critical activity in helping a child gain the knowledge and language skill that will enable good comprehension later on. Reading aloud increases background knowledge, builds vocabulary, and familiarizes children with the language in books. The Commission on Reading has advised that not only does reading aloud to a child make a difference, but the way parents read aloud matters. A book becomes a vehicle for using language—before, during, and after reading. In addition to reading aloud, engaging in probing conversations at home can help the child acquire the language skills needed to become a good reader. □

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THERE'S ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

BY JOHN KEEGAN

As Memorial Day approaches, how many of our students will see it as more than a fun three-day weekend or the chance to take advantage of the latest hot sale at the local mall? How many will carve out even a small portion of the day to honor the approximately 575,000 men and women who have died in service to our country? As adults, it is our responsibility to counter the progressive loss of memory that has infected our national life and, in particular on this occasion, to remind our students that freedom is not free. We are grateful to the renowned historian John Keegan for giving us this poignant picture of the extraordinary reverence with which the British treat their war dead. It is a lesson in civic values for all of us.

—Editor

"IWOULDN'T MIND," I heard a woman's voice sobbing at my elbow. "I wouldn't mind if my son had been killed. I wouldn't mind—if he could be here." Tears streamed down her kindly face. She clutched my elbow. "I wouldn't mind." There was a scent of roses and mown grass, the reflection of sunlight from white Portland stone, a cool and gentle Mediterranean breeze, the promise of heat to come. "I wouldn't mind."

Oh dear, I thought. Oh dear: If only you knew. We were two English people in a primal English setting:

John Keegan was for many years senior lecturer at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, England, and is now the defense correspondent of the London Daily Telegraph. He is the author of many books on military history, including The Face of Battle, Six Armies in Normandy, The Mask of Command, The Price of Admiralty, The Second World War, and A History of Warfare. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. This essay is reprinted from The American Scholar, Volume 66, Number 3, Summer 1997. Copyright © 1997 by the author.



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greensward, shrubs, flowering perennials, paved walks on which saxifrage rooted between the cracks, long walls, statuary, and monolithic masonry—an English enclosure far from England. Mature trees shut out the vista to the landward side, but to the seaward there was a gap in the planting to show blue water lapping the foot of limestone crags. Thyme and laurel and olive ascended the hillsides, silver and gray and black to counterpoint the garden's lighter and darker greens. "Remember, green is a color," Gertrude Jekyll, the inventor of the modern English garden, advised her pupils; and here, below the hillsides, arid after summer drought, green was a brilliant, almost overpowering color. The grass beneath our feet was spongy with the morning's watering,

and yesterday's and the days' before.

The landscape beyond the garden was ageless, with that Mediterranean agelessness which has captivated English travelers since they first began their journeys to rediscover, 300 years ago, the classical world their ancestors had done so much to overthrow; but the garden was timeless, belonging neither to the present nor to the past but to an arrested moment that exists only in the English imagination. It is a moment suffused by classicism, inspired by the temperate wilderness, but transcending both, a moment when the work of man comes into equilibrium with the beauty of nature and an ideal landscape is brought to perfection.

Where are these landscapes? They surround the English. Some are accidental, tracts of the English countryside, a highly artificial creation 4,000 years old in

Above: Tombstone at Beaumont-Hamel, France, marks the grave of an unknown British soldier killed during the Battle of the Somme in World War I.

At right: A cemetery of the First World War at Le Trou Aid Post, France.



parts, where contour and woodland—woodland surviving from the primeval or planted in living memory—combine with plough and pasture, hedge and wall, to form a vision the English call England. The English vision is particularly present in the Cotswolds west of Oxford, in the South Hams of Devonshire, in Thomas Hardy's Dorset, along the Welsh marches of Herefordshire or Shropshire, in Beatrix Potter country above the Cumbrian lakes, in the Kipling territory of remoter Kent and Sussex. Yet that vision is also present wherever population is sparse, rainfall heavy, and agriculture intense but with tracts of ancient forest land making a patchwork of settlement and emptiness, the familiar and the mysterious.

Many are not accidental at all, but the handiwork of great landlords and the artists they employed to beautify what was already beautiful in a manner quite alien to the environment that soil and climate offered them. England is natural broadleaf forest land, with deep topsoil in which stone is hard to come by and the indigenous flowering plants are retiring and modest on color. Without relentless human effort, cleared land goes back to scrub in a few seasons and to forest in a century. Despite the power of these natural forces, English landowners decided in the 17th century to create private landscapes for themselves that defy north European ecology and to impose on their immediate surroundings those elements of classicism which they knew their Italian and many of their French equivalents enjoyed by inheritance. They began to build stone palaces in classical style, to lay out severely formal gardens on their doorsteps, and to reorder the more distant landscape versions into those idealized Italian landscapes painted by Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin with which they filled their picture galleries. There is, within a mile of my house in Wiltshire, one of the greatest of English ideal landscapes, the artificial lakeland garden of Stourhead. I often wonder whether the Hoare family, which created it, was not inspired to do so by the southerly vista into Dorset, which typifies that vision of an accidentally perfect England to which I have referred already. There are other such artificial and ideal landscapes at Blenheim and Ditchley north of Oxford, at Stowe in Buckinghamshire, at Castle Howard in Yorkshire, and at Chatsworth in Derbyshire, to name only some of the most famous. Every English county offers to visitors dozens of smaller, less spectacular versions of these models, and the English visit them in their millions, at the tourist season but also throughout the year, to commune with a central belief of their Englishness—that England is a garden, and that to be English is to be a gardener; that in life they are best at home in a garden; and that, in death, a garden is where they belong.

Few English people, of course, can hope to live at Stourhead or Stowe; and, perhaps, they really don't wish to inhabit such idealizations of nature. The English are homebodies, happy if in a fraction of an acre they can recreate some of the elements of that high style. They are greatly helped to do so by one of the longest running national radio programs, *Gardener's Question Time*, whose peripatetic panel of experts weekly instructs millions of listeners in the secrets of gardening practice by answering queries put by mem-



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British cemetery, Bayeux, France, on the 50th anniversary of the Normandy invasion, the beginning of the liberation of Europe.

bers of a local horticultural society that has succeeded in the competition to welcome the broadcast to their town or village. I often think that the enormous popularity of *Gardener's Question Time*, which has been on the air now for nearly 40 years, is a touchstone of the difference between English and American culture. The extremes of climate in the United States, and its highs and lows of fertility and aridity, rule out the viability of a program based on the presumption of uniform temperature and cultivability. More than that, however, *Gardener's Question Time* presumes also that its listeners will have a lifetime to tend the same garden. It is a program for a people who do not move, or move at most a few miles down the road, and it would therefore be untransplantable into the restless mobility of the United States, whose people not only change states but coasts with a frequency that seems reckless, positively unnatural, to the BBC's cozy stay-at-homes.

I have been talking of the English worship of great gardens, the cathedral of their horticultural world. There is, quite as important, an alternative English gar-



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Above: Christian and Jewish grave markers for the soldiers who died defending Hong Kong in World War II at the Stanley Military Cemetery, Hong Kong.
Below left: A child visits the grave of her father, who died in World War II, at a cemetery in Arnhem, Holland, on the 10th anniversary of VE Day.



