

Reviews

A House Divided: The Lincoln-Douglas Debates. Produced and distributed by Grafica Multimedia, Inc., 1777 Borel Place, Suite 500, San Mateo, Calif. 94402; (415) 358-5553.

A House Divided is an interactive multimedia CD-ROM program that utilizes virtual reality technology to provide everything a history teacher is likely to ever want a student to know about the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Designed to accommodate inquiry instructional techniques, the single CD-ROM package includes two teaching guides appropriate for use with either college or secondary school students.

The program is capable of running in both Windows and Macintosh environments. System requirements for Windows include an MPC II level PC with 4MB of RAM running Windows 3.1 plus a 256 color monitor and speakers. If used with a Macintosh computer, requirements include at least an LCIII model containing a 68030 processor with 4MB (8MB recommended) of RAM, System 7 or later, a 13" or larger color monitor, and a 2x CD-ROM drive. Quicktime (version 2.0) and Adobe Acrobat Reader are included. When used on 4MB machines, the user must exit the program to read the accompanying text documents.

A House Divided provides a virtual reality tour of an antebellum mansion located at the site of one of the debates. At the beginning, the user may choose to listen to a narrative prologue accompanied by period music and illustrations or go directly to the main menu which is a plan of the mansion's first floor.

Tour-takers navigate through the rooms, clicking on various interactive artifacts to access information. If the CD-ROM is used as a scavenger hunt, students collect information from twenty-six political cartoons, maps, a time-line, the music and lyrics to twenty-nine period songs, four sight and sound narratives, the text of the debates, and A-V clips of debate re-enactments. A counter located in a bar at the bottom of the menu screen tallies the number of items accessed.

The primary documents are arranged together by room. The text of each of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, a 110-page com-

panion volume, and the teaching guides are accessed as individual books in the library. One or two-player games can be accessed by clicking on chess boards in the parlor. A multicultural perspective is provided by excerpts from *The History of Mary Prince* and *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas*.

The instructional guides were developed by C-SPAN for the Lincoln-Douglas debate re-enactments. Developed by professors and organized as teaching modules, both the college and secondary guides are designed to accommodate a variety of courses. Permission for copying any of the texts is provided to teachers. A bibliography of reference works is included as well as information on how to order videos of the debate re-enactments. In general, *A House Divided* is superior to many of the multimedia programs currently available for use in history classes. Teachers interested in content will be pleased with this program's depth of coverage, while those concerned with process will delight in the possibilities provided for critical thinking and inductive instructional approaches.

The major criticism of this CD-ROM involves the complexity of the installation process. To view or print the text of the debates and the teaching guides, it is necessary to install the Adobe Acrobat Reader folder in a process separate from the program installation, then to transfer the Adobe Type Manager LE files from the Acrobat Reader folder to the systems folder. Unfortunately, the Adobe Type Manager LE program does not support Power Macintosh, causing extremely slow printing on newer machines. □

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Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Expectations of Excellence (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1994)

In *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Expectations of Excellence*, the National Council for the Social Studies seeks to build

a cohesive and coherent foundation for social studies and "to guide social studies curriculum, teaching, learning tasks, and assessment" (p. xvii). Social studies is defined as the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence" (p. 3). The standards are grounded in a healthy tension between an integrated and a discipline approach which acknowledges the importance of the disciplines . . . in understanding topics . . . but also recogniz[es] that topics . . . transcend the boundaries of single disciplines and demand the power of integration within and across them" (p. 5).

Three outcomes are essential if students are to "assume the office of citizen" (p. xix): (1) support the common good; (2) adopt common and multiple perspectives; and (3) apply knowledge, skills, and values to civic action (pp. 5-8). Each outcome's description represents a blending of several schools of social studies thought, which, at times, results in a compromise definition of citizenship and defeats the attempt to make the field more cohesive. Under Outcome 2, for example, students will acquire multiple perspectives "within the framework of civic responsibility which is the hallmark of the democratic national culture committed to individual liberty and the common good" (p.7), but notably absent is a national perspective. Apparently, citizenship within our national community demands a global but not a national perspective.

Under Outcome 3, reference is made to the *Essential Skills for Social Studies*, first published in 1984. While it is an excellent list, acquisition of certain skills hardly seems adequate preparation for an "information-electronic-biotechnology age" (p. xix). Students, for example, are to gather information from microfiche but not from the Internet, and are to communicate orally and in writing but not through the use of multimedia technology. Finally, though much is made of civic action, *Expectations* stops short of advocating the extension of the "school as a learning place" into the community. Civic action seemingly consists of talking, not acting.

