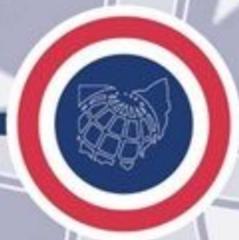


**OHIO**

*Social Studies*

**REVIEW**



**VOL. 56 ISSUE #2**

# OHIO SOCIAL STUDIES REVIEW

Volume 56 – Number 2



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## Editors' Comments

We hope you enjoy the Fall 2020 issue of *Ohio Social Studies Review*. This is a rather timely and relevant set of articles, including research, findings, and explanation on teaching pandemics, helping students become savvy with media, teaching war and military policy critically, and a case study with Inquiry Design Model. The findings from the OCSS Annual survey rounds out this issue.

James Moore of Cleveland State University gives us a thorough overview of historical pandemics and the many ways teachers can construct a unit on the topic. Indeed, the responsible civic duty required to ease the damage of a pandemic comes out fully in Moore's piece.

The team of Hollstein, Doppen, Hinkle, and Guedel examine and explain fostering global media literacy. Media polarization and bogus sources have made the Social Studies teachers' duty to train students with current events much harder than it used to be. In this election season, students need these skills even more so. The authors "lay out a path for social studies teachers" to create media consumers "who view their citizenship through a global lens."

Brian Gibbs at North Carolina University has put together a fine article on the perils of teaching during wartime and how critically questioning military policy, historic or recent, can be a risky proposition for teachers. On the one hand, social studies teachers should teach the realities and mistakes of war, while on the other, exposing atrocities and the fog of war can ruffle feathers. Too often patriotism permeates textbooks as well as communities, putting teachers in a catch-22—Gibbs's analogy—and prevents an honest critique.

We are honored to have Evan Long's case study of a second-year teacher pioneering an elective course simply titled "Inquiry." Long, of Longwood University, notes this traditional-leaning teacher has plunged into the C3 Framework with a supportive administration and quality outcome.

Finally, you'll find the results of the OCSS Annual Survey enlightening, with responses regarding Ohio social studies teachers' methods, views, and experiences.

--David Wolfford

--Sarah Kaka

# Pandemics and Plagues: Teaching History's Biggest Killers

James Moore, Cleveland State University



## Abstract

Though the recent pandemic is the first such crisis in recent memory, and indeed, before full recovery could be the worst disease to do worldwide damage for a generation, it is not the first. Teachers should embrace the opportunity to teach about pandemics for better understanding, and in order to play their part in addressing the crisis as cooperative citizens.

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 that has its origins in bats and was first identified in Wuhan, China in 2019 (Centers for Disease Control, 2020a). This is the first pandemic to be caused by a new (novel) coronavirus and is easily transmitted from person-to-person; simultaneously, humans do not have any immunity to this infectious disease and there is no vaccine at this time (Centers for Disease Control, 2020a). As of August 17, 2020, there have been 22 million reported cases worldwide with 775,000 deaths; this includes 5.6 million cases and 173,000 deaths in the United States (Worldometer, 2020). However, COVID-19 is just the latest pandemic to harm humanity; indeed, infectious diseases are not only the biggest killers throughout history but have changed history and impacted all major civilizations since antiquity (Barry, 2005; Dobson & Carper, 1996; Griffin & Denholm, 2017; LePan, 2020; Rettner, 2016). Unfortunately, many people do not understand the nature of COVID-19, nor historical pandemics, but there are crucial historical lessons—that have been ignored from past pandemics—that can inform policy decisions that can reduce morbidity and mortality (Morse, 2007; Robinson, 2020). Pandemics have decimated civilizations, destroyed economies, obliterated empires, and impacted climate change (Harper, 2020). Pandemics, by their nature, are intimately linked with politics, history, geography, morality, and economics and need to be examined in a comprehensive manner.

Therefore, it is prudent for social studies educators to expand their curriculum to include a unit on infectious diseases. World, European, and American history courses are the most appropriate subjects for studying infectious diseases and can be correlated with other topics and issues. For example, World War I (1914-1918) claimed the lives of 16 million people, but the misnamed “Spanish Flu” that ravaged the world in 1918 and 1919 killed between 50 and 100 million people globally (Barry, 2005; Mazzone & Potter, 2006; Withers, 2018). Most experts assert that 500 million people—1/3 of the global population in 1918—were infected with the flu (Barry, 2005; History.com editors, 2020a). Some researchers assert that the conditions of the war (troop movements, civilian dislocations, malnutrition, and lack of medical care) exacerbated the transmission of influenza; other experts believe that the pandemic influenced the course of the war and the Paris Peace Treaty in France (Dobson & Carper, 1996; Kahn, 2012). This specific pandemic remains the deadliest in history as historians, social scientists, and medical professionals continue to study it.

Pandemics and epidemics provide excellent opportunities for teachers to incorporate history, geography, economics, and government/civics into highly interdisciplinary lessons that conform with the “College, Career, and Civic Life: C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013a). Furthermore, teaching about the role of infectious diseases in history necessitates incorporating the sciences, medicine, the behavioral science, and the humanities to create a holistic unit plan whereby students construct an inquiry-based project that addresses the didactic, reflective, and affective domains. Studying about pandemics is an excellent approach to teaching students about civic participation. All citizens must cooperate with political authority and medical advice to reduce morbidity and mortality, while sacrificing some individual freedoms is essential in a democracy committed to public health and safety.

This article will briefly describe the history of pandemics (infectious diseases) and their impact on human civilizations. Infectious diseases remain a major threat to humanity; while great progress has been made in the past century (vaccines, inoculations, major advances in sanitation systems, public health policies), the current COVID-19 pandemic is a tragic reminder that any victories are often temporary and partial (Smil, 2020a). Second, this article will create a C3 Inquiry-Based Project based on the 1918 pandemic as an example of how teachers can incorporate the study of infectious diseases in their courses. Of course, teachers are encouraged to modify this example considering state requirements, standardized examinations, time constraints, and students’ needs.

### **Pandemics and Infectious Diseases in History**

The Neolithic Revolution—the shift from hunting and gathering to agriculture around 10,000 years ago—helped create the specific conditions that allowed the rise and diffusion of pandemics (History.com editors, 2020b; LePan, 2020). The creation of permanent settlements that over centuries transformed into large cities, increasing trade routes among city-states, greater human and animal proximity, and constant wars increased the likelihood that allowed pandemics to spread and devastate multiple city-states, countries, and regions. The great scourges of malaria, smallpox, leprosy, tuberculosis, bubonic plague, and influenza first appeared with the rise of agricultural societies. In ancient and early medieval societies—centuries before the rise of modern science (germ theory, microscopes, vaccinations, the scientific method)—people believed that angry gods and spirits wreaked epidemics and diseases upon peoples who transgressed the will of the gods (LePan, 2020). Scientific ignorance fused with enormous human suffering and dread led to irrational and dangerous responses that intensified morbidity and mortality.

The development of high-density urban areas—often characterized by poor sanitation, infected water and food supplies, untreated human and animal waste, and unhygienic human behaviors—exacerbated the development and diffusion of infectious diseases (Dobson & Carper, 1996; LePan, 2020). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the development of air travel, modern ocean liners, automobiles, and rapid rail transport has allowed infectious diseases to spread from region-to-region and continent-to-continent in a few hours. However, pandemics spread during antiquity and the Middle Ages.

For example, in 541-542, the Plague of Justinian (confirmed as bubonic plague in 2013) appeared in Asia Minor and killed between 30 and 50 million people in the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire) over two centuries (History.com editors, 2020b) and it is estimated that 10,000 people died daily in Constantinople when the plague was at its apex (Holzwarth, 2020). The plague originated in China and spread via shipping trade routes; the ships carried rats infested with fleas that carried the *yersinia pestis*, the bacterium that causes bubonic plague. Byzantine historian Procopius blamed Emperor Justinian and some historians assert that this charge may have impeded his efforts to reunite the Western and Eastern remnants of the Roman Empire, thus marking the beginning of the “Dark Ages” in Europe (LePan, 2020). Furthermore, the apocalyptic conditions spawned by this pandemic may have contributed to the spread of Christianity as people sought solace and deliverance (Dobson & Carper, 1996). Christians also believed in curing for the sick (many non-Christians avoided the sick and dying) and

may have increased their immunity, appearing protected by their virtue, thus attracting converts (Dobson & Carper, 1996). This is a good example of how pandemics have influenced major historical events.