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dening tradition, that of the cottage plot, the parish church of plantsmen and plantswomen. The great garden is formal and contrived, however artfully integrated into its normal surroundings, and its color tones are modulated and subdued. The cottage garden, by contrast, is spontaneous and informal, full of color and of plants allowed to have their head. The center point of the great garden is the paved or graveled walk running between trimmed topiary. That of the cottage garden is the herbaceous border and rambling rose. Both are equally English, though they have different origins. Toward the end of the 19th century, a new generation of English garden designers succeeded in combining these traditions into what is now accepted to be the classic English garden. Its layout draws on the 17th-century fashion for formality, on the 18th-century idealization of nature and classical civilization, and on a more recent enthusiasm for the vernacular. Some great gardens were adapted to accommodate the herbaceousness previously excluded as vulgar and unaristocratic, as at Arley Hall in Cheshire, where the beds date to 1846. Many more, the work of the newly rich, were radical reorganizations at old houses that had either fallen into decay or were designed in the new fashion from the start. Such houses were not necessarily large, but were built to the highest standards and given spaciousness by a deliberate policy of extending the architecture of the house out into the surrounding walls, terraces, summerhouses, and topiary hedges. The most sought after designer of these new houses was the young architect Edwin Lutyens, and the most inventive designer of the gardens associated with them, the self-taught horticulturist Gertrude Jekyll. They were often to cooperate. Lutyens helped Jekyll with what remains one of the most influential of all English gardening books, *Gardens for Small Country*



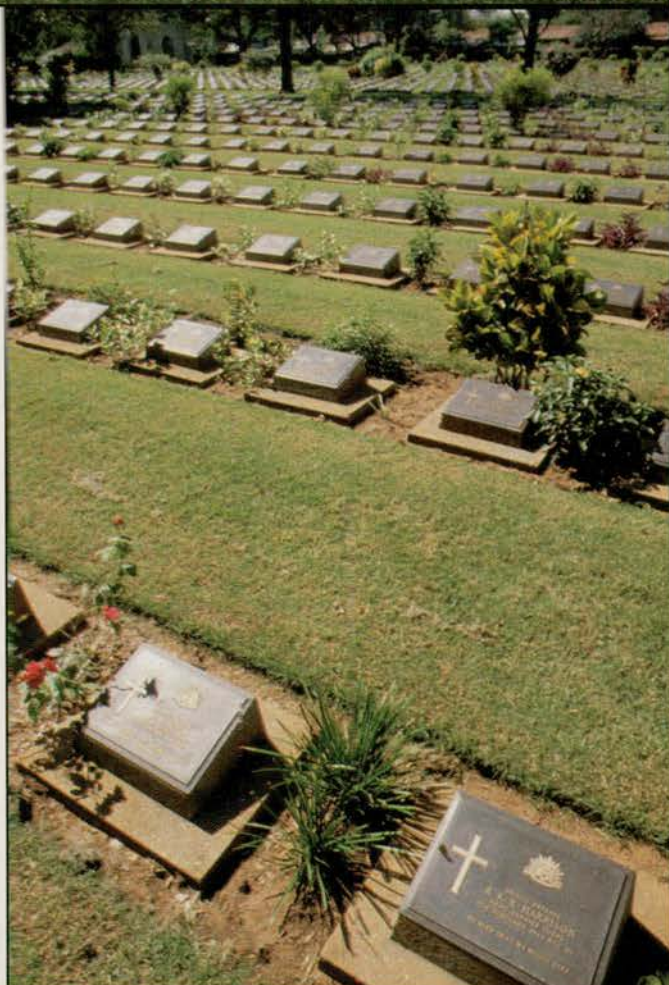
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Above: A British World War II cemetery in Taukkyan, near Rangoon, Burma. At right: Graves of British soldiers at a cemetery near the River Kwai in Kanchanaburi, Thailand. They were killed by the Japanese during World War II while building the railroad in Burma.

Houses, and the results of their collaboration can be seen at such places as Orchards, Surrey; Marsh Court, Hampshire; Ampot House in the same county; and Folly Farm, Berkshire.

Lutyens particularly favored low stone walls, paved walks, pergolas, and pavilions in stripped-down classical style. Jekyll encouraged the planting of dwarf roses, creeping ground cover, gray and silver border plants, azaleas, and climbers such as hydrangea and wisteria. Their joint purpose was to soften masonry with vegetation that liked support, to sharpen natural forms with architectural straight lines, and to relieve the grays and browns of stone and brick with blues, yellows, and purples.

IT WAS IN exactly such surroundings that the tear-stained woman and I found each other, when she clutched my arm and burst into her outpourings about not minding if her son were killed. I was not the least surprised by her reaction. I had heard it, in different versions, many times before in many parts of the world. We were, as it happened, on Crete, in the Suda



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Beautiful flowers adorn the gravestones at this British war cemetery in Medjez El Bab, Tunisia.

Bay British War Cemetery, where 1,571 servicemen are buried, mainly British but including large numbers of New Zealanders and Australians. Most were killed resisting the German airborne invasions of May 20, 1941, a disaster for the German parachutists involved, of whom 2,000 died on the first day, but a strategic victory for Hitler, who secured the island despite those catastrophic losses.

We might, however, have been in any one of the larger Commonwealth War Graves Commission's cemeteries anywhere in the world. The dead of the British Empire and Commonwealth of the two world wars are buried in 134 countries, from Algeria to Zimbabwe, including the former Soviet Union. In the list are the two tiny states of San Marino and Monaco, each containing two graves. The smallest cemetery is on Ocracoke Island, off North Carolina, with four graves; the largest is the Thiepval cemetery in the department of the Somme, France, where the bodies of 70,000 soldiers are buried, and the names of those missing in the great Somme battle of the First World War are commemorated. These are cemeteries proper, of which the Commission maintains about 2,000 throughout the world. Besides these are 23,000 individual graves or plots in nonmilitary cemeteries, for

which the Commission also cares. One such grave is in Kilminster churchyard, under my bedroom window, and I see it every morning when I draw the curtains. It is that of Private S. Prince, Somerset Light Infantry, who died at age 22 on May 5, 1916—home, I presume, on leave from France just before the opening of the Battle of the Somme. Every two years an official of the Commission comes to scrub the headstone—one of over a million identical headstones in the world—and to cut the grass, tidy the surroundings, and ensure that Private Prince continues to repose in dignity.

There are, of course, many more dead than headstones. In every French cathedral a plaque, inscribed in French and English, displays the text *To the Glory of God and in Memory of One Million Men of the British Empire Who Died in the Great War and of Whom the Greater Number Rest in France*. Of those killed in France, the bodies of nearly half could not be found or were unidentifiable, while most of the naval dead were lost at sea. There is a similar proportion of missing among the dead of the Second World War. In some way the Commission commemorates the names of all of them. The numbers are staggering. Nearly 1.7 million names are commemorated, of which 900,000 are those of identified servicemen and women lying in marked graves. There are over 700,000 monumental inscriptions to the missing, but 200,000 of those are on graves reading *Known Unto God*, because the remains recovered by the Commission were unrecognizable. There are other variations. Some headstones record a casualty "known to be buried near this spot"; others, two or more names of bodies too intermingled to be buried separately.