Expectations is broken into three parts: description of ten themes; curriculum stan-

dards and performance expectations for each theme in early, middle, and high school grades; and classroom applications of each standard for each set of grades. The ten themes are: culture; time, continuity, and change; people, places, and environments; individual development and identity; individuals, groups, and institutions; power, authority, and governance; production, distribution, and consumption; science, technology, and society; global connections; and civic ideals and practices. Unfortunately, the books provides neither a rationale for nor an in-depth explanation of the relationships among these themes. The latter is accomplished, in part, in the classroom applications section where each theme's performance expectation is cross referenced with relevant themes. *Expectations* would have better served its purpose as a guide for curriculum development if richer examples of the thematic connections had been provided.

A review of the "Time, Continuity, and Change" theme offers the reader insight into the document's thematic approach. First, the document identifies concepts, such as causality, critical to students being able "to understand their historical roots and to locate themselves in time." Next, the document identifies performance expectations or demonstrations of conceptual understanding such as: apply historical perspective; apply key historical concepts; identify and describe historical periods and patterns; and, employ historical inquiry. Cross referencing other themes offers the reader insight into ways to apply these skills. One classroom application of the "Individuals, Groups, and Institutions" theme describes U.S. history students' examination of how institutions change. Students brain stormed a list of five major institutions and then researched how a major twentieth-century event was or was not influenced by one of the institutions. These classroom vignettes represent the document's strength. They are a wonderful array of exciting classroom practices which the experienced teacher can adapt to numerous courses.

Ultimately, *Expectations* falls prey to a concern voiced by James Shaver: "A scope and sequence statement . . . should be a model of [a curricular] process—of laying out

assumptions and linking choices to them—and of outcome, a curriculum to be admired" (*Social Education* 48 (1984): 263). While *Expectations* represents a step forward by NCSS in "laying out assumptions" for curriculum development, it fails in "linking choices to them," and while identifying important outcomes, its use as a curricular model is limited. Much of the responsibility for bringing cohesion and coherency to social studies still rests with the reader. □

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Linda R. Monk, ed., *Ordinary Americans: U.S. History Through the Eyes of Everyday People*; Foreword by Ken Burns.

Disparaging what he believes to be the current state of affairs in the teaching of history, Ken Burns complains in the foreword to *Ordinary Americans* that by teaching about the American experience "from the top down," history has become "a kind of castor oil of dry dates and facts and events of little meaning, something we knew was good for us but hardly good tasting." And, thus, he makes his case in support of this compilation of documents allegedly distilled from the experiences of common Americans.

Well, just how good a book is it? *Ordinary Americans* presents interesting articles about many different people in the American past. Generally, the developer of the teacher's guide, Charles R. Sass, did a good job choosing ideas that instructors might use to present the material. So, if the book generally does what it sets out to do, why do I have a difficult time recommending it to fellow high school history teachers for use in their classes?

Specifically, I have three areas of concern. First, while the authors announce their incorporation of "multicultural themes," both the documents that they select and the range of multicultural experience that the documents portray skew the overall treatment of American history. By my count, *Ordinary Americans* includes 193 articles, forty of them about themes which might be

categorized as "black history" and thirty-six of them focusing primarily on "women's history." Many of the articles are highly interesting, even gripping, in emotional appeal, but sometimes they tend to characterize the black experience or the role of women in such an idiosyncratic manner that the reader gets the impression that their experiences in America were very different from everyone else's. Of course, to a certain extent this is true. But, the book takes this notion to extremes. For instance, three articles dealing with women portray their role as soldiers in war. As interesting as such events might be, they focus the student's attention on the token aspect of women in warfare. While a strong case may be made today for the sharing of battlefield responsibility with women, to emphasize such a role in wars which were fought when the overwhelming majority of soldiers were men, trivializes the contribution made by women to the war. In this way, *Ordinary Americans* portrays the exceptional as the norm, and it unintentionally but powerfully patronizes those groups whose contributions it seeks to incorporate in a fuller explanation of American history.

Second, the apparent obsession with black and women's history pushes the work towards an incomplete telling of the American experience. In the 193 articles, for instance, there is only one which treats the experience of the Mexican-American immigrant, and even it is told from a woman's perspective. If the hope is that *Ordinary Americans* will appeal to students of various minority backgrounds as a way to understand their heritage as Americans, then it will not relate to thousands of students of Mexican background. And yet, there is ample opportunity to expand on the story of both Mexican-American relations and Mexicans in America. For instance, in dealing with Manifest Destiny, the authors mention the Gold Rush, coming to the gold fields, and Native Americans losing their land and dying at the hands of the white settlers. Why not talk a bit about Texas? Why not include information about the *Californios*? Why not talk about how Mexican heritage has shaped and formed much of the history of the southwestern United States? Why not, at least talk about the Mexican-American War,

Pershing's expedition of 1917, or the race riots in Los Angeles in 1940? Probably, the editors would respond that they did not have room—perhaps, but only one article out of 193?