In 1353, Giovanni Boccaccio wrote *The Decameron*, a collection of short stories describing the horrors wrought by the *Black Death* that ravaged Asia and Europe during the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Aberth, 2005; Lundis, 2020). Boccaccio's stories detail the physical and psychological misery experienced by victims and their families as the plague annihilated Florence. Medical science and religion offered no solutions. The bubonic plague, popularly known as the *Black Death* (so named because victims developed painful pus-filled buboes, or inflammation of the lymph nodes, especially in the groin and armpits that were very dark in color), killed circa 200 million people between 1347 and 1353. Few pandemics can compare for the utter enormity of human suffering and the complete obliteration of the established economic, political, and social order (Aberth, 2005; Benedictow, 2006; LeVine, 2020). The plague, like other pandemics, can lay dormant and return with a vengeance in subsequent decades or centuries; hopefully, this lesson will not be lost on contemporary governments as they battle COVID-19.

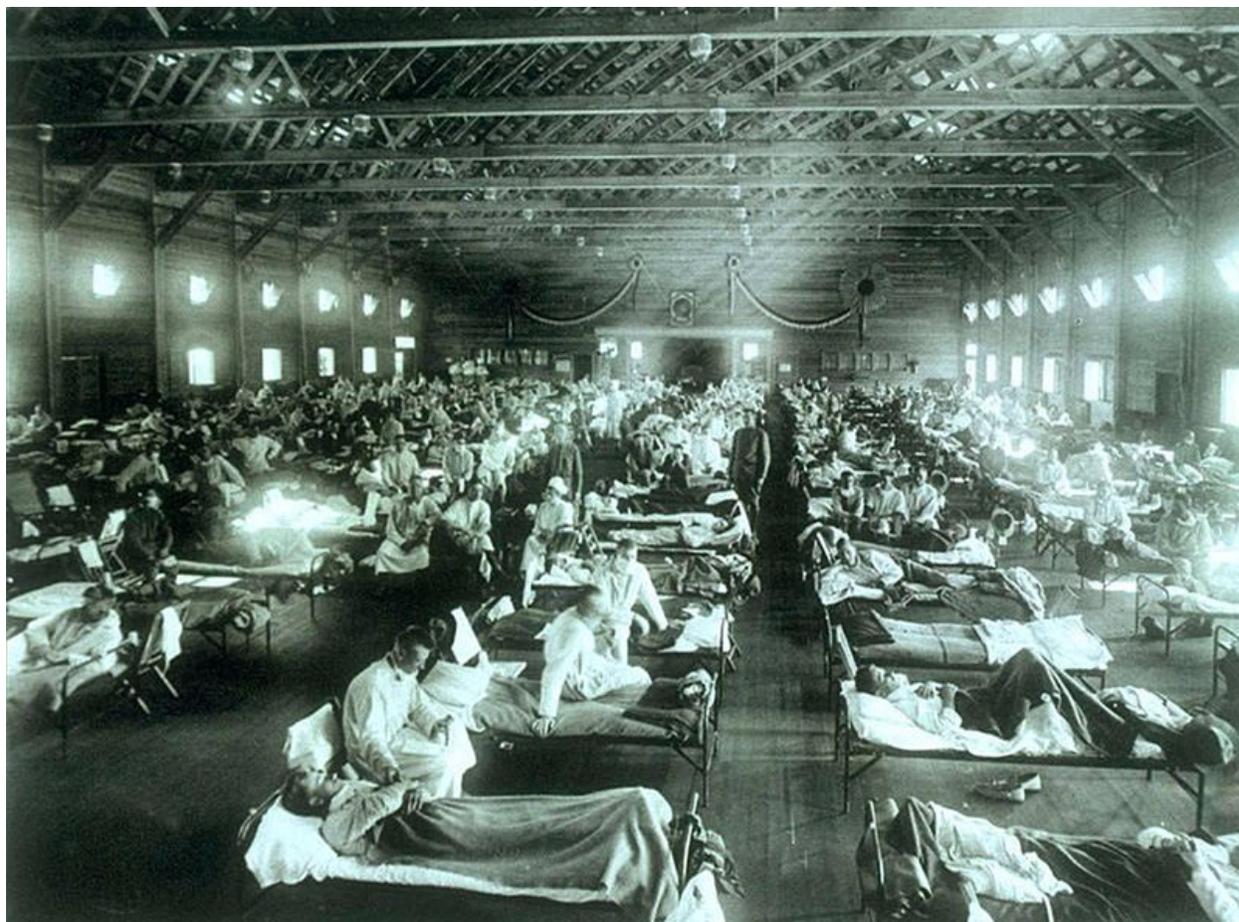
For example, in 1665-1666, the bubonic plague would strike again in London, England killing 20% (roughly 100,000 people) of the population. In 1855, the bubonic plague, called the Third Plague Pandemic, began in China and killed 15 million people by the 1950s (Andrews, 2018). However, this pandemic led to several medical and scientific breakthroughs regarding its causes and nature. In 1894, Dr. Alexandre Yersin identified the bacillus *yersinia pestis* as the cause of this plague and later scientists claimed that flea-infected rats are the culprit in transmission. Recent research calls this into question and some experts reject the notion that rats are responsible, instead these researchers assert that humans carrying fleas and ticks are the perpetrators (Dean et al, 2018). This is an interesting controversy and demonstrates that new research—aided by scientific and technological advances in genetics, biology, computer science, and other disciplines—is useful in questioning conventional wisdom. Students must learn that absolute certainty, including the ability to admit error, is an enemy of science and research.

The Columbian Exchange—the trans-Atlantic transfer of crops, animals, population, cultural artifacts, and ideas—was devastating to New World populations (Diamond, 1996; History.com editors, 2020b). It is estimated that the population of the New World numbered around 60 million prior to Columbus's arrival in 1492. Since the indigenous populations did not possess any immunity or natural resistance to the diseases brought by the Spanish, 56 million (ca. 90% of the population) died from smallpox, measles, typhus, influenza, and bubonic plague (Koch, et al., 2019). Though the Spanish conquistadores possessed superior weapons and pack animals, Eurasian infectious diseases were the primary cause of Spain's victories over the Aztecs, Incas, and other indigenous populations (Diamond, 1996; Koch et al, 2019).

For 13,000 years, New World populations evolved in isolation from European and Asian populations; simultaneously, there were significant differences in agriculture and animal husbandry among these civilizations that impacted immunity for certain infectious diseases. The Europeans spent thousands of years farming livestock where, over time, animal infections crossed over and became deadly to human beings (PBS, 2005). These infectious diseases killed millions of Europeans, but survivors developed immunities and antibodies that offered some resistance and handed these down to future generations. The New World populations were completely vulnerable to these diseases because they did not farm large mammals, with minor exceptions (PBS, 2005).

One of the interesting, and controversial, dimensions of the Columbian Exchange, centers around the charge that the Europeans committed genocide. There is one report that the colonists intentionally infected blankets with smallpox and gave them to the Shawnee, Mingo, and Delaware warriors who attacked Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania in 1763 (Kiger, 2019). However, this is the only documented account of the colonists using a

primitive form of biological warfare against Native Americans. The disagreements among historians and others regarding genocide is one that students could explore in their C3 Inquiry-Based project.



Victims of the 1918-19 flu pandemic, Camp Funston, Kansas.  
National Museum of Health and Medicine, U.S. Army.

Finally, the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic killed between 50 and 100 million people; this is the single deadliest pandemic in history and still has lessons for today's COVID-19 crisis and others that will inevitably follow (Barry, 2005). One of the major goals for teaching history is to avoid the pitfalls of presentism—the idea that something like COVID-19 is new and unprecedented in human history. In fact, people familiar with the history of epidemics and pandemics know that they have been quite common and ubiquitous across time.

The flu pandemic a century ago infected 500 million people, 25% of the global population in 1918 (Barry, 2005; Holzwarth, 2020) and reduced life expectancy in the United States by ten years. Astonishingly, the flu infected 30 million Americans and killed 675,000; this is far greater than the 117,000 Americans killed in combat in World War I (Holzwarth, 2020). Wartime censorship prevented the truth about the influenza pandemic reaching American and European citizens. Neither the Allies nor the Central Powers wanted to panic their militaries or publics and prevented any coverage of the pandemic (of course, this was much easier prior to the development of commercial radio, television, satellites, and the Internet.) Spain, however, did not censor its media and reported on the pandemic falsely, leading to people calling it the “Spanish Flu.” Contemporary research indicates that the

pandemic had its origins in China, France, or Kansas (Withers, 2018). (Interestingly, teachers may assign students to discuss and debate the morality of belligerent countries withholding crucial information about the pandemic—thus contributing to more sickness and deaths—to avoid panic and fear in the military forces and public.)

Rumors, like the Germans using poison gas with the flu virus to infect Americans via U-Boats, and dangerous policies, like doctors prescribing aspirin at toxic levels and officials in Philadelphia waiting two weeks to use social isolation, contributed to human morbidity and mortality. These brief descriptions of pandemics are just a few examples of the human misery—physical, emotional, social, political, and economic—infectious diseases have wrought in history.

