

Unit Overview: Rationale / Narrative

Title: The Age of Exploration: Whose voice is missing?

A guiding idea for me as the teacher of this unit comes from Martha Nussbaum's book *Cultivating Humanity* where she points out that in order to be a good (humane) citizen and make the right choices, you must have narrative imagination: "the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, **to be an intelligent reader of that person's story** and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have." [emphasis added] What can we learn by putting ourselves in another person's shoes? Can we understand their choices? Could we find it in ourselves to make different ones if we were in the same situation? We need to know who we are and where we came from; but we need to examine that as critical enquirers and not merely accept the story as it is handed to us.

History is everyone's story—everyone's view should be represented.

Big Idea: I want my students to understand that their interpretation of, and perspective on, history is just as important as knowing the history in the first place. I want my students to read between the presumed facts presented to them in textbooks and be able to see whose point of view a story is being told from and whose is missing. I want my students to have the faculty to know who it is that is not being represented, what that viewpoint might have looked like, and to understand what that says about the perspective and/or implicit bias within the text.

In particular in this unit, I want my students to think about the difference between discovery and invasion; what the Age of Exploration looked like from the eyes of native people (in Africa, in the Americas); and what it means for our world today if we accept the majority view without question or criticism.

For example: While my students had already learned the basic story of Columbus discovering America in earlier grades, they had never thought about what it might mean to say he **discovered** a place and a people that already existed. They had never considered the perspective of the Native people or critically examined the idea of Columbus as Hero.

So what? This is important to study because students need to understand how people's actions in the past have led to today's realities. As they develop their identities as both U.S. and global citizens, they need to be able to analyze the oft unstated political human history behind geographic expansion and (hopefully!) make better choices as they contribute their voices to the decisions of this country and our world. They need to understand the choices made in contributing to majority-viewpoint-only history and what they can do to change that so their voice is represented in the future.

STRUG – Age of Exploration Unit

Questions that will guide this unit of study include:

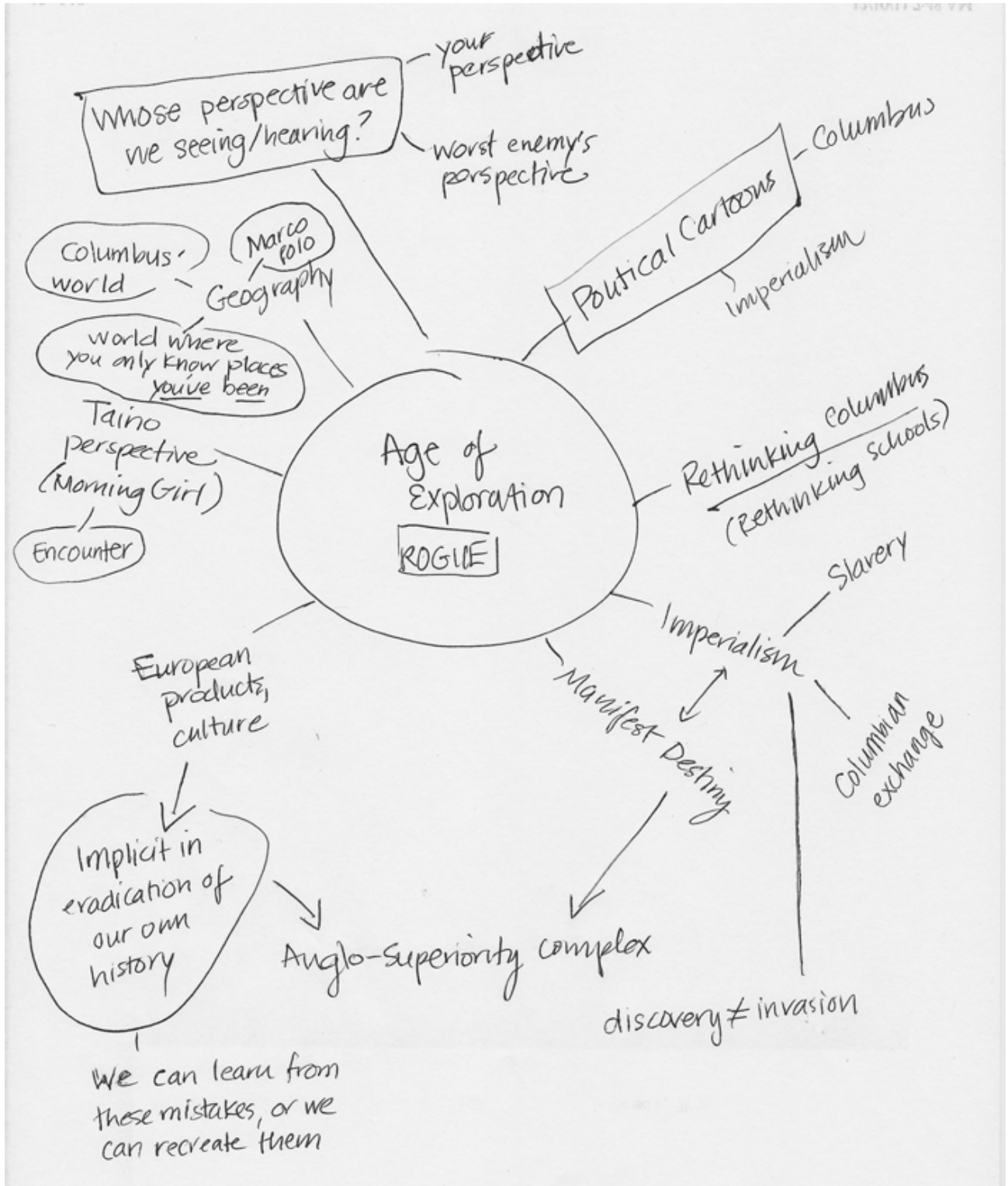
- How do we know who's telling the story?
- How can you “discover” a land where thousands of people are already living?
- Why has history generally ignored the Native experience?
- How can we make sure this perspective is heard?