Moreover, as much as the editors try to shun the works of important “dead white men,” fully as many articles specifically deal with the traditional white heroes and villains of the past as they do with the black experience. In forty articles, the focus of the reading is on how people responded to something done by political or military leaders. And this distribution makes precisely the point that Ken Burns seems to have missed in high school. The function of the instructor is to show how people with power made decisions that affected the lives of the rest of us. Absolutely. It is necessary to relate the true experiences of the individuals, but it is also important that the explanation be made in the context of the political, social, and cultural background as shaped by those with power. To do any less is to celebrate the serendipitous as the common, it is to interpret the trivial as the truly important, and it is to disassociate the mundane from the theoretical. An instructor who uses only *Ordinary Americans* to validate the experience of mainstream America is as much the fool as the one who demands that every student know all the states and state capitals in isolation from their historical, economic, or geographical importance.

So what should you do with the book? Use it for what it is. It still has an excellent collection of interesting articles and some very creative and novel approaches to presenting the material. But beware that by using it, your students may feel that you uncritically endorse it. Our students today are, at once, superficially sophisticated and historically naive. While they may sometimes feel overburdened by the lessons we teach them, they have a keen ability to see through phoniness. The uncritical and singular use of *Ordinary Americans* will recreate a false historical experience, just as an over reliance on a traditional text would. Buy the book and take from it what will work for you—but, do not commit next year's social studies budget to its purchase. □

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Holocaust Education Web Site

An interdisciplinary team of teachers at North Hagerstown High School in Maryland has created a site on the World Wide Web consisting of student reactions to a 9th grade field trip to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The team intend for the site to attract input from anyone with personal and professional experiences of the Holocaust, and invite teachers to share their feelings and knowledge on its historical, personal, and sociological importance. Their goal is to make this a rich and productive source for Holocaust education. The URL is: <http://www.fred.net/nhhs/html/tripintr.htm>. This site grew out of an educational unit on Tolerance and the Holocaust, entitled, “The Beast Within,” which can be found at: <http://www.fred.net/nhhs/html/beast.htm>. □

Solving Environmental Mysteries

Are you looking for a better way to teach environmental issues? Eco-Detectives is an 18-lesson curriculum that introduces students to productive ways of thinking about environmental problems. The lessons address environmental problems as mysteries worthy of investigation. The curriculum is suitable for high school as well as middle school.

Some of the mysteries are: Why are whales endangered but chickens are not?; Why do people in poor nations have more children than people in rich nations?; Why, in spite of today's emphasis on recycling, are bottles, cans, and papers routinely tossed into landfills?; and, Why do nice people refuse to use mass transit?

Such questions launch lessons that teach students about human behavior by introducing basic economic principles. Each lesson actively involves the student in the learning process and helps students begin to fashion realistic solutions. The principles can be applied to environmental problems of the present and past. The curriculum, written by Mark C. Shug, John Morton, and Donald R. Wentworth, was produced by PERC (the Political Economy Research Center) in Bozeman, Montana. A sample lesson is available at no charge. Contact Jane S. Shaw, PERC, 502 S. 19th Avenue, Suite 211, Bozeman, Mont. 59715; (406) 587-9591; fax: (406) 586-7555; e-mail: shaw@perc.org □

History Computer Review

The *History Computer Review*—formerly the *History Microcomputer Review*—publishes two issues a year, featuring articles by historians who use commercial software in imaginative ways or simply create their own software. With an international audience, *HCR* is especially interested in ways in which history and computing relate to education. The current subscription price is \$20 for the two issues. If you would like to subscribe or submit an article, contact: Jim Schick, HCR, Department of History, Pittsburgh State University, Pittsburg, Kans. 66762; e-mail: jschick@pittstate.edu. If you would like to be considered as a reviewer, contact Dr. Leslie G. Hunter, Review Editor, Department of History, Texas A&M University Kingsville, Campus Box 166, Kingsville, Tex. 78363; e-mail: lhunter2@tamuk.edu □

Teaching History: A Journal of Methods

Teaching History: A Journal of Methods contains articles concerning the teaching of history as well as reviews of history books. It is published twice yearly, in the spring and fall. For a free sample copy, write to Sam Dicks, Box 4032, Emporia State University, Emporia, Kans. 66801-5087. □

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