The current COVID-19 pandemic—a new disease about which little is known—has demonstrated that governments were not prepared for a pandemic (Smil, 2020b). Predictions have been wildly wrong regarding morbidity, and the shortage of masks, gowns, and gloves have exacerbated the spread of the pandemic. Teaching students that humility is a virtue may be prudent; for all of mankind’s scientific and technological advances, our safest course of action now is to mimic 14<sup>th</sup> century Italians and quarantine from other people (Smil, 2020b).

### **Social Studies: Plagues and Pandemics**

Educators have numerous methods, activities, materials, artifacts, and primary resources when choosing how to incorporate pandemics and plagues into their courses. Furthermore, there are copious books, artwork, and music related to infectious diseases that teachers can use to create interdisciplinary unit plans, possible in conjunction with English and science teachers. Of course, the sheer number of resources—books, websites, journal articles, primary sources, and educational materials—may be overwhelming. However, a brief description of some of the most relevant, comprehensive, and practical resources will help educators plan their unit on infectious diseases.

For example, John M. Barry’s *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History* (2005) is a superb historical, medical, and political narrative of the 1918 influenza pandemic that killed between 50 and 100 million people. First, Barry describes the poor state of American medicine prior to the Progressive Era. There was an absence of rigorous training and solid medical knowledge and American doctors had to travel to Germany to receive a high-quality medical education. This eventually led to the professionalization of medicine—the creation of excellent medical schools, such as Johns Hopkins University’s School of Medicine in 1893, advances in biology and chemistry, an emphasis on empirical data and clinical models, and rigorous training for doctors who were required to obtain state licenses—in the United States. These were fortuitous developments prior to the 1918 pandemic.

Second, Barry discusses the emerging science of virology and focuses on the courageous doctors and scientific researchers who risked their lives to stop a horrible and unprecedented pandemic. This section of the book reads like a medical mystery and demonstrates the power of committed experts to seek solutions; of course, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has witnessed medical experts around the globe seeking vaccines and viable treatments. Social studies teachers may wish to collaborate with science teachers to demonstrate how scientific advances impact public policies, legislation (school requirements that all students have vaccinations prior to attending classes), and politics.

Third, Barry focuses on the societal response—he is critical of the corruption and dishonesty of public authorities who lied/misled citizens about the dangers of the influenza pandemic—and how different cities instituted contrasting policies (Philadelphia’s response was a disaster; San Francisco’s was robust and a victory for public health policies). The parallels between the 1918 responses to the influenza pandemic and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic are stark: fears, some people resisting social distancing guidelines, refusing to wear masks,

and numerous contradictory statements by politicians and experts that serve to confuse and frighten the American people. Today, the COVID-19 pandemic affects everyone in the United States; this fact will help students understand the 1918 pandemic and to make comparisons to develop critical thinking, empathy, and personal responsibility. Furthermore, Barry's book can provide teachers with excellent ideas and approaches, and the bibliography can lead to other outstanding resources.

One of the most interesting methods for teaching about pandemics and plagues throughout history centers on art, specifically paintings, to demonstrate the human misery caused by infectious diseases. Historically, paintings of plagues were powerful visual images understood by illiterate populations as God's wrath for immoral and wicked behaviors (Kasriel, 2020). Art has the power to inform the didactic domain (facts, empirical data), the reflective domain (critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity), and the affective domain (emotions, values, beliefs, and morality). Powerful art can help students develop compassion, humility, tolerance, courage, and other virtues by showing human suffering and triumph over adversity. The contemporary pictures and videos of doctors and nurses, risking their own health, taking care of COVID-19 patients is reminiscent of Marcantonio Raimondi's 16th century painting *Il Morbetto* (The Plague). This painting humanizes the victims, including young children, being treated by doctors with such compassion that it motivates viewers to take action to alleviate human misery. Furthermore, art is an excellent method to teach about symbols, metaphors, and abstract thinking. These thinking skills are transferable and vital to a liberal arts education and civic participation.

For example, in 1485, Giacomo Borlone de Burchis painted "*The Triumph of Death with The Dance of Death*." This fresco in Clusone, Italy, demonstrates the inevitability of death; neither wealth, status, nor power immunize any human being from their ultimate destiny. Death is represented by a skeleton queen and two fellow skeletons killing people—begging for mercy and offering material wealth to escape their fate—with a bow and an arquebus (a 15<sup>th</sup> century long gun). Many artists, such as Pieter Bruegel the Elder, have painted versions of *The Triumph of Death* to show the horrors of pandemics, such as the Black Death in medieval Europe. These paintings are an excellent set introduction activity to stimulate student interests in infectious diseases and how societies—across time and space—respond. Kasriel (2020) offers several examples of plague art that focus on punishment, compassion, public health, personal responsibility, and other themes. Based on these artworks, teachers can easily develop a multitude of questions and assignments that students will find challenging and rewarding. Moreover, using ancient and medieval art is an effective method to connect the past with the present and demonstrate our common humanity throughout time.

There are several websites that offer educators and students ideas, information, resources, and teaching activities about pandemics and plagues. For example, the Science Museum (n.d.) offers an interesting program titled *Epidemics* that examines the Black Death, smallpox, and polio. This resource includes maps, artwork, photography, fact sheets, and suggested resources that are relevant and appropriate for secondary school students. This resource also discusses the advances in genetics and genome mapping allowing researchers to identify specific strains of plague and genetic testing that has confirmed the 1348-1352 plague was, in fact, bubonic plague.

World History Commons offers an excellent program titled *Long Teaching Module: Children During the Black Death* (Wray, 2020). This website offers an introductory narrative, ten primary sources, a detailed lesson plan (objectives, materials, and activities), a document-based question, differentiation based on student ability levels, and a bibliography. The primary sources include a last will and testament, a passage from the *Decameron*, legislation aimed at preventing or containing the plague, and first-hand accounts by chroniclers.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2020c) is a federal health agency dedicated to protecting Americans' health regarding infectious and non-infectious diseases. This agency provides a wealth of information on all major diseases and public health issues. Thus, the CDC is a vital component of American national

security—they are committed to protecting the American people from intentional biological or chemical warfare—and prepares for possible attacks involving anthrax, smallpox (this scourge was eradicated in 1977 but the U.S. and Russia retain samples of the variola virus for research and in case a vaccine is needed), plague, and other pathogens. The CDC understands that epidemics and pandemics can not only kill and sicken millions of people but destroy a country's political and economic systems resulting in chaos. The CDC is an invaluable resource for social studies educators because it provides fact sheets, charts, maps, podcasts, links to journal articles and other resources, and historical videos and information on all major infectious diseases.

History, geography, and government teachers will find a wide variety of resources for teaching about diseases (the information on alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs is relevant to instructing K-12 students on the incredible harm of substance abuse) and their impact on society. Furthermore, the CDC (2020d) created the Development of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) division that focuses on health issues—substance abuse, obesity, nutrition and exercise, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, violence, and mental health—that are relevant to secondary students. This information is valuable for educators teaching civic and personal responsibility and the relationships among physical/mental health and socioeconomic status, productivity, educational performance, and happiness. A comprehensive civic education requires students understand that their personal health choices and behaviors impact other people and society; teaching them to make healthy and socially responsible choices during COVID-19 is crucial in social studies education.

The DASH subsection on “health disparities” discusses the disparate impact of infectious and chronic diseases on racial minorities, low-income individuals, sexual minorities, and other socially marginalized populations (Centers for Disease Control, 2020d). COVID-19, like many infectious and chronic diseases, has had a disparate impact on African Americans and other racial minorities; this fact can lead to a discussion of why racism, discrimination, and segregation have had an adverse effect on minority populations. The CDC is a magnificent resource that will inspire social studies teachers to create excellent lesson plans and student activities.

Social studies teachers can choose multiple approaches to teaching about plagues and pandemics. For example, throughout history poverty-stricken and marginalized groups suffered disproportionate morbidity and mortality owing to diseases (infectious and chronic). Historically, these groups live in densely populated urban areas characterized by poor nutrition, a lack of hygiene, poor sanitation (untreated human and animal waste, polluted waters), the absence or unaffordability of medical care (which was often primitive by contemporary standards), geographic isolation from social services and grocery stores, and the lack of public health systems. Furthermore, these populations are politically powerless and have often been ignored by policymakers. Currently, many infectious diseases in the United States—HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, COVID-19—disproportionately impact African Americans, especially in densely populated urban areas (Centers for Disease Control, 2020b).