An attempt was made in the immediate aftermath of the First World War to represent in visual terms what the Empire's loss meant (*Courage Remembered* by Edwin Gibson and G. Kingsley Ward, 1989):

Imagine [the dead] moving in one continuous column, four abreast. As the head of that column reaches the Cenotaph in London, the last four men would be in Durham [240 miles away, in the north of England]. In Canada that column would stretch across the land from Quebec to Ottawa; in Australia, from Melbourne to Canberra; in South Africa, from Bloemfontein to Pretoria; in New Zealand, from Christchurch to Wellington; in Newfoundland, from coast to coast; and in India, from Lahore to Delhi. [I might interpolate for an American audience: in the United States, from Boston to Philadelphia.] It would take those million men 84 hours, or three-and-a-half days, to march past the Cenotaph in London.

These distances may be nearly doubled since the Second World War, in which another 700,000—as opposed to 400,000 United States—servicemen died.

How was this vast army of the dead to be decently interred? That was the question that confronted the British government very soon after the first mass casualty lists began to be published in the national newspapers in 1915. The dead of Britain's earlier wars, frequent though those had been, were comparatively few in number. They had been buried near where they fell, commemorated by stones raised by their friends or their regiments, if commemorated at all. It was a disposal accepted by the poor from which the bulk of the army's soldiers came. In civil life the parents of many of them would have gone to an unmarked pauper's



Veterans from the 48 RM Commandos who landed on 'Juno' Beach pay their respects to their dead comrades at the British Military Cemetery in Douvres, France.

grave in town or city. In the countryside a wooden cross, soon to decay, would have indicated their plot in the churchyard. In my village, a resident has calculated, 25,000 bodies have been buried in the churchyard since the Norman Conquest, yet it contains only a few dozen stones, those of the better-off and none older than the 18th century.

By the beginning of the 20th century, however, the British were as a people better off. The funeral had become a major working-class ritual, perhaps the only public event in an individual's passage through life, and a marked headstone had become a symbol of respectability, that respectability which Victorian Britain had made its chief outward value. For that reason, though for many others, it was unthinkable that the dead of a national army, dying in their tens of thousands for King, Country, and Empire, should be left in hurried, unmarked graves, marked if at all by some makeshift cross nailed together by the deceased's comrades. In practice, things were worse than that. Bodies were being thrown together into abandoned trenches, sometimes in dozens; individual burials might be marked by a stake, dozens of which were kept ready by a graves registration officer, on which was affixed a metal plate stamped from a "penny in the slot" machine of a type common in railway stations. At best, given time and a spell out of the trenches, the soldiers might dig graves in French or Belgian churchyards; those began rapidly to fill up. Moreover, the better-off among the bereaved were erecting private memorials of a type the majority could not afford, and some were repatriating the bodies. Both practices struck the wrong note in what the government represented, and the population endorsed, as a national war.

Very early on, therefore, Britain established what, in retrospect, may be seen as several remarkable and nationally distinctive principles for the burial and com-

memoration of its war dead. One was that there should be no private memorials, "on account of the difficulties of treating impartially the claims advanced by persons of different social standing." Another was that there should be no repatriation of bodies, because of the commonly held feeling that, as one officer put it, "in spite of all differences of rank, we were comrades, brothers dwelling together in unity." A third was that officers and soldiers should be buried identically and together because, as Fabian Ware, the first War Graves Commission director, wrote, "In 99 cases out of a hundred [officers] will tell you that if they are killed [they] would wish to be among their men." A fourth, the most important, was that each fallen soldier should be honored individually, so that, even in a war of mass slaughter, each should be represented as a hero in an epic of collective heroism.

These principles were to be greatly elaborated and their implementation standardized in the years to come. That was the achievement of Fabian Ware himself, a modest man who nevertheless deserves to be recognized as a major semiologist of British culture in the 20th century. Semiology was not, of course, his purpose; semiologist was not a title he would have welcomed or even understood. That, nevertheless, is his title to fame, and it is richly deserved. Through him a peculiarly English—I say English in preference to British—language of symbols, some from nature, some from the mind or hand of man, has come to stand as a representation of how the nation wished to be seen by itself and by other nations at the end of its passage through an ordeal that tested the roots of its culture



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Above: Belgians tidying Tyne Cot Cemetery in occupied Europe, 1942.

Below: Cemetery in Rabaul, New Britain Island.



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and identity to destruction. Some representation of this language of symbols can, as I have said, be found at sites in almost every country in the world, and I can testify to its continuing power to move the emotions of those who come upon them from personal experience. Wherever they are found—and I have found them in places as far apart as Alabama, Israel, Pakistan, and South Africa—the British are moved with pride and to tears, tears shed also by people who are not British at all. Fabian Ware, by instinct rather than artifice, succeeded in creating a great cultural artifact at which, I do not think I exaggerate in claiming, generations to come will wonder—as we do at the relics of the Roman legions—long after Britain's worldwide power is only a memory for historians.

Ware had much help. In 1915, soon after he was appointed, the French government wrote a law deeding land for the cemeteries of foreign soldiers as a *sépulture perpétuelle*. It passed, but not without opposition, for it was against the local traditions both of storing the bones of the dead in ossuaries, a cheap and compact way of burying remains en masse, and of reusing burial plots. As a result, however, British war graves were to be the resting places of individuals in legal perpetuity. He also had assistance from several foremost British architects, including Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker, who with Lutyens was a designer of the Empire's great public buildings. Rudyard Kipling's role in the design of the Imperial War Graves was a poignant one. His only son, John, was too myopic to meet the army's medical standards, and he used his influence to secure John a commission in the Irish Guards. John was among the regiment's missing after the Second Battle of Loos in 1915. For several years Rudyard and his American wife, Carrie, toured the military hospitals in France seeking news of their lost one, without avail. At a moment of alleviation in his grief, he wrote a short poem always quoted among his selected works:

My son was killed while laughing at some jest, I would I
knew
What it was, and it might serve me in a time when jests
are few.

The truth, never communicated to the parents but discovered by a regimental comrade from survivors of John's company, was that he was last seen crying with pain from a wound in the mouth. His body, lost for decades, has only recently been identified by officials of the Commission, and his headstone is appropriately re-engraved.

It is acutely ironic, therefore, that Kipling was responsible for conceiving the inscriptions carved on the headstones and monumental sculpture of the Commission's cemeteries. These monuments take three forms. One is a high columnar cross, bearing a bronze sword, known as the Cross of Sacrifice. The second is a monolith, the Stone of Remembrance, on which are carved words from Ecclesiasticus, adapted by Kipling: *Their Name Liveth For Evermore*. The adaptation was made to avoid giving offense to Hindus, so many of whom died in the service of India's King-Emperor. The third is the universal and standard headstone, two feet eight inches high, one foot three inches broad. It is cut from white Portland stone, engraved with the de-

ceased's regimental badge—Private Prince's, below my bedroom window, shows the mural crown, slung bugle, and battle honor "Jelalabad" of the Somerset Light Infantry—and also with an appropriate religious symbol. Today, 1.5 million bear the Christian cross; 65,000, the Muslim crescent; 100,000, the appropriate Sikh or Hindu symbol; 10,000 the Star of David; and 10,000, Buddhist or Confucian symbols. The stone is also inscribed with the dead serviceman or service-woman's number, name, decorations, regimental title, age, and date and place of death; or as many details as could be ascertained when a body was disinterred for reburial—for example, *A Captain/Canadian Infantry*. At the bottom of the stone, relatives may place a personal inscription of up to 60 characters. These inscriptions are the exception rather than the rule, itself an indication of how heartfelt is popular acceptance of the guiding principle of uniformity of remembrance. They are quite conventional—*Peace Perfect Peace*, for example, or *He Died That Others Might Live*. Eccentric or distasteful inscriptions are not allowed. Occasionally, however, an extra tug to the heartstrings is given by a particularly apt line of poetry or some quite artless phrase of lament, the labor of a young widow or of a family struggling together to express their love for a son and brother who will not return.