Grade level/content area: Seventh-grade social studies.

Placement in curriculum: We started the year with a unit on geography: learning about geographic themes such as movement, place, region, and human/environment interaction, as well as latitude, longitude, grid coordinates, hemispheres, et cetera. We followed that unit up with a unit on the Americas, first focusing geographically on climates, regions, natural resources and the like; and moving from there into the idea of human civilization in the Americas, starting with the tribes coming over from Asia, and studying Native Americans in both the North and South Americas. **This point is when our unit takes place, studying the beginnings of the Age of Exploration, up through Magellan, Balboa, Cabot and Verrazano.** After this we transitioned into a unit titled Exploration via Colonization (that begins with Cortes, Pizarro, and goes up to the 13 Colonies.).

Semantic Map: Thought Process / Resources

Developed in collaboration with Dr. Trinder.



STRUG – Age of Exploration Unit

Resources

Textbook:

As I taught this unit during my student teaching semester, I was tied to the textbook available in my classroom.

American History The Early Years to 1877 by Donald A. Ritchie and Albert S. Broussard (Glencoe/McGraw-Hill; 3rd edition; February 2000)

Supplemental texts:

The Enemy: a book about peace by Davide Cali and Serge Bloch (Schwartz & Wade Books, 2009)

“Visionary Bungler” The Columbus story excerpted from *The Cartoon History of the Real World Part 1: From Columbus to the Constitution* by Larry Gonick (Collins Reference, 2006)

“The Tainos: ‘Men of the Good’” by Jose Barreiro, excerpted from *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years* edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson (Rethinking Schools, 1998)

Encounter by Jane Yolen (Sandpiper, 1996)

Where do you think you’re going, Christopher Columbus? by Jean Fritz (Puffin, 1997)

Web sites / Videos:

The Case of the Technical Knockout: Part 3: how the Vikings navigated the Atlantic Ocean without the use of modern technology