Therefore, teachers can adopt a social, political, and economic justice approach to infectious diseases. This approach may involve examining the history of racism, slavery, Jim Crow, and *de facto* residential segregation trends across the country. Currently, the reparations debate—should the United States compensate African American descendants of slaves for the great inequality (wealth accumulation, political power, unequal access to education, health care, quality housing, and employment) that continues as a legacy of slavery—is relevant in academic and political circles. Focusing on infectious diseases, including COVID-19, and their impact on African Americans, is a social justice issue that many students would find interesting and challenging.

Another interesting approach focuses on geography. In 1854, Dr. John Snow mapped a cholera outbreak in London and showed a correlation between the number of cholera cases and their proximity to public water pumps (Tuthill, 2003). He removed the handle from the pump on Broad Street (today, the street is called Broadwick Street, and there is a monument—a water pump with its handle removed) and the number of cases of

cholera declined (Tuthill, 2003). Dr. Snow, a founder of epidemiology and medical hygiene, is also given credit for helping to establish and define medical geography. Medical geography is concerned with tracking epidemics, pandemics, and other diseases “to identify their sources, detect their carrier agents, trace their spatial diffusion, and prevent their recurrence” (Nijman, Shin, Muller, 2020, p. 293). Medical geographers (sometimes called health geographers) study how spatial and environmental factors, such as climate, topography, soils, air quality, river flows, the quality and source of water, contribute to the diffusion of diseases. Medical geographers utilize sophisticated maps, GIS techniques, and demographic data to analyze the spatial aspects of diseases (Nijman, et al., 2020). Teachers could assign groups different infectious diseases to research from a geographic perspective. This would allow students to GIS technologies, mapping software, demographic data, and historical knowledge to study COVID-19 and other pandemics.

An historical approach might examine how the 1348-1353 Black Death transformed European history. The Black Death accelerated the end of feudalism and manorialism and hastened the Renaissance, which, in turn, heralded the modern world. Students may wish to examine the economic effects of the Black Death on important individuals or families, the Catholic Church, or specific governments. They may wish to examine the art, literature, and music associated with the plague; these cultural artifacts are powerful reminders of the horrors and suffering the plague conferred on victims and families. There are several excellent books on the Black Death that could serve as resources for students. Finally, students might examine the plague in other countries, such as China or India, or examine how reactions in the 14<sup>th</sup> century mirrored reactions to the HIV-AIDS pandemic that began in the early 1980s and has killed 40 million people, especially in Africa (Nijman, et al., 2020). Hopefully, these suggestions will stimulate educators to brainstorm (possible with their students) other creative ideas that will motivate students to learn about pandemics and plagues, not just to fulfill course requirements, but as a vital topic regarding human suffering and creating ways to mitigate suffering.

### **A C3 Inquiry-Based Project: Pandemics and Plagues**

The College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards (henceforth, referred to as the C3 Framework) was designed to improve civic education and preparing all students for democratic participation in a globally competitive economy (NCSS, 2013). Developing citizens committed to creating a just and equitable society—one where America’s democratic ideals of liberty, due process, equal opportunities, and social justice become a concrete reality for all citizens—is the core civic goal of the C3 Framework. It is a conceptual guide to social studies standards; as such, it is a flexible paradigm that allows teachers and students creativity. The rationale for the creation of the C3 Framework is based on the idea that students will need content knowledge, disciplinary skills (how social scientists structure their disciplines), special skills (creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication), and the ability to work in cooperative environments characterized by high level computer technologies and a rapidly globalizing economy.

The C3 Framework focuses on the core social science disciplines of history, civics/government, economics, and geography; these are the four federally defined social studies disciplines chosen to streamline the development process (NCSS, 2013, 18). The focus on the four core disciplines does not mean that other disciplines—sociology, psychology, or anthropology—are to be ignored. Indeed, the C3 Framework incorporates the social studies, as well as the humanities and the natural sciences. Teachers can review the C3 Framework by visiting the website (<http://www.socialstudies.org/system/files/c3/C3-Framework-for-Social-Studies.pdf>) prior to developing their inquiry plan (3-4 weeks is reasonable) on infectious diseases. A comprehensive review of the C3 Framework is beyond the scope of this article, but teachers will benefit from visiting the website as they develop their unit plans.

## The Inquiry Plan: Pandemics and Plagues

### **I. The Compelling Question:** *Why was the 1918 “Spanish” Influenza Pandemic so Destructive?*

This is a compelling question because it focuses on an enduring issue with significant political, cultural, economic, and social implications. The question must be amenable to empirical analysis, rigorous debate, relevant to students, and employ multiple research methods (historical, quantitative, and qualitative). Moreover, a compelling question is complex, debatable, often controversial, and stimulates students’ interest and motivation in a topic. This question is the focus of the research project and educators must ensure that students focus on a thorough examination of data to answer this question. There is a copious amount of historical, economic, political, and medical research on the 1918 pandemic; this ensures students will be able to access primary sources, journal articles, books, websites, and other materials to answer the compelling question. The inquiry-based project requires cooperative learning, student leadership, positive relationships, and a commitment from each student to complete their assignments.

**II. Supporting Questions:** These questions in the four core disciplines (and other social studies disciplines) are to be answered based on rigorous research to support the compelling question. Additionally, there are two questions, one for psychology, and one for medical science. These are just examples and students (with teacher guidance) can develop their own supporting questions. These questions must be amenable to empirical answers.

#### A. History:

1. Can you identify two common characteristics between the 1918 pandemic and COVID-19?
2. How do the 1918 mortality and morbidity rates compare with the 1348-1352 bubonic plague in Europe?
3. Why was the 1918 pandemic so fatal for healthy people ages 20 to 40?
4. Can you explain how political cartoons portrayed the 1918 pandemic?
6. How did the 1918 pandemic impact the Paris Peace Talks with President Wilson?

#### B. Geography:

1. Can you trace the spatial diffusion of the 1918 influenza pandemic on a map?
2. Why was the 1918 pandemic misnamed the “Spanish flu?”
3. How did the 1918 pandemic effect China, India, and Europe?
4. Can you explain why San Francisco had significantly lower death rates than Philadelphia?

#### C. Economics:

1. How did the 1918 influenza impact trade among countries?
2. Why do high death rates during the 1918 pandemic help survivors economically?
3. What has been the impact of COVID-19 on American businesses?

4. How do pandemics affect supply and demand curves?
5. What occupations are most at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic?

D. Civics/Government:

1. How do pandemics promote international cooperation and/or competition?
2. Why was it harder for the government to communicate with the American people during the 1918 pandemic compared with today?
3. Should the primary responsibility for policies regarding pandemics be given to the federal government or each state?
4. How would you characterize the American government's response to COVID-19?
5. How can governments use pandemics for military or political advantage?

E. Psychology:

1. Why are epidemics or pandemics so devastating psychologically?

F. Medical Science:

1. Can you identify the current treatments for influenza? (any other disease.)

### **III. Developing Procedures, Data Collection, and Analysis**

After the creation of the compelling and supporting questions, the next step involves developing the procedures for data collection and analysis. Teachers must be proactive and ensure students are able to identify and reject myths, propaganda, and faulty arguments devoid of empirical data. The C3 Framework claims, "Students should use various technologies and skills to find information and to express their responses to compelling and supporting questions through well-reasoned explanations and evidence-based arguments. It is imperative that students become familiar with "Dimension 2" of the C3 Framework. They must understand how historians and different social scientists approach their work. For example, geographers focus on spatial relationships, interactions between humans and the environment, migration, and diffusion patterns, and use GIS technologies to map data. Geographers would be interested in how the 1918 pandemic spread across the entire world and why some regions were hit harder than other areas. Economists examine supply and demand curves, the concepts of scarcity and elasticity, and fiscal and monetary policies. Economists would analyze how the morbidity and mortality rates affected economic growth and international trade. The supporting questions from each discipline examine data specific to their academic specialty. Thus, the C3 Framework allows a holistic analysis of the 1918 pandemic from multiple perspectives. Through the rigorous analysis of sources and application of information from those sources, students should make the evidence-based claims that will form the basis for their conclusions" (NCSS, 2013, p. 53).

It is crucial that students are able to evaluate the credibility of sources and make distinctions between values, facts, opinions, and political ideologies; teaching students to recognize biases, faulty logic, propaganda, myths, and the difference between correlation and cause/effect are vital skills in the social studies and are mandatory for methodologically sound inquiry learning (NCSS, 2013). Students should use peer-reviewed journals, history and social science books, websites (caution is needed here, and students need to learn about

propaganda, the politicization of media and resources), museum artifacts, and other appropriate resources to gather factual information, statistics, and multiple perspectives.

This process requires that teachers supervise students' research and help them find reputable resources and deal with the complexities and contradictions associated with research—experts disagree on many issues, some questions may not have answers, methodologies may be flawed, and researchers have bias—that may be frustrating. Moreover, keeping students on track, checking their progress, monitoring group dynamics, and ensuring they finish their project requires diligence.