Kipling also struggled to find a form of words that would dignify without mawkishness the grave of a body that could not be identified. Eventually he hit upon the brief phrase *A Soldier of the Great War Known Unto God*. Unidentified burials of the Second World War are inscribed *A Soldier* [or *A Sailor* or *An Airman*] *of the 1939-45 War Known Unto God*. Altogether 204,145 graves in the Commission's care are now inscribed in one of these ways. The only other variations to the headstones are the use of the words *Served As* when a man enlisted under an alias, and the phrases *Buried In This Cemetery*, *Buried Near This Spot*, *Buried Elsewhere In This Cemetery*, and *Known To Be Buried In This Cemetery* when records allow such certainties but remains were not found. *Believed To Be Buried In This Cemetery* is sometimes seen, and, for wartime graves lost and defying rediscovery, Kipling chose the words *Their Glory Shall Not Be Blotted Out*, also from Ecclesiasticus. The rarest of all variations is the substitution for the religious symbol of a facsimile of the Victoria Cross or the George Cross, Britain's highest awards for bravery.

None of this symbolism could be imposed until the lost bodies of the dead were found and the makeshift cemeteries of the war reordered. Work began while the Great War was still in progress, but even at its end the condition of many burial places was deeply distressing to relatives who began to make their way to France and Belgium to find where lost ones lay. Too often the sites they discovered were patches of mud or torn earth, bereft of vegetation or covered by weed and rank grass. A scheme of order had to be devised. The task was given to Sir Frederic Kenyon, the director of the British Museum. Within the guiding principles of uniformity of commemoration and an individual grave for all recovered remains, he proposed that each cemetery should either "have the appearance of a small park or garden in no way recognizable as a ceme-



A red floral wreath sits on the step in front of a large tomb at the Caterpillar Valley Cemetery in Longueval, France, the second largest cemetery on the Somme. The cemetery contains the remains, most unidentified, of those who fought in the Battle of the Somme in World War I.

tery," or that it "be marked by rows of headstones of a uniform height and width, the graves themselves being leveled to a flat surface and planted with turf and flowers." The rows of headstones would "carry on the military idea, giving the appearance as of a battalion on parade."

The second alternative was adopted; but, by some creative inspiration of those who undertook the work, the first alternative was integrated with it. The Commission cemeteries are unmistakably that; but they are also unmistakably parks or gardens in the classic English style. How did that come about? We can only guess that it was because the Commission, when it began to recruit maintenance staff, decided for administrative reasons not to enlist locals but to commission British firms that would send their own staff abroad. The practical work was therefore begun not by French or Belgian laborers but by British gardeners, already experienced as horticulturists or later trained at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew. The style they brought with them was that which



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Lutyens and Jekyll—she actually drew up plans for several cemeteries—taught through their seminal gardening book. By March 1921, there were 1,362 gardeners employed; many were to settle in France or Belgium, marry local women, found little English communities, and put their sons into the Commission's employment. These communities still exist and now have equivalents in Africa, Southeast Asia, India, Pakistan, all trained in and so carrying on the tradition of classic English country-house gardening in the desert and the tropics as well as in temperate northern Europe.

Other, deeper, literary influences were at work. The Great War provoked in Britain, uniquely among combatant nations, a poetic response. A very great deal of it was arcadian and pastoral. That, again, should not be surprising. As Paul Fussell has noted in his famous book, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, "Half the poems in *The Oxford Book of English Verse* are about flowers and a third seem to be about roses." He does not do a similar count for First World War poetry, but the result might be the same. Certainly some of the most famous are suffused with gardening themes. I would cite first Edward Shanks's "Drilling in Russell Square," from the earliest days of the war:

The withered leaves that drift in Russell Square
Will turn to mud and dust and moulder there
And we shall moulder in the plains of France
Before these leaves have ceased from their last dance.

Shanks was all too prophetic. Hundreds of thousands of the drilling men of 1914 and 1915 did moulder in the plains of France, becoming dust in the mud of the battlefields. The spectacle of their makeshift graves inspired one of the most famous of the war poems, by the Canadian John McCrae, himself to be one of the war dead. Its fame is a principal reason for the British custom of wearing a poppy on Remembrance Sunday:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow.
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Those themes were also used by Rupert Brooke in what remains the most famous of all English poems of the war, "The Soldier," which I can still repeat by heart from childhood memory:

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust conceal'd;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Wash'd by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

I cannot prove but I do feel—a poetic certainty—that the idea of making "some corner of a foreign field" a place that would be "forever England" was a principal motivation of the idea of the war cemetery as a pastoral, arcadian garden. It has, unconsciously or not, been the result.

WHAT HAS been the effect of this partly intentional, partly accidental effort to honor the hundreds of thousands of British and Imperial war dead within the principles of individual yet uniform commemoration? It is different from that achieved by the French, who also buried their dead individually, but under a cross, which produces en masse a spiky and geometrical effect altogether lacking the mood of repose so immediately felt in all British war cemeteries. It is certainly different from that chosen by the Germans, whose dead lie in multiple or sometimes in mass graves—like that at Langemarck in Belgium, where 36,000 bodies of the students killed in the First Battle of Ypres are buried under a single giant slab—and whose cemeteries, heavy with evergreens and dark oaks, speak only of collective grief and national tragedy. It is also different from that which I associate with American cemeteries. There the small size of the headstones, a pattern chosen after the Civil War, the paucity of inscribed personal detail, and, as at Arlington, the intermixture of large, private memorials, often to generals or distinguished civilians, diminishes the sense both of uniformity and of the importance of the individual; while the absence of flowering plants and horticultural design brings a harshness quite at variance with the gardened serenity of the British equivalent. It may be for such reasons that the United States began to permit during the First World War the repatri-

ation of bodies by bereaved families, an understandable response to grief but one that undermines the principle that those who fought and died in comradeship should also be buried in comradeship.

Of the effect of the method of commemoration chosen by the British toward the end of their national tragedy of 1914-18 I have no doubt. It created a deep bond of unity between the bereaved, and within the nation as a whole, which reached out to comprehend the peoples of the Commonwealth and Empire as well. The emotional touch was so sure that it extinguished—after a brief intense controversy in 1919—all demand for repatriation whatsoever. The dead of the Second World War are buried in exactly the same manner as those of the First, and today the only demand met by the government regarding burial policy is that war widows should be assisted with travel costs in visiting their husbands' graves. This has been conceded, and elderly women are now traveling as far away as Burma and Malaysia on cemetery pilgrimages—without exception returning consoled, often positively inspired, by the beauty of the setting in which they find their husbands buried.

Often they find a husband's grave next to that of an Indian Muslim or a Burmese Buddhist, exactly similarly commemorated, and that too has had, if not a unifying, at least a palliative effect. If the British parted with their imperial subjects on the comparatively unacrimonious terms they did, that may be in part due to the fact that they chose to make no distinction in the way or in the place where they buried those who fought the Empire's wars. Certainly it is remarkable that the rarest of the War Graves Commission's tasks is the repair of desecration. Their cemeteries in former imperial or colonial territory are almost never desecrated, even at times of outburst of nationalist rancor against the old imperial master.

