

Editor's Notebook

Summer approaches, and with it the promise of long-awaited time for leisurely reading. This issue of *Social Education*, the last of the school year, focuses on literary and cultural themes, offering the annual Notable Social Studies Trade Books list, as well as reviews of the Carter G. Woodson award-winning books, and a set of articles showing how literature and the arts offer unique tools that can enhance students' understanding of social studies, as well as their reading skills.

Many people obtain their first impressions of the law from books they read as children. James H. Landman examines the "entertaining, accessible, and at times provocative, explorations of the rule of law" in three books popular among young readers—*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Holes*, and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. (165) Landman's Looking at the Law column points out that all the books highlight flawed or threatened systems of justice, but also offer frameworks that a skillful teacher can use to examine the meaning of the rule of law and the circumstances in which it promotes fairness and justice.

Artwork that captures the imagination of students can also serve as a means of leading them into a voyage of historical discovery. In our Teaching with Documents column, David Rosenbaum, Lee Ann Potter and Elizabeth K. Eder review the paintings and travels of the nineteenth-century artist, George Catlin, who was fascinated by Native Americans and made numerous trips to the West. The featured document is an 1832 letter from George Cass, Secretary of War, supporting Catlin's upcoming travel project. The accompanying teaching suggestions offer creative ways of guiding students to investigate the westward expansion.

Engaging students through visual appeal is also the focus of the article by Karen H. Wilkins, Caroline C. Sheffield, Martha B. Ford, and Bárbara C. Cruz, who recommend some excellent picture books for students on the civil rights movement. Their selection of books takes readers from the Mississippi of the 1930s through the Jackie Robinson baseball era and the lunch-counter strikes of the 1950s to the civil rights marches that galvanized the nation.

At the center of this issue is a pullout with the new list of Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, a selection of exceptional books published in 2007 that have social studies value as well as outstanding literary qualities. The books cover the range of social studies. The annotations identify the reading level of each book and the social studies standards themes to which it relates. The list has been prepared by a committee of NCSS members in association with the Children's Book Council.

Reviews of the annual award-winning Carter G. Woodson books complement the listing of trade books. The 2007 award winners focus on civil rights, the career of Gordon Parks, the

role of cotton in American history, the lives of a migrant community, and the Japanese American incarceration during World War II. The Woodson awards honor books of exceptional educational value that enhance our knowledge and understanding of race and ethnicity in the United States.

Terence A. Beck offers insights into what social studies classes can be like for students who are not native speakers of English by describing a parallel experience—his own attempts to understand French civic concepts during a six-month sabbatical in France, while he was less than fluent in the French language. On the basis of the lessons gained from this personal experience, he makes several practical recommendations to teachers with ESL students about the best ways to teach social studies when students are not likely to understand everything said in class.

S. Kay Gandy examines the popular cultural images of the cowboy, and emphasizes that "the cowboy culture and history are the product of men and women of many ethnicities." (189) She investigates this diversity with a particular focus on Native American, African American and Hispanic American cowboys and the conditions under which they worked. Her teaching suggestions will give students a better understanding of the work cowboys did and the lives they led.

Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* is a classic novel of the 1930s American South that is widely used in English classes. Lori Kumler and Rina Palchick point out that it also "provides a rich context for exploring numerous historical and social studies themes" (195), and describe an imaginative collaborative project they conducted that created mock trials out of events in the book for students in their respective government and literature classes.

One of the award-winning Carter G. Woodson books, *Dear Miss Breed*, is the focus of an article by Patrick Westcott and Martha Graham Vlator, which outlines how the book can be used to investigate the Japanese American internment in World War II. The authors show ways of using the letters in the book as valuable primary sources for an inquiry that highlights questions such as, "What is the definition of an American citizen?"; "Must Americans prove their allegiance to their country?"; and, "Can a wrong ever be a right?"

Mia Mercurio examines a historical legend—the story of Annie Moore, the first immigrant to enter the United States through Ellis Island—and finds that it has become shrouded in inaccuracies and myths. She reviews the treatment of Annie in children's literature, as well as the realities that faced immigrants at the Ellis Island station, and presents the results of a search for Annie's real life history.

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