#### **IV. Communicating Conclusions and Civic Action**

The final product allows students to present their findings and engage in civic action to make a difference in their communities. Thus, an excellent C3 Framework inquiry project on the 1918 influenza pandemic can prepare students to apply their knowledge during contemporary pandemics. There are numerous lessons from the 1918 pandemic that are relevant to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Students will discover that social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, and isolating at home when sick were effective measures during the 1918 pandemic. Cities, like St. Louis, that instituted these policies had significantly better outcomes compared to cities, such as Philadelphia, that ignored social distancing and wearing masks. Therefore, the refusal of some American citizens to follow these steps—recommended by almost all medical doctors, infectious diseases specialists, and public health officials is so bewildering. These steps, perhaps annoying but simple to practice, save lives.

Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of a C3 project on the 1918 pandemic would be an emphasis on civic responsibility based on respect for other people. Students, like many adults, must learn that no right or freedom is absolute, and limitations are required for public health and safety. America's emphasis on individual rights and liberties is a hallmark of democracy; however, individualism carried to an extreme can produce selfish and narcissistic individuals wholly unconcerned with the welfare of others or society. Students can lead on this issue and set a positive example by following the CDC guidelines.

Communicating conclusions and taking informed action is the final stage in the C3 Framework and students present their conclusions and describe their policy recommendations for solving problems and improving society via civic engagement. According to the C3 Framework, "Civic engagement in the social studies may take many forms, from making independent and collaborative decisions within the classroom, to starting and leading student organizations within schools, to conducting community-based research and presenting findings to external stakeholders" (p. 59). Students, working individually and collaboratively, will present their findings via essays, reports, multimedia presentations (PowerPoints, videos, blogs, and other forms of social media), debates, posters, mock trials, moot courts, and other activities (NCSS, 2013a). The audience for these presentations may include outside officials who were involved in the C3 projects, as well as parents. Moreover, these presentations give students opportunities to comment on their work, accept constructive feedback, make modifications, and gain valuable experiences that will help prepare them for college, career, and civic life (NCSS, 2013a).

There are numerous other methods teachers may employ to teach about the 1918 pandemic. Videos, essays, mock trials (holding governments responsible for their policies) simulations, small group discussions, interactive lectures, using music artwork, science, literature, political cartoons, and other methods may be more appropriate than a time-consuming and complex C3 Framework project. Moreover, time constraints, student ability levels, state/district testing requirements, and other factors may affect teaching decisions. Teachers must have the ability to modify their instruction based on their specific needs and circumstances. Teachers can modify the C3 Framework; the emphasis on student-centered education, cooperative learning, and using the scientific method to produce projects that impact students' knowledge, thinking and research skills, communication skills, and motivates them to engage in civic affairs is crucial to modern education. Teachers are professionals and know how to achieve these goals based on their specific circumstances. Of course, there are many methods and

activities teachers can implement to teach all topics and issues; but all methods and activities can be measured by their impact on students' knowledge, thinking skills, and commitment to developing the civic virtues that are essential to a democracy.

Regardless of the methods and activities chosen by educators to teach about pandemics throughout history, it is crucial that the primary goal of civic education—developing virtuous citizens who possess the knowledge, skills, and democratic dispositions required in a democracy—be the foundation of all social studies courses.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The 1918 influenza pandemic was the single greatest killer in history. There are so many lessons to be learned from studying this human tragedy. Indeed, historians, social scientists, public health officials, and medical doctors continue to examine the 1918 pandemic (new computer technologies and advances in DNA testing have yielded positive results) and apply those lessons to contemporary pandemics and epidemics. COVID-19 has unleashed emotional, psychological, social, political, and economic destruction on the United States and the world. Simultaneously, the current pandemic offers educators and students excellent opportunities to explore the obligations citizens have to each other in a democracy, as well as the relevant human, historical, economic, political, and geographic dimensions of the pandemic.

Pandemics do not respect geopolitical or physical borders and can have a devastating impact on all countries and can shatter the global economy. Therefore, students—young citizens learning about their rights and responsibilities in social studies classes—must understand how their actions impact other citizens. Therefore, teaching civic virtues—compassion, personal responsibility, community engagement, humility, self-discipline, and moral courage—is crucial in a democracy.

Thomas Jefferson, as well as other U.S. founders, understood that the fate of democracies rest on the character of the citizenry; this is why Jefferson stated the ultimate goal of civic education is “to develop the reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge their minds, cultivate their morals, and instill into them the precepts of virtue and order” (Gowdy, 2016, p. 5). Successfully fighting pandemics, like wars, requires cooperation, trust, and civic engagement—all individuals must make sacrifices for the common good. Teachers may use this opportunity to tell students that social distancing and wearing masks indicate, not a violation of personal freedom via government fiat, but a deep concern for the lives and well-being of other citizens. Students can develop empathy for the elderly, citizens with serious health conditions, low-income individuals, and minorities who represent a disproportionate number of COVID-19 cases and deaths.

Historically, natural and human disasters have a disproportionate adverse impact on poor and minority citizens because they lack the capital to access needed resources. Therefore, another powerful reason for teaching about pandemics revolves around social justice. Ensuring that poor and minority citizens receive proper health care—access to doctors, hospitals, and medications—is a moral and constitutional mandate. Active citizens, motivated by a passionate desire to establish equality, engage in civic activities to transform the words “and justice for all” into a concrete reality for all Americans.

All citizens must understand the economic impact of pandemics on the United States and other countries; pandemics are intrinsically related to the social studies. For example, as of August 5, 2020, there have been 18.6 million cases across the globe with 702,500 deaths; the United States has 4.8 million cases—approximately 25% of the world total—and 157,000 deaths (John Hopkins University, 2020). These deaths represent a tragedy for the victims and their families as well as serious economic hardship for societies. Between mid-March and late July, 54 million Americans applied for unemployment insurance; in April 2020, the national unemployment rate reached 14.7%, the highest since the 1930s Great Depression (Congressional Research Service, 2020). The unemployment

rate, combined with many companies closing and increased federal spending to ameliorate unemployment, prompted Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell to state, “This precipitous drop in economic activity has caused a level of pain that is hard to capture in words, as lives are upended amid great uncertainty about the future” (Congressional Research Service, 2020, p. 2).

Globally, some estimates indicate that 29 million people in Latin America may fall into poverty, reversing hard-earned gains in reducing income inequality. Foreign investors have withdrawn \$26 billion from developing Asian economies, not including \$16 billion from India, generating fears about a major recession in Asia (Congressional Research Service, 2020). Africa, after evading the initial diffusion, is seeing an increase in cases; this is disconcerting because Africa is poorly equipped to deal with COVID-19 on top of malaria, yellow fever, and HIV/AIDS.

However, these dry, albeit important, numbers disguise the incredible human misery spawned by the pandemic. For example, survey research indicates that more Americans are currently suffering from anxiety (53%) and sadness (51%) in greater percentages than before the pandemic (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2020). The specter of disease and death, the loss of employment, social isolation (the absence of attending sporting events, concerts, and social interaction found in large groups), and an unknown future contribute to depression, stress, and financial apprehension. Furthermore, with many schools online for the fall 2020 school year, many working parents are concerned with balancing jobs with supervising their children’s education. As of August 2020, the implications of COVID-19 on students—emotional harms, social isolation, lack of free/reduced meals in schools, and the impact on their knowledge and skills—are deleterious.

Pandemics are also related to government and civics. COVID-19, like most natural and human disasters, has produced enormous criticism of the American government’s handling of the pandemic. Disagreements among medical professionals, public health experts, researchers, and policymakers has confused and angered many Americans—people have been shot, verbally abused and physically assaulted over requests and refusals to wear masks—who have lost faith in institutions (Pew Research Center, 2019). Thus, teachers can use the pandemic to educate students on the crucial importance of democratic ideals—individual rights and responsibilities, liberty balanced with order and restraints for the common good, equality under the law, and due process—and civic virtues when confronted by serious challenges such as COVID-19.

In 2013, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013b), very concerned about the decline in civic education and the narrowing of the social studies curriculum (the standards, testing and accountability movement, in conjunction with a strong emphasis on STEM disciplines is responsible, in part, for the decline of social studies), issued a position paper titled “*Revitalizing Civic Learning in Our Schools.*” This paper argued that competent and responsible citizens must be informed, thoughtful, and engage in civic behaviors based on democratic virtues. Character education is integral to social studies education. The NCSS articulated this ideal when they stated, “They are concerned with the rights and welfare of others socially responsible, willing to listen to alternative perspectives, confident in their capacity to make a difference, and ready to contribute personally to civic and political action” (p. 3).