But then neither are they in countries that were never part of the Empire or Commonwealth—former enemy countries, like Germany, or those that have subsequently fallen into war with Britain, like Argentina or Iraq. Why should that be? To trample the graves of the enemy is an apparently universal if regrettable human instinct. One of the saddest places I have ever seen is the deliberately abandoned and untended German war cemetery at Piontek in Poland, immaculately maintained until January 1945, now a wilderness. The only explanation I can offer for the immunity of the British cemeteries is that Lutyens and Jekyll and Kipling and Ware and their army of anonymous gardeners succeeded in creating something symbolically more powerful than a site for ritual desecration, a site of universally venerable sanctuary. There is a holiness in those cemeteries both of nature and its beauties and of religion in all its forms that defies hatred and brutishness, speaks of the immortal, and touches eternity.

If foreigners are moved by those emanations, how much more the British themselves. When in 1920 they buried an unknown warrior in the national shrine of Westminster Abbey—the first of many unknown warriors later to be buried by other countries—they chose this inscription for his grave: *They Buried Him Among the Kings Because He Had Done Good Towards God and Towards His House*. In burying their

million and more warriors, known and unknown, in cemeteries that resembled and evoked the country-house gardens of the rich and propertied, they in effect buried them, if not among kings, then among knights and lords. It was a decision that ensured the individual remembrance of the most humble, exactly as members of the more famous families are remembered in their ancestral plots, an evergreen and renewable remembrance, a celebration of pedigree and a testament of continual youth.

"I always feel young when I come here" are words I remember from a visitor to another British war cemetery, which holds the dead of the Battle of Normandy in William the Conqueror's city of Bayeux. The war widow who spoke was one of a party in which all had lost their husbands 50 years before. None had remarried; the years had taken their toll, but they returned each year to place flowers on the graves of men killed in their twenties in the fight to liberate Europe from Hitler in 1944. "I always feel young," she repeated, "just as if I was the same age as when I last saw him." She had grown very stout. It was difficult to picture the bride of the months before D-Day. "Do stop, Betty," one of her friends interrupted, "or you'll make us all cry." It was I who was overcome with tears. The row of headstones of young infantrymen of the East Yorkshire Regiment, the roses growing around the feet of their widows, the strange glow of happiness that suffused their faces, were altogether too much for me. I was unable to speak, fortunately not unable to repress my impulse to embrace each in turn; to do so would have been an affront to our Englishness, to the fundamental Englishness of the place and the moment.

It is that same Englishness that overwhelmed my weeping companion in the Suda Bay cemetery on Crete. The tears I had shed in Normandy helped me to understand hers. Of course she would not, in a certain sense, have minded if her son had been killed. For Britain's war cemeteries create an aesthetic which is actually strong enough to prevail over the agony of maternal or connubial grief. To see a child to the grave brings the harshest pain human sensibility can suffer. Yet to find a child—or a husband or a father—buried as a hero, among coevals and comrades all raised to heroic states by a symbolism central to one's own culture, is to experience the transcendence of pain through the keenest emotions of pride in family and nation. The garden is a metaphor for the idea of beauty, of renewal, and of immortality to many peoples and many creeds. If this is indeed an age without heroes, seeking monuments that might still touch every human heart, the ideal garden may be what is sought. Certainly it is some image of the 2,000 English gardens we have created around the world that allows us to repeat each November on Remembrance Sunday, without any false sentiment, some of the most famous verses the Great War inspired—Laurence Binyon's "For the Fallen (September 1914)"—verses that are an epitaph for heroes of any time or place:

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them. □

THE TEENING OF CHILDHOOD

(Continued from page 25)

in the growing number of kid magazines.²³

The seduction of children with dreams of teen sophistication and tough independence, which began with Barbie and intensified markedly in the last decade, appears to have had the desired effect: It has undermined childhood by turning children into teen consumers. This new breed of children won't go to children's movies and they won't play with toys. One of the stranger ironies of the rise of the tween is that toy manufacturers, who with the introduction of Barbie began the direct hard sell to children and were the first to push the teening of American childhood, have been hoist with their own petard. The 1998-99 Toy Industry Factbook of the Toy Manufacturer's Association says that the industry used to think of kids between birth and 14 as their demographic audience, but with the emergence of tweens they have had to shrink that audience to birth to 10.²⁴ Even seven- and eight-year-olds are scorning Barbie.²⁵

Who needs a doll when you can live the life of the teen vamp yourself? Cosmetic companies are finding a bonanza among this age group. Lines aimed at tweens include nail polish, hair mascara, lotions, and lip products like lipstick, lip gloss, "lip lix." Sweet Georgia Brown is a cosmetics line for tweens that includes body paints and scented body oils with come-hither names like Vanilla Vibe or Follow Me Boy. The Cincinnati design firm Libby Peszyk Kattiman has introduced a line of bikini underwear for girls. There are even fitness clubs and personal trainers for tweens in Los Angeles and New York.²⁶

Marketers point at broad demographic trends to explain these changes in the child market, and they are at least partially correct. Changes in the family have given children more power over shopping decisions. For the simple reason that fewer adults are around most of the time, children in single-parent homes tend to take more responsibility for obtaining food and clothes. Market researchers have found that these kids become independent consumers earlier than those in two-parent homes.²⁷ Children of working mothers also tend to do more of the family shopping when at around age eight or nine they can begin to get to the store by themselves. Though candy, toy, and cereal manufacturers had long been well aware of the money potential of tween cravings, by the mid-eighties, even though their absolute numbers were falling, tweens began to catch the eye of a new range of businesses, and ads and marketing magazines started to tout the potential of this new niche. The reason was simple: Market research revealed that more and more children in this age group were shopping for their own clothes, shoes, accessories, and drug-store items—indeed, they were even shopping for the family groceries. Just as marketers had once targeted housewives, now they were aiming at kids.²⁸ Jeans manufacturer Jordache was one of the first companies to spot the trend. "My customers are kids who can walk into a store with either their own money or their mothers'," the company's director of advertising explained at the time. "The dependent days of tugging on Mom or Dad's sleeve are

over." Now as the number of children is rising again, their appeal is even more irresistible. Packaged Facts, a division of the worldwide research firm Find/SVP, has said that the potential purchasing power of today's kids "is the greatest of any age or demographic group in our nation's history."²⁹

And there is another reason for the increasing power of children as consumers: By the time they are tweens, American children have simply learned to expect a lot of stuff.³⁰ Many of them have been born to older mothers; the number of first babies born to women over 30 has quadrupled since 1970, and the number born to women over 40 doubled in the six years between 1984 and 1990. Older mothers are more likely to have established careers and to be in the kind of financial position that allows them to shower their kids with toys and expensive clothes.³¹ Also, grandparents are living longer and more comfortably, and they often arrive with an armload of toys, sports equipment, and fancy dresses. (The products of the children's clothes company Osh Kosh B'Gosh are known in the trade as "granny bait.") Divorce has also helped to inflate the child market: Many American children divide their time between parents, multiplying by two the number of soccer balls and Big Bird toothbrushes they must own. But as we have seen before, impersonal social forces have found support in human decisions. Important as they are, demographics by themselves can't explain 10-year-olds who have given up dolls for mascara and body oil. The teening of childhood has been a consummation the media devoutly wished—and planned. The media has given tweens a group identity with its own language, music, and fashion. It has done this by flattering their sense of being hip and aware almost-teens rather than out-of-it little kids dependent on their parents. On discovering the rising number of child customers, Jordache Jeans did not simply run ads for kids; they ran ads showing kids saying things like "Have you ever seen your parents naked?" and "I hate my mother. She's prettier than me." When Bonne Bell cosmetics discovered the rising sales potential of younger shoppers, they did not merely introduce a tween line, which some parents might think bad enough; they introduced it with the kind of in-your-face language that used to send children to bed without dinner: "We know how to be cool. We have our own ideas. And make our own decisions. Watch out for us." Sassaby's "Watch your mouth, young lady" is a smirking allusion to old-fashioned childhood that is meant to sell a line of lip "huggers" and "gloss overs."