<http://videos.howstuffworks.com/history/viking-videos-playlist.htm#video-2034>

The story of Marco Polo’s life as sung by musician and artist Jeffrey Lewis

<http://www.history.com/videos/marco-polo#marco-polo>

The “Reconsider Columbus Day 2011” page on the Red Phoenix Web site (Newspaper of the American Party of Labor)

<http://theredphoenixapl.org/2011/10/10/reconsider%C2%A0columbus%C2%A0day-2011/>

The Animaniacs Magellan song

<http://www.evtv1.com/player.aspx?itemnum=8234>

ThinkQuest web page on Magellan: <http://library.thinkquest.org/J002678F/magellan.htm>

A student video of Magellan’s voyage:

http://teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?title=Ferdinand_Magellan&video_id=69037

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Songs:

MP3 of Sally Rogers “1492” found via *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years* edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson (Rethinking Schools, 1998)

Physical Geography Tools:

Three globes, two covered with blue paper and the cut up bits of a few paper maps—one representing the globe as Columbus knew it, one representing the globe according to my geographic perspective.

Calendar

Introductory lessons:

1. Concept lesson on Perspective.
2. Changing Times: Europe in transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance

Skill-building and concept-building lessons:

3. Marco Polo! Geographic perspective: the world as Columbus knew it
4. Portugal & the Age of Exploration: what inspired Columbus to go on his journey.
5. Timeline: Pulling all the pre-Columbus pieces together.
6. Columbus: The Hero. Textbook version.
7. Columbus: The Villain / gaining a wider perspective. + Vocabulary pop quiz!
8. Columbus: the Taino perspective.
9. Writing Assessment: Columbus.
10. Early European claims to the Americas / QAR strategy.
11. Magellan!
12. QAR Worksheets and Vocabulary Skits (Review)

Culminating lessons:

13. Writing assessment: Columbus / Magellan comparison
14. Explorer Timeline / Vocabulary Quiz / Work on Final project
15. Project presentations / Performance assessments

Final Project

Throughout this unit, students will work on an individual research project resulting in the presentation of a monologue to the class.

They will ultimately write a monologue about one of the explorers we study—choosing from three options. They can either 1) be that explorer and present their perspective: would that be an objective or subjective perspective? Or 2) choose to be one of the native people he encounters and tell us about him from their (presumed) perspective. Would that be subjective or objective? Or 3) be an impartial observer, like a reporter, who tells us both sides of the story. What does impartial mean? Would that indicate an objective or subjective point of view?

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Mr. Jones will be helping students research their chosen subject during technology and assisting them in finding sources that give a fuller view of their subjects than our textbook does.

IL State standards to which this unit of study is aligned are:

Social Studies:

State goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States and other nations.

16.A.3b Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical maps and other historical sources.

16.A.3c Identify the differences between historical fact and interpretation.

16.B.3C (W) Identify causes and effects of European feudalism and the emergence of nation states between 500 CE and 1500 CE.

16.B.3d (W) Describe political effects of European exploration and expansion on the Americas, Asia and Africa after 1500 C.E.

16.D.3 (W) Identify the origins and analyze consequences of events that have shaped world social history including famines, migrations, plagues, slave trading.

16.E.3b (W) Explain how expanded European and Asian contact affected the environment of both continents, 1000 BCE-1500 CE.

State goal 17: Understand world geography and the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the United States.

17.A.3a Explain how people use geographic markers and boundaries to analyze and navigate the Earth (e.g. hemispheres, meridians, continents, bodies of water).

17.C.3a Explain how human activity is affected by geographic factors.

Language Arts (new Common Core standards)

Reading

RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.7.3 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

RI.7.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

RI.7.9 Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of the past.

Writing

W.7.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W.7.1b Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

W.7.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details and well-structured event sequences.

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W.7.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflect, and research.

Speaking & Listening

W.7.3 Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Language

L.7.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L.7.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 7 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of categories.

L.7.4a Use context (e.g. the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph, a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

RH.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social or economic aspects of history/social studies.

RH.7.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

WHST.7.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

WHST.7.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.