This statement summarizes how citizens should behave; the current pandemic provides all Americans with an opportunity to practice effective citizenship—wearing a mask and social distancing demonstrates concern for others’ health, students using social media to connect with older/sicker relatives shows compassion and sacrificing (avoiding crowded beaches, bars, parties, and concerts) displays a commitment to the common good. Teaching students (many secondary school students are naturally prone to a certain degree of self-absorption and selfishness) they must sacrifice for others is an effective means of ameliorating the excesses of individualism.

It seems prudent that social studies educators increase their focus on teaching about pandemics throughout history. The powerful lessons learned from past failures and successes can inform contemporary

policies and individual behaviors; there will be future pandemics and providing citizens with knowledge and the character traits needed to overcome adversity is imperative to democracy. Furthermore, the economic, geographical, and political aspects of pandemics provide educators with a plethora of methods, activities, and resources to engage students to become actively involved in society.

Finally, COVID-19 and other pandemics show that “no man is an island” and cooperation, personal sacrifice, and a deep concern for other human beings are required to overcome adversity. However, overcoming adversity and existential challenges (wars, environmental threats) requires the citizenry to possess the character traits (moral courage, individual responsibility for actions, civic engagement, compassion, respect, self-discipline, honesty, resilience in the face of suffering, and humility) instilled by families and schools. In short, social studies plays a pivotal role in developing these character traits and preparing students for civic participation. Thomas Jefferson, in an 1816 letter to Amos J. Cook stated, “And if the Wise, be the happy man, as these sages say, he must be virtuous too; for, without virtue, happiness cannot be” (Jefferson, 1816). Jefferson believed the same about democracy, it requires virtue to survive. Teaching about pandemics provides excellent opportunities to instill virtues in secondary students thus fulfilling the primary goal of civic education (NCSS 2013b).

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# Fostering Media Literate Global Citizens: Tools for Understanding

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## Abstract

Presently, our students are inundated with media through a variety of resources. Now more than ever it is vital for students to be able to consume information, which is credible, reliable, and verifiable. All of this is being compounded by a shrinking world and a level of access which is almost instant and a media landscape where traditional gateways of editorship may not always be present. In order to address the need for media literate and global oriented citizenship we lay out a path for social studies teachers to foster media literate consumers of information and who view their citizenship through a global lens. Natural disasters provide wonderful examples of events which have both local and global impacts, and which are relevant to social studies.

## Introduction

Natural disasters, media literacy, and global citizenship are more intertwined than one might realize. Becoming a media literate global citizen requires that students learn how to examine major events from multiple global perspectives. Consequently, students must learn how to reframe current events in the context of global issues as “the realities of global interdependence require [they develop] an understanding of the increasingly important and diverse connections among world societies” (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2010). Social studies teachers have the unique opportunity to help their students make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as global citizens of an interdependent world (NCSS, 2013). Examining current events fosters discussions of ongoing world issues in order to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of citizenship, but sometimes a depth of understanding is sacrificed when news changes fast. Natural disasters such as the recurring California wildfires, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, and the Australian bushfires often make headline news only to soon dissipate as public amnesia sets in. An essential part of developing informed global citizens is helping students acquire a sustained understanding of current events and their impact; understanding the media’s function in democracy; and learning to make personal and political decisions that are socially and civically responsible.

Although many social studies teachers make time for current events in their classroom repertoire, typical instruction often involves students selecting random articles about sensational news items from a newspaper, magazine, or website (Lipscomb & Doppen, 2013), a mode of instruction that fails to empower students as learners (Freire, 1970) and minimizes the opportunity to teach a deeper understanding or caring for people impacted by current events (Doppen & Tesar, 2012; Noddings, 2005). Teaching current events this way reflects a one-hit, distant historical perspective, which is particularly problematic within a school curriculum that is shallow and reflects a Western bias (Willinsky, 2000; Zhou, 2009, 2012). Furthermore, current events

instruction often falls by the wayside in academic settings because of high-stakes testing, the need to adhere to a narrow, rigorous curriculum, and teachers' own fears about teaching controversial issues (Hollstein & Hawley, 2019; Lipscomb & Doppen, 2013). Even topics that are generally agreed upon as important for current events in the social studies classroom can be controversial, and therefore neglected, due to a potential lack of teachers' understanding of and ability to field student questions, or fear of scrutiny from members of the community about their instructional and curricular decisions (Hollstein, 2016).

More than ever, today's students can use digital tools to engage a broad spectrum of ongoing global issues and their impact to learn about unfolding news events while they unfold and play out, discuss the impacts with others in forums or affinity blogs, and respond with empathy. Yet, many teachers are unsure of how to help students stay informed of ongoing issues, make reasoned decisions for the global public good, and respond with empathy. Engaging students in this essential process while helping them move beyond a shallow, cursory knowledge of world issues in order to "recognize their connections to people around the world who may share similar situations or have different reactions" (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005, p. 123) seems impossible. Yet, students can achieve all of this while learning about digital media and social networking sites in which many people retrieve news and information that can guide earnest seekers of information to truth or misinformation. It is essential in a social studies classroom that students be able to effectively navigate the many forms of digital information they may encounter as they study current events. Media literacy provides a roadmap that will guide students in a broad array of interactions. This is particularly challenging considering how problematic news information and discussion can be, especially when coupled with global environmental issues such as the Australian fires, which to many students, seem far away and irrelevant to their lives. It is important to note that what we are presenting here are materials and examples that we have all used in our classrooms effectively.

In this paper, we conceptualize a model for media literacy instruction that extends to include a sustained understanding of current world issues, empowers students to be globally-civically aware, and promotes media literacy skills. Through this instructional model, students will use media literacy-based activities in a social studies classroom to uncover information about events, deliberate viewpoints, and begin to develop a critical awareness based on guiding questions such as:

- What are credible sources for information on global current events?
- What civic obligations do global citizens have to be informed through accurate sources of information?
- What actions can we take to care for people who live far away?

These questions exemplify the overarching knowledge gains for planning student inquiry. As complex guiding questions, not rooted in one time or place, the questions are intended to promote students' deeper thinking about their actions and roles in a civic global society. Such questions ideally emerge as students use digital media to investigate environmental disasters and the disasters' basis in human decision-making. Teachers may encourage students to discuss responses representing multiple perspectives. Further discussions may center on patterns of whom natural disasters affect, the underlying causes, and the possibilities for showing empathy and civic engagement during natural disasters. As students grapple with such topics, they develop a deeper understanding of natural disasters, global citizenship, and use of digital media.

For more explicit essential questions, we draw from Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) Understanding by Design Model, which shapes student inquiry in order to elicit knowledge through multiple research pathways. The UBD Model, also referred to as "backwards design" focuses first on the desired learning outcomes, followed by steps students take to achieve the outcomes. Teachers may use these essential questions explicitly or implicitly during the lesson.

- How can we use the Internet to find accurate information about natural disasters?
- How does the Internet spread misinformation about natural disasters?

- Who is responsible for natural disasters?
- Why have some regions suffered environmental degradation while others have not?
- What is the responsibility of citizens outside of the natural disaster area?
- How can individuals use the Internet to act civically in the aftermath of a natural disaster?

### **Citizenship and Current Events**

Many digital literacy lesson plans, such as those from *Teaching Tolerance*, Newsela, or the Looksharp Institute, benefit student understanding of current events (political or otherwise), civic actions and obligations, or promote empathy through shared understanding. This model is unique in its merging of current events, global understanding, and digital media literacy. Because it is deeply rooted in the philosophy of good citizenship, this model is most appropriate for social studies coursework. Social studies education has always included examining the social aspect of citizenship (Beard, 1929; Thornton, 2008). The study of current events in social studies has been a constant ever since before its formal inception (Camicia & Dobson, 2009; Evans, 2004; Hess, 2008; Oliver & Shaver, 1966). Almost a century ago, John Dewey in *Democracy and Education* argued that it is the duty of citizens to be informed and participatory in their democracy to ensure that it serves the best interest of all its members. As the father of democratic education, he advocated an informed and participatory civic collective through the study of current events (Dewey, 2012; Pass, 2007). This requires social studies education to ensure students become aware and active citizens by examining events outside of the classroom (Deveci, 2007; NCSS, 2013). The most recent articulation of this responsibility can be found in NCSS' College, Career and Civic Life Framework (C3) (2013) which requires students to be knowledgeable about current events and possess the ability to affect change.

The study of current events in social studies can foster the development of democratic citizens who are able to effectively navigate the many diverse requirements that are placed upon them (Deveci, 2007). Countries with schooling that promotes students' questioning and discussions in classrooms as well as civic participation correlate with a deeper student knowledge of and support for democratic values (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Studying contemporary and sometimes controversial events allows students to enact the reality of citizenship (Camicia, 2008; Hess, 2002; 2005; 2008; King, 2009) and understand its dynamic nature because it requires them to evaluate alternative perspectives on public issues (Camicia & Dobson, 2009). Conversely, the study of citizenship from only one perspective delivered as "truth" without regard for multiple perspectives or possible inaccuracy amounts to indoctrination – "banal nationalism" (Billig, 1996), whereas effective education is "the opening of possibilities" (Sears & Hughes, 2006, p. 4).