There is little reason to think that children have found the freedom and individuality that liberationists assumed they would find now that they have been liberated from old-fashioned childhood and its adult guards. The rise of the child consumer and the child market itself is compelling evidence that children will always seek out some authority for rules about how to dress, talk, and act. Today's school-age children, freed from adult guidance, turn to their friends, who in turn rely on a glamorous and flattering media for the relevant cultural messages. Recent studies have found that children are forming cliques at younger ages than in previous years and that those cliques have strict rules

about dress, behavior, and leisure. By the fifth or sixth grade, according to *Peer Power: Preadolescent Culture and Identity*, girls are gaining status "from their success at grooming, clothes, and other appearance-related variables."³² Teachers and principals also see an increasing number of 10- and 11-year-olds who have given up toys for hair mousse and name-brand jeans and who heckle those who do not. What matters to this new breed of child is, according to Bruce Friend, vice president of worldwide research and planning at Nickelodeon, "being part of the in-crowd" and "being the first to know what's cool."³³ These "free" children "are extremely fad conscious"; moreover, according to *American Demographics*, tweens' attraction to fads has "no saturation points."³⁴ Look for the tween consumer to become even more powerful.

A diminished home life and an ever more powerful media constitute a double blow against the conditions under which individuality flourishes. Whereas in the past eccentric or bookish children might have had the privacy of their home to escape the pressures of their media-crazed peers, today such refuge has gone the way of after-school milk and cookies. And if you think that at least such children have been freed of the pressure of yesterday's domineering fathers and frustrated mothers, you might want to reconsider. As Hannah Arendt once noted, "The authority of a group, even a child group, is always considerably stronger and more tyrannical than the severest authority of an individual person can ever be." The opportunity for an individual to rebel when bound to a group is "practically nil"; few adults can do it.³⁵ The truth is, yesterday's parent-controlled childhood protected children not only from sex, from work, and from adult decisions but also from the dominance of peers and from the market, with all its pressures to achieve, its push for status, its false lures, its passing fads.

But in the anticultural filiararchy which is replacing traditional childhood, adults no longer see their job as protecting children from the market. In fact, it is not that the child's hurried entrance into the market means that parents are increasingly failing to socialize children. It's the other way around. Children are viewed by manufacturers as the "opinion leaders in the household," according to a vice president at Keebler.³⁶ Manufacturers believe that children are exercising influence over family purchases never before remotely associated with the young. Holiday Inn and Delta Airlines have established marketing programs aimed at children, and *Sports Illustrated for Kids* publishes ads from American Airlines, IBM, and car manufacturers.³⁷

While simply turning off the TV would help, at this point television is only one part of the picture. Kids learn of their sophisticated independence from retail displays and promotions, from magazines and direct mailings. With their captive audience, schools, too, have become an advertiser's promised land: Kids see ads in classrooms, on book order forms, on Channel One, on the Internet, on school buses, and now even in textbooks. Book order forms distributed in schools throughout the country from the putatively educational firm Scholastic look like cartoons and provide children with the opportunity to order stickers, auto-

graph books, fan biographies, and books based on popular movies and television shows. Practically every Fortune 500 company has a school project, according to the *New York Times*, and many administrators expect that in the near future we will be seeing signs like CHEERLEADERS BROUGHT TO YOU BY REEBOK in school gyms.³⁸ "It isn't enough just to advertise on television," Carol Herman, a senior vice president of Grey Advertising, explains. "You've got to reach the kids throughout their day—in school, as they're shopping at the mall ... or at the movies. You've got to become part of the fabric of their lives."³⁹

The scorched earth policy in the name of the filiararchy requires that ever younger children be treated as potential customers, once again in the guise of education. When *Sesame Street* arrived on the airwaves in 1969, no one imagined that preschoolers could be a significant market segment. In fact, the improbability of preschool purchasing power was the reason *Sesame Street* had to appear on public television in the first place; no one wanted to put a lot of money into creating and broadcasting a program for kids who had no purchasing power. How shortsighted that was! By 1994 Children's Television Workshop was bringing in \$120 million a year largely on the strength of its over 5,000 licensed products. The list includes not just educational items like books and audiotapes but bubble bath, pajamas, underwear, and Chef Boyardee Sesame Street pasta. Toy manufacturers gradually caught on to the power of the littlest people, especially where their education was concerned. The number of preschool toys exploded in the decades after *Sesame Street* was introduced, and many of them were stamped with a seal of approval from some expert or other—or with the image of Ernie or Big Bird, which in the minds of many amounted to the same thing.

And now *Teletubbies* has arrived to help carve out the pre-preschool market and to give power to the littlest people. *Teletubbies* was designed for one- and two-year-olds, and though no one has ever explained how it could possibly be educational for babies to watch television, it is clear that when toddlers see pictures of the four vividly hued plush and easily identified characters (with television screens on their stomachs) on bottles or bibs, they will cry for them and PBS will rake it in. In anticipation of opening up this new market segment, the media went into overdrive. Pictures of the characters appeared in ads in trade and consumer magazines and were plastered on buses in New York City and on a giant billboard in Times Square. The show was a topic on *Letterman*, *Today*, and *Nightline*. "If this isn't the most important toy at Christmas this year, then something desperately wrong will have happened," gloated Kenn Viselman, whose Itsy Bitsy Entertainment Company has the rights to *Teletubbies* products. "This show had more advance press than *Titanic*." Wondered one critic, "Where does it end: A TV in the amniotic sac?" But marketers were thrilled; according to the president of another licensing company, before now "the one-to-two-year-old niche hasn't been filled very well."⁴⁰ The one-to-two-year-old niche? McNeal has said that children become aware of the market as early as two months of age.⁴¹

There is no more unmistakable sign of the end of childhood as Americans have known it. □

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WHAT WE MEAN BY THE WEST

(Continued from page 15)

ought to be reintroduced. Some call for a revival of Western Civ, albeit updated in such a way as to accommodate new historiographical trends. Others insist on world history courses as necessary to introduce young Americans to the globalized, multipolar world they live in today. Unfortunately, world history itself has often been contaminated by what I regard as patently false assertions of the equality of all cultural traditions. Every flower has an equal right to bloom, say the multiculturalists, just as the young rebels of the 1960s said that every subspecialty had equal value in the curriculum. Neither of these propositions is true.

One cannot know everything, hence one must make choices. And just as some facts are more important to know than others, so certain cultures have displayed skills superior to others in every time and place throughout history. Simply imagine living in proximity to a competitor—be it a business, tribe, ethnic group, or nation—possessed of skills greater than yours. There is no use asserting that your culture is just as good as his. It palpably is not, and you must do something about it. Perhaps you will borrow from your rival in an attempt to catch up, in which case your differences shrink, or perhaps you will rally your people to repel the rivals to keep them at a distance, in which case your differences magnify. But one way or another you must change your own ways.

