

# The Revised NCSS Standards: Ideas for the Classroom Teacher

Syd Golston

Your sheaf of curriculum documents grows higher every year—you've got plastic binders with several iterations of your district's Social Studies Scope and Sequence, your state standards, and now even sections of the English/Language Arts Core Standards which pertain to social studies. They tell you *what* to teach in elaborate content lists, and some of them may even identify learning goals for your students. What they don't do enough is to help with *how* to teach all this content. How will you plan a year's worth of meaningful, connected units? How will you create a set of engaging lessons which send your students to their own resources, instead of to worksheets of vocabulary terms which will show up on some multiple choice test in the spring?

The updated NCSS Standards are directed toward those meaningful units and engaging lessons. They set guiding questions and provide strategies and "Snapshots of Practice" which can be used to combine extensive use of content with suggestions for the activities young people need to become thinking, involved members of society. You use them side by side with your content standards, such as those that your district provides or your state mandates.

The revised standards retain the organizing principle of ten social studies themes:

1. Culture
2. Time, Continuity, and Change
3. People, Places, and Environments
4. Individual Development and Identity
5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
6. Power, Authority, and Governance
7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption

8. Science, Technology, and Society
9. Global Connections
10. Civic Ideals and Practices

The additions in the revised standards are expansions to the learning expectations of the original standards. There are four categories of guidance for the curriculum planner, and they are particularly helpful to the classroom teacher: Key Questions for Exploration; Knowledge; Processes; and Products. The Snapshots of Practice follow, and they provide stimulating prompts for putting together your own lesson.

For example, here is a section from one of the most rigorous and lauded set of social studies standards in the United States, the *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework*.<sup>1</sup> Section USII. 9 reads:

Analyze the post-Civil War struggles of African Americans and women to gain basic civil rights.

- A. Carrie Chapman Catt
- B. W.E.B. Du Bois

- C. Marcus Garvey
- D. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- E. Alice Paul
- F. Booker T. Washington

*Seminal Primary Documents to Consider:* Booker T. Washington, the Atlanta Exposition Address (1895), and the Niagara Movement Declaration of Principles (1905).

This is surely core material, a United States history teacher would think, and well worth using those primary documents suggestions. What kind of lesson will deliver this material so that students learn not just the facts of Booker T. Washington's speech, or feminist arguments a century ago, but also thinking skills and connections to the United States today?

Our teacher notes that the NCSS section *Time, Continuity and Change* sets impressive objectives for historical studies like this one:

High school students use historical methods of inquiry to engage in the examination of more sophisticated sources. They develop the skills needed to locate and analyze multiple sources, and to evaluate the historical accounts made by others. They build and defend interpretations that reconstruct the past, and draw on their knowledge of history

*continued on page 214*



Above: Mrs. Carrie Chapman with flags of 22 nations.



Booker T. Washington seated at desk.



**JEFF SPRINGER**  
HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

# SOME HAVE MORE POWER. NONE HAVE MORE INFLUENCE.

There will always be those with more money or fame, but for high school students Principal Jeff Springer is a unique and guiding presence. He's there on their first day of classes — and he's there to see them cross the stage at commencement.

To Jeff, commencement is more than simply an annual event. It's a timeless moment shared between faculty, families and students. A time when the entire school community comes together for a rite of passage that fills Jeff with both pride of achievement and a sense of nostalgia.

At Herff Jones, our caring, knowledgeable representatives feel exactly the same way. Which is why we are genuinely committed to managing even the smallest details for busy professionals like Jeff. After all, helping to bring the school's unique culture and traditions to life is what we do best.

**DOWNLOAD OUR FREE WHITEPAPER ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS  
AT [HERFFJONES.COM/ACHIEVEGOALS](https://herffjones.com/achievements)**



GRADUATION



CLASS RINGS &  
JEWELRY



YEARBOOKS



PHOTOGRAPHY



EDUCATIONAL  
PUBLISHING



MOTIVATION &  
RECOGNITION

[herffjones.com/achievements](https://herffjones.com/achievements)



HERFF JONES®

CREATING A CLIMATE  
OF ACHIEVEMENT

## NCSS STANDARDS *from page 210*

to make informed choices and decisions in the present.<sup>2</sup>

The Standards give other prompts for planning this lesson:

“How do perspectives about the past differ, and to what extent do these differences inform contemporary ideas and actions?...”