The varied and diverse composition of the global community requires an in-depth understanding of cultural, social, and political underpinnings that drive global interactions and citizenship. Global citizens should be informed, aware, and participatory in their local, national *and* global communities. However, as the concept of global citizenship continues to evolve (Banks, 2004; Leduc, 2013; Martin et al., 2012; Myers, 2006) we view teaching students to understand and respond to the media as a moral imperative for schools.

### **A Changing Landscape of Civic Notions**

Because school experiences serve as predictors of civic knowledge and engagement (IEA, 2001), studying current issues can serve to help students develop a deeper understanding of the purpose, process, and problems of becoming a global citizen. Explicitly, students need to understand the media because, to echo the classic quote by Marshall McLuhan (1964), "The medium is the message." Each innovation in communication technology and media changes what we know and how we learn (Fang, 1997; Carr, 2011; Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2012), therefore, changing our notions of citizenship.

Historically, each innovation in communication technology and media has provided human beings with a greater awareness of, and ability to act on, issues beginning with the invention of papyrus and the development of the alphabet all the way to Web 2.0 technologies, the most recent and pervasive of which are Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram. However, much of what looks like “information” on the surface is inaccurate and biased, related to a person, group, or institution’s quest for political or financial gain or notoriety, or the author’s failure to adequately research and ask important questions before publishing his or her opinion or status update. Misunderstandings on the part of Internet users also lead to inaccuracies: a lack of understanding on how to conduct a good Internet search for information using Google or other search engines (Carr, 2011) or not being able to distinguish between fact and opinion in digital information. Such problems highlight the truth that all forms of the media are tools that can either be reliable or untrustworthy depending on *how people use these tools* (Debatin, 2008).

## **Global Issues**

In the aftermath of a natural disaster, public attention (and the attention of students as well), typically fades quickly as new events take its place in the headlines, hearts, and minds of the global community. News articles, blogs, and government-issued press releases present facts and opinions that can be researched and evaluated to uncover content information related to the several key areas of the social studies such as history, geography, economics and civics. In keeping with the democratic, student-centered nature of media literacy, instructional methods may vary widely from classroom to classroom but must always include a broad variety of sources, opportunities for students to reflect on what they have learned through discussions and journals, and student-created media products that empower student voices (CML, 2007; Hobbs, 2005; Hobbs & Jensen, 2009). Such products should be creative and represent students’ own perspectives; they can take almost any number of forms, including letters, blogs, editorials, podcasts, videos, photo collections, or news articles. These strategies represent generally agreed-upon key practices in media literacy instruction (CML, 2007; Hobbs, 2005; Hobbs & Jensen, 2009).

When selecting a natural disaster for study it is important to consider student interest. Unfortunately, major world events, including disasters such as the British Petroleum oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, too often receive little sustained attention in the classroom, let alone in news. Already, one of the most devastating fire seasons ripped through Australia and yet, it disappeared from coverage on mainstream media in the United States. Yet it is important to recognize the global context in which this seemingly localized event took place (Martin et al., 2012). Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and the fracking spill on the Opossum Creek in rural Ohio are examples of local events that are embedded within larger global issues. Controversial in nature, both events, as well as the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, foster numerous questions of social justice, civic responsibility, and environmental destruction. Typhoon Haiyan was a natural disaster, though one could argue that the severity of this event was impacted by human action that has led to warmer ocean waters (McKibben, 2011). Hydraulic fracturing is an energy phenomenon that through accessing natural gas and petroleum deposits in shale basins causes both direct and indirect environmental degradation. Fracking has become a global issue evidenced by a rapid increase in fracking operations worldwide (Spross, 2014).

All these events share a common thread through their impact on people, wildlife, and the environment at large. Providing students with an ecological cosmopolitan framework will help them to better understand global interdependence, the nature of controversy, global citizenship and social justice (Hess, 2004; Moore, 2012; King, 2009). As we begin to offer examples of teaching strategies, we strongly encourage teachers to foster deep empathy within students through the events they examine and to train students to see humanity in all events. We believe that a critical examination of information through media literacy can foster this level of quality engagement. Teachers and students might experiment together using anchor chart systems or digital notebooks

to track current events, their implications, and media attention in order to gain deeper understandings and identify patterns that shape global actions.

### **Media Literacy in the School Setting**

In this era of “fake news” and perception as truth, media literacy is more important than ever. Media literacy is the foundation for fostering competent global citizens. Presently, students are inundated with information from traditional sources, such as television news, magazines, and newspapers; and non-traditional sources such as social media, blogs, and wikis — some of this information being credible, fact-based, and thorough, with other information being biased, incomplete, or discreditable in other ways. Many students do not fully understand how to navigate the information cascade but a firm understanding of media literacy will help offset the aforementioned noise (Lazer et al., 2017).

According to the National Association of Media Literacy Education, media literacy is defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act, using all forms of communication” (n.d., para.1). Traditionally, when teaching any type of information literacy, the process is relatively similar. A media specialist explains the basis of the research and then outlines procedures for finding the desired information. Once students have the required tools, the media specialist will guide them through a round of research to operationalize a potentially abstract process (Ragains & Wood, 2016). However, this is not the case with media literacy. Hobbs (2010) states that a “one-size fits all” approach to this problem will not work (p. 20). Therefore, it is vital that in a K-12 setting the process be separated and segmented to ensure students are successful.

When teaching media literacy at the K-12 level, we recommend beginning with a website called Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus (<https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>) The website looks typical. It describes the plight of the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus and where it lives. The website comes equipped with an About page and FAQs. You can donate to the tree octopus. You can even learn its Latin name. This website is easy to use when introducing students to what to look for in valid resources. While the site looks legitimate, we asked the students to look for references. We teach them to find out where information comes from. Triangulation can be helpful in this process. We teach the students to find the information in three sources. This process helps solidify the accuracy of the resource. This coalesces in the idea that our students are only able to be active, informed, and participatory if they have accurate information on which to base their decision and actions.

K-12 students, especially younger students, present a unique challenge due to where they are in the range of cognitive developmental milestones. First, younger students have not yet developed the complex intellectual and emotional skills required to determine if they are being misled. Second, they lack practical real-world experience (Potter, 2011). In their lack of experience, children do not know what to take at face value and what information needs further investigation. Research is an acquired skill which must be sharpened over time with consistent and purposeful practice under the guidance of an expert. These skills will present a difficult obstacle for students, especially in our current landscape when purportedly “correct” information sources exist. However, starting media literacy training early can foster research skills and practices which will be fundamental building blocks to learning to critically evaluate news and information, and the sources of such information, in a global world with many competing political interests.

**Table 1** Classroom Strategies

Strategy	Key Components	Benefits
Evaluating Sources	Source credibility	Students learn how to differentiate between expert knowledge and opinions
	Inquiry	
	Critical thinking	Research Skills
Finding credible sources	Academic databases	Confidence
	Internet search engines	Efficiency
	Evaluative process	Research skills
	Critical thinking	
Determining Bias	Nature of bias	Critical thinking
	Positionality/Source	Ethical Reasoning
	Critical thinking	

### Media Literacy Classroom Activities

Thus far, we have described current events, the importance of global citizenship, and the importance of media literacy as a binding strategy across these ideas. We will now describe three strategies which we encourage social studies teachers to use in their classrooms to examine current events with a media literacy framework as the guide (Table 1). These strategies are intended to be a starting point for growing students' media literacy through action. Aligning with NCSS' (2013) C3 framework inquiry arc, these activities further shift the focus of students from *learning* about an issue to *inquiring* about an issue. These activities encourage students to identify an issue of interest, investigate this issue, and then determine a resolution of their choosing. More succinctly, they take the role of active learners instead of passive consumers. While this article is focused on global citizenship and current events, we have purposefully crafted these sections in a broad way in order to ensure that teachers can use them across a multitude of subjects and classes in social studies. All are student-led, enhancing intrinsic motivation.

