

**This issue's contributors have** a flair for selecting distinctive and challenging topics, and their articles offer novel insights into some of the more interesting times, places and issues in the social studies.

In the Teaching with Documents column that opens the issue, Lee Ann Potter looks at the first dispatch from the U.S. consulate that was established in Baghdad in 1888, when the city was still part of the Ottoman Empire. The new diplomatic mission had nothing in common with U.S. representation in Baghdad today; the first consul, John Henry Haynes, was an archaeologist employed by the Babylonian Exploration Fund who was not paid by the U.S. government for his consular services. Archaeologists interested in exploring ancient Mesopotamia had as much influence as U.S. businessmen on the decision to establish the consulate. The teaching suggestions that accompany the document will help students learn about the early growth of U.S. ties with the Middle East.

Joan Brodsky Schur looks back to the bygone world of the Puritan communities established by the seventeenth-century colonists of New England. She describes a simulation activity aimed at getting students to understand life in that very different era. After students were exposed to the rigid codes of behavior of Puritan communities, including judgmental public scrutiny and punishments designed to shame miscreants, they acquired a better appreciation of the difference between societies that respect individual freedom and privacy and those in which authorities assert sweeping powers over the private and public actions of residents.

The pursuit of freedom has been accompanied historically by debates and disagreements over the questions of who should enjoy it, when, where, and how. Sam Chaltain maintains that students would better appreciate the benefits and responsibilities of democratic citizenship if their schools were more committed to free and open school climates. Too often, he states, student freedom is seen as a threat to school order, but in a properly structured school, freedom and order complement each other. Developing a distinction made by Paulo Freire, he cautions against confusing authority with authoritarianism, and urges schools to develop cultures that embody First Amendment freedoms.

Attempts to restrict immigration by legislation have been a recurring theme of U.S. history, and have often been accompanied by racial or ethnic prejudice. Our Looking at the Law column examines the legislation initiated by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and reviews attempts by Chinese immigrants to use the federal court system to preserve their rights. The column focuses on the lawsuit brought in 1884 by Chinese immigrant Chew Heong, whose case was upheld by the Supreme Court, though this temporary victory was eroded by subsequent legislation. James H. Landman suggests teaching activities that will assist the

study of this period of anti-immigrant fervor in U.S. history.

As the money spent on advertising by presidential campaigns reaches dizzying new heights, Chris and Sox Sperry suggest ways of enhancing students' skills of media analysis. They review the highlights of campaigns from different periods of U.S. history, pointing out that, from the earliest days of the republic, candidates have sought to create positive media impressions of themselves and negative impressions of their rivals, and there is nothing new about the belief that election campaigns are crass and dirty.

Mira Cohen's article investigates Ronald Reagan's skills as "The Great Communicator." Reagan, she points out, enjoyed illustrating his political beliefs with the personal stories of the man or woman on the street. The Omaha Beach memorial ceremony in 1984 was one occasion on which he did this to great effect. Using documents from the Reagan Presidential Archives, Cohen traces the crafting of his remarks on that occasion from the time that the daughter of a D-Day veteran sent Reagan her reminiscences of her father and a request to attend the memorial ceremony, through to the final speech.

In his Internet column, C. Frederick Risinger builds on the theme of this year's NCSS conference in San Diego: Crossing Borders and Building Bridges. Although the Internet permits almost instant communications between different communities and countries of the world, he believes that teachers have not taken full advantage of the opportunity for international communications that can link students and classrooms. He recommends websites that can help break down boundaries between peoples by connecting students and classrooms across the world.

Both history and literature can be considered means of recording human experience, and Trace Schillinger warns against treating them as very different endeavors, preferring to seek "a space where the disciplines of literature and history become entangled." (385) Her classroom strategy is to encourage her eighth-grade students to use historical literary sources and write creatively about historical events. Citing student-written poetry as an example of her approach, she points out that students seeking to write creatively about a historical topic need to acquire significant knowledge about it in order to write effectively.

In the final article of this issue, Robert Vadas criticizes the myths that persist in this country about the Viet Nam war, and the failure of school textbooks to depict it accurately. He describes a program he has established that takes his pre-service teachers to Viet Nam to study the events and impact of the war. In addition to getting to know the country and its people, his students have become more able to rebut myths about the causes and course of the war, and the reasons for the U.S. failure in Viet Nam.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at [socialed@ncss.org](mailto:socialed@ncss.org).