“[Students] formulate research questions to investigate topics in history, identify possible answers, and use historical methods of inquiry and literacy skills...”

“Learners demonstrate understanding by writing a position paper exploring multiple perspectives about a historical issue...”<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the teacher sees in the Snapshots of Practice for Time, Continuity, and Change the narrative of a Civil War lesson:

James [Visser] assigns the students key documents from the “founding” period and the Civil War period (e.g., the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the United States Constitution, President Lincoln’s inaugural addresses, the Gettysburg Address, and Emancipation Proclamation). He divides the students into groups to study documents from both the Revolutionary period and the Civil War period, looking for the continuity and the changes in American ideals in these two periods.<sup>4</sup>

Now the teacher envisions a lesson that will seek continuity and change in a pair of documents dealing not with the Civil War, but with turn of the 20th century civil rights and feminism. She notices that there are no suggested documents by Carrie Chapman Catt or Alice Paul, but she finds online a parallel speech to Booker T. Washington’s Atlanta Exposition address<sup>5</sup> — Carrie Chapman Catt’s speech before Congress on women’s suffrage.<sup>6</sup>

Pairs or groups of students will be asked to identify similarities and differences in the two documents, in perception, in argument, and even in style. They will notice that Booker T. Washington used terms like “every *manly* way of the people of all races” and referred only to “*manhood* suffrage.” His speech avoided the feminist cause altogether, while Carrie Chapman Catt, a civil rights advocate, spoke of the rights of both sexes of all races and countries: “to widen the suffrage for men or women in any land.” They can discuss the changes between 1895 and 1917 which might explain this. Some students may notice that Washington’s impassioned pleas come from a narrative style (“Cast down your bucket where you are,” from a story about a marooned ship), while

Children  
& Youth *in*  
*History*

## what do dolls, piñatas, and swaddling have in common?



**They can all be found at *Children & Youth in History*, the first website focused on children in world history.**

This **free** online resource was created by the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University and the University of Missouri-Kansas City, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

*“...sets the standard for sophisticated and scholarly content on the web”*

— HISTORY PROFESSOR, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Learn more by visiting

**[chnm.gmu.edu/cyh](http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh)**

Ivory doll from the Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona (Spain)

Christmas piñata © Victor Ancheta

Swaddle mold © The Trustees of the British Museum, London

# AMERICAN HISTORY

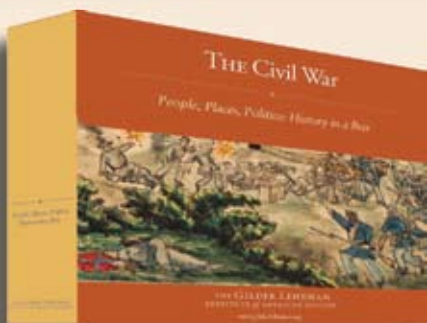
## AFFILIATE SCHOOL PROGRAM

*FREE FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS*

- Affiliate School web portal with lesson plans, teachable documents, videos, podcasts, toolkits and more
- Professional development opportunities, including regional forums and free summer seminars
- Free and discounted books, multimedia kits, and traveling exhibitions (to see the Gilder Lehrman teacher resources go to [www.gilderlehrman.org](http://www.gilderlehrman.org))

**JOIN OUR  
NATIONWIDE  
NETWORK**

THE GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY



**COMING NOVEMBER 2010**  
**HISTORY IN A BOX: THE CIVIL WAR**  
*PEOPLE, PLACES, POLITICS*

A multimedia resource kit that includes an educator's guide and a variety of colorful resources for history classrooms. For other Gilder Lehrman Institute resources including posters, DBQ booklets, DVDs and other classroom resources go to [www.gilderlehrmanstore.org](http://www.gilderlehrmanstore.org).

Gilder Lehrman is a non-profit organization supporting the study and love of American history. For more information about the American History Affiliate School Program go to [www.gilderlehrman.org/affiliates.html](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/affiliates.html)

Catt's arguments depend more on rhetoric and historical citations.