Superiority, real and perceived, and inferiority, real and perceived, are the substance of human intercourse and the major stimulus to social change throughout the course of history. Those actions and reactions, ambivalences and conflicts born of perceived disadvantage, have made human beings what we are and conditioned our behavior. Now, in terms of Western Civ and what our young people need to know about themselves and their world, it seems to me that the obvious globalization of human contacts and interactions means that the study of civilizations in isolation no longer suffices. We must teach and learn world history so as to prepare ourselves to live in a world in which the West, no less than "the rest," must respond to challenges from abroad. World history must make space for all the peoples and cultures in the world, but it must also recognize the fact that events in some places and times were, and are, more important than others. And the principle of selection is simply this: What do we need to know in order to understand how the world became what we perceive it to be today?

Thus, we must focus the attention of our students on the principal seats of innovation throughout history, while remaining aware of the costly adaptations and adjustments, and in many cases the suffering of those conquered or displaced by dint of their proximity to those seats of innovation. The main story line, therefore, is the accumulation of human skills, organization, and knowledge across the millennia, which permitted human beings to exercise power and acquire wealth through concerted action among larger and larger groups of people across greater and greater distances until we reach our present era of global interaction.

Now, in the last four or five centuries the West defined as the European core plus overseas periphery is certainly the major player. But it has not been the only one, and lately we see signs that the center of highest skills may indeed be migrating to the Pacific Ocean littoral, just as it shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic littoral after the year 1650. A proper history of the world needs to make clear that such shifts have occurred in the past and may occur again in the future, and that the mechanism by which they occur is successful borrowing from the prior centers of superior skill and incorporation of such skills into a different cultural context able to make new use of them, innovate further, and so become a new center of superior skills.

That is how the West became dominant in the first place, by borrowing from China above all. China had, quite transparently, been the leading center on the globe between 1000 and, say, 1450: Just think of gunpowder, printing, and the compass. Francis Bacon was the first to state explicitly that those borrowed skills were the principal secret to the rise of the West, and he was certainly correct to a large degree. One ought to add the Chinese notion of meritocracy, the examination system for recruitment into a bureaucracy, imported to Europe in the 18th century. These four tools of power, technology, and organization Europeans took from China, domesticated into European culture, and exploited in more radical and far-reaching ways than the Chinese themselves had done.

One of the most visceral issues in our current debate over history curricula is how to reconcile this vision of the human past, which is true to the intellectual purpose of history, with the desire to preserve and pass on American institutions and cultural values, which is true to the civic purpose of history. That is no small problem because liberal multiculturalists are loath to admit the true inequality of cultures, and sometimes undermine our specific national heritage by denigrating it, while conservatives are loath to admit the contingency and possible inferiority of Western and American ways. Yet the conservative response is dangerous too. In fact, it makes the same mistake the Chinese made when confronted by the Europeans. Their past was so brilliant that they could not believe the "South Sea barbarians" mattered. Unfortunately, they found out after 1839 that it did not suffice to tell Europeans that they were immoral to trade in opium. They came anyway, bearing guns with which the Chinese could not cope.

The Turks had exactly the same history with respect to their confrontation with Europe except that it happened earlier, after 1699. They had steadfastly paid no attention to the West until it was too late for them to catch up and adjust their institutions to the European challenge.

If we Americans likewise believe that we possess all the truths that matter—for instance, those expressed by the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and so forth—and need only recite them piously, we will not be able to react intelligently to changes that may occur, or are already in train, in the world around us. We must instead continue to adapt lest we, too, be left

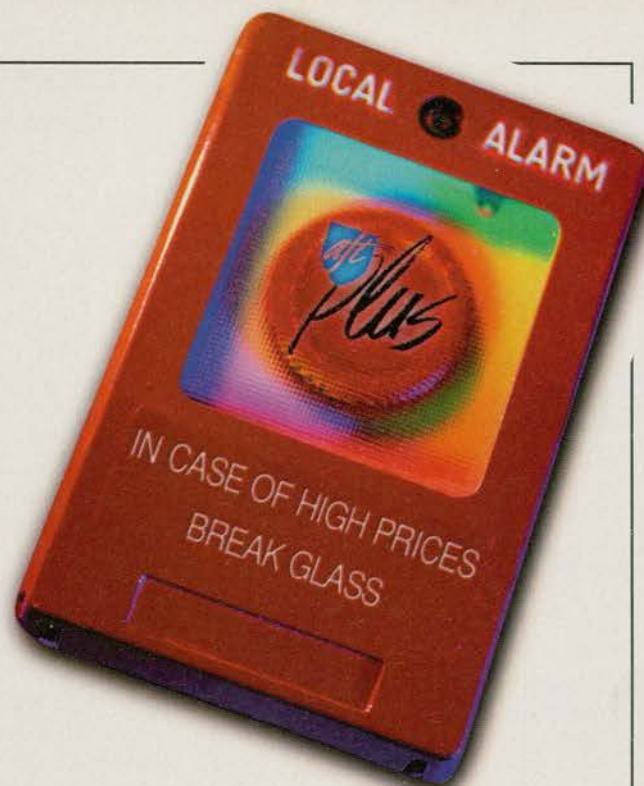
behind, and cultivate an open-mindedness towards the rest of world, and be at the ready to borrow ideas and skills of value. To do so, of course, may require that we adapt, adjust, and even reject treasured aspects of our past.

One obvious example is what I regard as Americans' almost obsessive individualism as compared to commitments made to primary groups in which fellow spirits may meet and share and make life worthwhile. I firmly believe that groups are needed to maintain that private sphere of freedom and fulfillment and creative variety that emerged so stunningly in 17th-century England. But the preservation of that zone of freedom requires that individuals in fact join in groups and choose to devote themselves to common undertakings conducive to the polity's health. That is not to say that groups organized around treasured grievances or anger against all who are different, as displayed by some of the militias and eccentric sectarians today, do not indeed threaten public order and perhaps even the wide world beyond. But for people to spurn all groups, even the family, in the name of individual satisfaction, is no less destructive of culture.

Thus, the choices we make every day about which groups to join and how fully, enthusiastically, and loyally to participate in them will shape the future of our country and the world. I must say that the Internet and other new forms of communication will presumably permit new groups to form around national, ethnic, political, professional, religious, even sports loyalties. Indeed, loyalty to everything from the nuclear family to nationhood to the human race and—if you want to get really cosmic—the DNA form of life—is the potential stuff for a group loyalty even as the rise and fall of groups is the stuff of history. Conflicts among loyalties pose the central moral problem of human life. We all belong to many groups and embody many identities, and how to reconcile them effectively one with another has been the ethical challenge to human beings ever since tight-knit, separate primary groups of hunters and gatherers ceased to be the sole form of human society.

In recent centuries the group called the "nation" has come to the fore. But there is nothing eternal about it, and no one knows what new forms of community may emerge and what new challenges they may pose. It seems to me, therefore, that understanding how groups have interacted in the past is the only preparation for responsible, effective action in the future. And that means that world history is a far better guide than Western Civ alone, which is, in the largest frame, a mere episode in the human saga: an important one, to be sure, which no rational world history would leave out, but an episode just the same.

So insofar as a concept of the West excludes the rest of humanity it is a false and dangerous model. Situating the West within the totality of humankind is the way to go, and we should in our classrooms move as best we can in that direction, believing always in the ennobling effect of enlarging one's circle of sympathies, understanding, and knowledge, and aspiring to share that belief with our students. There can be no higher calling for historians, and above all, for teachers of history. □



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LETTERS

(Continued from page 2)

and how it could succeed in the future.

Lesson #1: Detracking will not magically erase inequalities that already exist. It is clear that the education provided to students in previous years was unequal, no doubt because the "slower" children lacked exposure to the same richness of vocabulary, writing skills, and historical concepts that the "faster" students enjoyed. It would be foolish for anyone to believe that such inequities could be eliminated in a single year. Detracking requires a long-term commitment, which must begin in kindergarten and continue until students graduate from high school.

Lesson #2: Teachers should see children as multitalented and multi-competent. Clearly, the teachers who took part in this program were caring and thoughtful, but they showed a shallow understanding of their students' strengths and weaknesses by classifying them simply as "slow," "middle," and "fast." Was there any attempt to assess their students in other ways? Did the teachers encourage the children to prepare debates, analyze political cartoons, or create artistic representations of the time periods? Teaching a heterogeneous group of students requires a curriculum that acknowledges and celebrates intellectual diversity so that students can succeed in different ways.

Lesson #3: Students are the most valuable resource in making detracking work. One of the distressing facets of this effort was the partitioning of the class into fast and slow students. The students should have been involved in the endeavor from the very beginning, starting with a discussion of the inequities present in the school's tracking system. This would have spawned a mutual support system where students worked to help one another succeed, instead of seeing it as a zero-sum game where attention to one group would only come at the expense of another. Involving students in an effort to create fairness and equity is a wonderful ideal, especially in a social studies class.

Lesson #4: Teachers must be proactive in order to meet the chal-

lenges of diversity. One of the problems cited in the article was that the fast students had a larger vocabulary than the slow ones. This could easily be remedied by issuing word lists before the start of the unit. Clearly, teachers have to think ahead to counter whatever disparities they may encounter.

Lesson #5: Faster is not better. Apparently, the tasks created by these teachers did not require much in the way of analytical thinking, as the "fast" students were able to complete even the most complex assignments unaided and in a few minutes. When we judge students by how much they've accomplished rather than how what they do shapes their understanding of the world, we are relegating education to the completion of a set of low-level tasks that have little meaning. Detracking will only succeed when we abandon the shallow notions of what it means to be engaged in learning.

The results of detracking at Progressive High should not be seen as a reason to abandon our efforts to bring educational fairness to our schools; they are a warning that our efforts are doomed to failure unless we create classrooms where fairness, tolerance, and cooperation are integral parts of the educational structure.

—ROBERT M. BERKMAN

Middle School 88 - The Peter Rouget School
Brooklyn, New York

I am concerned that people who read James Rosenbaum's article will

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conclude that detracking doesn't work. During the more than 30 years in which I have been teaching learning disabled students, I have always had a very broad array of functional levels and ages in my room. I have learned *not* to ask questions that have only one right answer, and I encourage students to share their thinking.

We always go over calendar events related to labor unions, women, Native Americans, African-Americans, etc., as well as what is on PBS during the week. When it's time to work, the students group themselves and help one another. Once my students realize that *they* are responsible for taking an active role in their own education, they do so. They have learned, as Frederick Douglass said, that "without struggle, there is no progress."

I always use "big" words with my students so they become familiar with them. They can easily cope with challenging ideas, as long as they aren't penalized for having difficulty reading on their own. We often read together—in my school we use Zinn's *People's History of the U.S.* as our text. I ask them what they understood from the passage, and then we discuss it. Students don't need to be humiliated, nor do we need to assume that just because they don't have a big vocabulary, they can't think or contribute to a class discussion.

It sounds as though the teachers, and perhaps the author, too, believe that there are "gifted" students, "middle-level students" and "slower" students. Those terms are used throughout the article. I tell my students every day that they are brilliant and capable and that they're going to college—or whatever seems appropriate to contradict their lack of belief in themselves. And, guess what? They all rise to the occasion!

—JUDI HIRSCH
Oakland, California

Although James Rosenbaum's study and the article based on it, "If Tracking is Bad, Is Detracking Better?" focused on only one school, a suburban public high school in the Midwest, the questions it raised seem legitimate both because of the school's makeup and the teachers' strong initial belief in the concept

of detracking.

The conflicts detracking presented seem unsolvable. The pressure to lower standards, teach to the middle, and ignore high-level language and challenging topics in order to keep mid-level students on track would seem to render illegitimate our highest teaching ideals. Also, the harm done to minority or low-income students at both ends of the achievement spectrum indicates that detracking is no answer to the problems created by tracking.

With the current level of funding in most public school districts (as well as stubborn opposition to major overhauls in standards and grading practices), many problem/solution situations just amount to "pouring new wine into old wineskins."

My hat is off to the teachers in Progressive High for facing these challenges head on.

—KATHLYN JOHNSON
First-Grade Teacher
Chicago, Illinois

THE AUTHOR RESPONDS

Judi Hirsch and Robert Berkman know the detracking literature and raise important issues. However, they ignore some key issues. They blame the teachers in my study for having tracking in their hearts. This is grossly inaccurate. As I pointed out, these teachers strongly supported detracking before it began, and they recognized and praised its social benefits throughout. But they did not regard social benefits as sufficient goals. Their criticisms of detracking came from a commitment to academic achievement, which detracking made more difficult.

Hirsch and Berkman criticize the adjectives "fast" and "slow" in describing students. The teachers at "Progressive High" did not use those words in front of students, and they didn't label students. However, they saw that some students learn material more slowly than others, and, that if they ignored this fact, they couldn't give students the help they needed.

Detracking advocates ignore achievement differences for the sake of promoting social equality. They equate academic achievement with "stuffing students full of historical facts," and they replace it with



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art and music (Berkman), current events, PBS shows, national holidays, and topics with no right answers (Hirsch). Berkman tells his classes that some students are high achievers because of social injustices (which risks stigmatizing those who achieve). Progressive High's teachers wouldn't accept current events and drawing as substitutes for social and political history. They believe that academic achievement helps students gain skills that are required for the analysis and understanding of history and that these skills are transferable to other areas of life (including current events).

Supporting this view, research finds that even small increases in high school achievement, at any point on the achievement scale, improve adults' earnings, even for individuals with no college degrees (Miller, Shazia R. [1998], "Shortcut: High School Grades as a Signal of Human Capital," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 20, 4: 299-312). While detracking advocates brag about making sure more students enter college, they ignore the 80 percent dropout rate of students who enter college with low achievement (Rosenbaum, James [1998], "College for All," *Social Psychology of Education*, 2:55-80). Detracking advocates' claims that achievement is unimportant are mistaken and a serious disservice to students.

Kathlyn Johnson recognizes that although these conflicts can be addressed by extensive enrichment opportunities, providing these opportunities requires extensive resources that few schools possess. Without additional resources, Progressive High's teachers found that detracking made teaching much harder and less effective in addressing students' needs.

Berkman is right that one year of high school cannot wipe out the previous 10, but he draws the wrong conclusion. You can't level the playing field in high school; the kids are already playing in different leagues by then. The problem must be fixed earlier when differences are smaller and less deeply ingrained.

—JAMES E. ROSENBAUM
Professor
Institute for Policy Research
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Evanston, Illinois

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