An important objective from the Standards could end the class—the tie of past to present. Certainly there are still complex connections between the feminist and human rights movements, locally and globally. The class could think about questions like this: Have we made more progress today in racial equality or equality of the sexes? Are people around the world oppressed more by race or by sex? Have the two constituencies of civil rights advocates and feminists moved closer together or farther apart in the century that followed today's lesson?

The teacher could assign the Niagara Movement Declaration of Principles (1905) as homework. The *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework* includes in an earlier era of United States history the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions (1848)<sup>7</sup> and a comparison

of these two can show that the student has learned as an individual to perform a similar comparison to the one he did as a group member in class.

Did our teacher use her state standards? Indeed. However, planning with the NCSS Standards made this an experience far more valuable than note taking or textbook outlining. It's more likely that the students will answer correctly any question on this material which appears on the MCAS History and Social Science test. More importantly, students will have learned not just content, but skills in reading, thinking, and working together.

The NCSS Standards add critical features to instructional planning. Social studies teachers need them on that shelf of curriculum binders. 📖

#### Notes

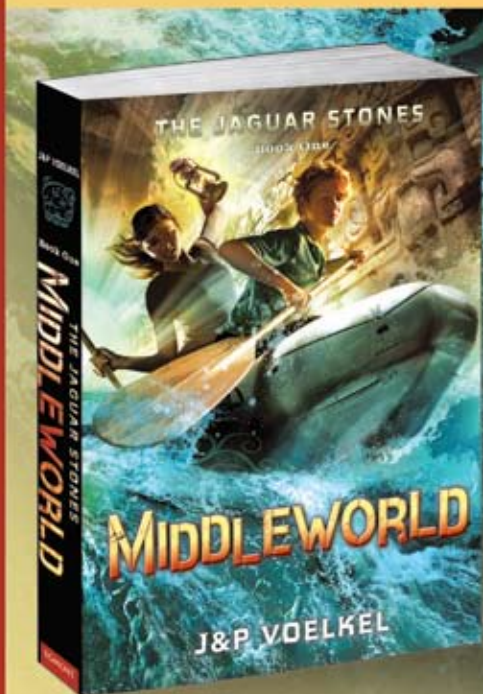
1. The *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework*, [www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/final.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/final.pdf)
2. See the page describing Theme 2, "Time, Continuity,

and Change," in Chapter 2, "The Themes of Social Studies," of National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2010).

3. For the first prompt, see the same reference as note 2 above. The second prompt is from the description of processes at the high school level for Theme 2, "Time, Continuity, and Change," and the third prompt is from the description of products at the high school level for Theme 2, "Time, Continuity, and Change," in the section of the standards dealing with Purposes, Questions for Exploration, Knowledge, Processes, and Products. (*National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, op. cit.)
4. See the Snapshots of Practice for Theme 2, "Time, Continuity, and Change," at the high school level in *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, op. cit.
5. Booker T. Washington's Atlanta compromise speech <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/88>
6. Carrie Chapman Catt's speech before Congress, 1917, [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/cattcarriec/a/cong\\_1917\\_speech.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/cattcarriec/a/cong_1917_speech.htm)
7. Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework (see note 1 above), p. 70

**SYD GOLSTON** is a school administrator and curriculum writer who served as President of NCSS in 2009-2010. She may be reached at [sgolston@ncss.org](mailto:sgolston@ncss.org).

## Percy Jackson meets Indiana Jones in the new adventure trilogy, **THE JAGUAR STONES**



## Welcome to **MIDDLEWORLD**

In a race against the ruthless Maya Lords of Death, two intrepid kids chase through the perilous rainforest, down underground rivers, and into ancient temples of human sacrifice. **MIDDLEWORLD** is a nonstop adventure for young readers and a treasure trove of Maya culture and history.

*Based on 5 years of academic research, plus extensive travel in Central America, and fact-checked by Dr. Marc Zender, Harvard University. With a 14-page glossary of Maya history, gods, cosmos, and calendars.*

**Go to: [www.jaguarstones.com/Teachers.html](http://www.jaguarstones.com/Teachers.html) to request a free lesson plan CD!** Includes ideas for Maya cultural study in Math, Social Studies, Earth Sciences, Debate, Physical Education, and Language Arts.

**EGMONT**