## Evaluating Sources

It is essential that students know and be able to differentiate between credible expert driven sources of information and those which are opinions masquerading as fact. Credibility means that a source of information has consistently presented accurate information that can be verified by other sources. Social media has created multiple platforms through which users can post or add information, such as, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter. Between the Internet at large and the narrower scope of social media, students are bombarded by information through, in some cases, minute to minute updates. This cascade of information makes it difficult for students to determine what is credible information and what is misinformation. In a recent example, dated in February 2020, Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton, speaking about the coronavirus and where it possibly originated, suggested that the disease originated in a bio-weapons lab in Wuhan, China and stated “we don’t have evidence that this disease originated there”... but because of China’s duplicity and dishonesty from the beginning, we need to at least ask the question to see what the evidence says, and China right now is not giving evidence on that question at all.” (Stevenson, 2020 n.p.). Senator Cotton is not a disease expert and many of his claims have been proven false (CNN, 2020). Another example is President Trump’s contention that the coronavirus spread from a biological weapon effort by China (Timm, 2020). Though the virus did originate in China, and China failed to fully disclose the severity of the outbreak, there is still no public evidence supporting that it was manmade in a biological weapons lab. False claims like these create problematic scenarios where students, who trust public officials, engage the broader world with incorrect information.

In addition, students lacking experience and who trust political leaders or figureheads may perceive them as unbiased and will believe what they are being told is credible and factual. Thus, by not possessing the requisite media literacy skills to assess this information, a student might mistake misinformation as factual. Such risks pose the potential for global hysteria and extreme media and political attention, and a possible threat beginning with something people have some familiarity with (influenza), originating on the other side of the world, can have negative effects on global understanding and empathy during disasters.

Being able to evaluate a source through media literacy is necessary for determining credible information. We encourage students to engage in the following process as if it were a checklist in order to fully perform this evaluation. Using Senator Cotton’s public statement on the coronavirus or President Trump’s comments, for example, students must first ask how a source acquires this information and the extent to which this source is qualified to speak on this issue with expertise. Sourcing information is paramount to high-level media literacy in order to determine credibility and potential bias. Students who research Senator Cotton’s background and unpack his credibility may realize he does not have a credible and authoritative position to comment given his education and background, and over time and with practice, identify patterns of misinformation or propaganda spreading from unreliable sources when assessing other information. Furthermore, while assessing credibility students should ask questions such as, “Does this source have professionally trained journalists reporting the news or are the stories opinions from untrained readers or fans who are simply commenting?” This is critically important due to our ability to generate content about almost anything and parade it as fact when it may not be. Teachers should question students frequently about sourcing, especially during discussions of current events or controversial issues. When studying disasters and global citizenship, such questions can serve to separate rumors (unverified information) from fact-based reporting.

Similarly, students should ask whether the information is transparent, which means articles or information are clearly marked as editorials, opinion pieces, or investigative journalism (Caulfield, n.d.). In the case of Senator Cotton and his misleading coronavirus comments, he was offering a belief without relevant facts to support his argument which can be very dangerous when someone in a position of authority submits opinion as fact. We strongly encourage students to strip bare the noise surrounding information in order to ascertain its basic building blocks. One exercise that demonstrates the evaluative process is to have the students pick a current

events topic such as coronavirus. Next, have students search for the topic of that news event using a preferred search engine such as Google. Upon completion of their initial search, ask students to critically examine their results. To do this, we suggest having students select one site from their search results and explain why their source is credible or not credible based on the questions we have outlined above. We recommend that the first-time teachers engage in this activity that they do so as a whole class for students to see multiple examples of potentially credible and non-credible sources of information. Further, during this whole-class activity we encourage students to document their results (see table 2).

**Table 2** Assessment of Credibility Chart

Topic	Source	Credibility	Notes

Technology is creating more and more platforms for information. While it is hard to keep up with each new emerging technology, the criteria to assess credible sources does not change. We have found this activity successful in assessing information credibility across a variety of platforms.

### Finding Credible Sources

Now that students understand how to determine the credibility of sources. The next step is to show students how to search utilizing academic databases or search engines, if academic databases are not readily available. Academic databases are a powerful tool for students to conduct searches in an academic setting. Academic databases are wonderful tools for the classroom, especially given that they have been created and curated for the sole purpose of allowing teachers and students to find academic material. Academic databases have been designed with students and teachers in mind through their user interface and searchability. Academic databases can be difficult to use when doing research on current events because their very nature is predicated upon taking time to properly determine sourcing authority and credibility. Thus, academic databases are useful as a tool but may not always be helpful when examining current events. However, we recognize that some schools may not have access to an academic database, such as INFOhio which is a database designed specifically for K-12 students. If academic databases are not available, then we advocate using a broader Internet search using a popular search engine as this may be the only accessible tool for students. It is important for students to understand that search engines are neither good nor bad, rather, search engines are simply an algorithmic platform to find information. However, students must understand that, as is the case with any search, the quality of results will always be equal to the quality of the search. This distinction is important because while we prefer an academic database like INFOhio, search engines can yield fruitful results but only if the students understand how to search for and determine credible sources. Simply put, a better search will yield better results.

When searching, either an academic database or a search engine, we encourage students to attempt to find books or journal articles due to the intense scrutiny required for publication, which ensures they are accessing information that is accurate. However, other sources like news outlets must be evaluated for bias and credibility. When conducting an internet search, we encourage students to use sites ending in .edu or .gov, as these sites are educational institutions and government backed sites. However, students will often encounter sites ending in .org and while most non-profit .org sites are credible, we strongly encourage students to thoroughly evaluate these sources for bias and potential misinformation. Historically .org sites have been non-profit organizations. In the case of the American Red Cross this is a strong, reliable source. Some organizations,

however, do have an agenda and their information could be considered bias (University System of Georgia, n.d.[W3] ). We encourage students to maintain a high level of scrutiny, even when using .org sites. In this age of information, students must be taught to review the "About," tabs, mission statements, and lists of contributing authors, funders, and groups that support the websites, particularly .org sites. Even though propaganda and misinformation can be hidden behind seemingly innocuous group names, amateur researchers can identify glaring problems and weed out such sites from their sources. With repetition, students will acquire triangulation and therefore, more reliable knowledge upon which to act.

We believe using INFOhio is straightforward and strongly encourage teachers to connect with their school media literacy specialists in order to find further guidance. An additional and helpful exercise to finding credible sources is to have students select their favorite search engine. We encourage students to utilize multiple search engines to create a wide variety of results. Students may not be aware of how information changes depending on where they look. Therefore, we encourage students to search for the same topic such as the Australian bushfires but independently from each other in order to create a variety of results. The Australian bushfires are a great example of a natural disaster which took on a life of its own due to the volume of information about the issue. After students search their topic, in our example the bushfires, have them compare their search results with one another (see table 2). We conducted a search and the third site listed was Wikipedia which may contain a large amount of accurate information, but which is still editable at any time, by anyone. We also recommend that teachers document some of the results, perhaps through screenshots, to display to the entire class for later analysis. As an extension of this activity and to further highlight how information is disseminated, ask students to search for Australian bushfires using a different search engine. Additionally, changing the order of a multi-word search will, in most cases, change the search results significantly. We used Bing.com and found that Wikipedia was now the second page but that three of the first five sites were .org sites. Students need ample time searching so that they can feel comfortable navigating the Internet effectively. Searching a term and simply adding .edu to the search bar will greatly enhance the credible sources. Teachers can conduct guided practices with various keywords in whole-class or small-group settings depending on the schools' available technology and student abilities.

We have found in our own classes that when students understand how to find and evaluate credible sources, they become more confident in their abilities and begin to search out more varied sources due to their increased skill at determining credible sources. We have also found that this process and subsequent increased confidence helps to make students more efficient researchers. Over time and through purposeful practice, students will, hopefully, stop using search engines and go directly to a variety of different sites and sources they know are reputable. This also addresses NCSS (2013) Standards, Dimension 3 requiring students to practice evaluating sources and using evidence by having students "gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection" (p.54).

### **Determining Bias**

All information comes from sources which have been created by people who are themselves biased which means all material has bias (Ryan, 2019). Therefore, it is the researcher's job to evaluate bias. A primary question that students should ask is whether the bias is intentional. For example, when looking for information on drugs used in medicine, students are not encouraged to use a pharmaceutical company's website due to its vested interest in creating a favorable view of their product rather than providing all relevant information. A better alternative would be the Physician's Desk Reference.

Bias is much more widespread today than in the past due to our far-reaching ability to introduce and disseminate information. Ryan (2019) notes that outside of ethical journalism and academics, most individuals are

not overly concerned with controlling the bias of their material. When students better understand and can assess a source's agenda, this can help greatly with determining bias. Shearer and Matsa (2018) reported that about two-thirds of Americans get their news from social media. While news sources are supposed to inform their audience and not promote one agenda over another or encourage you to think a certain way on a topic, it has become much more widespread to attempt to do both (Caulfield, n.d.). We strongly encourage teachers to have students choose sources from different mediums and then ask them to determine potential bias. This exercise will help students to become familiar with different mediums and their possible bias.

Students need to be exposed to all types of sources, to face them head on. Interestingly, a recently published study by the Pew Research Center for Journalism and Media identified deep partisan divisions among U.S. consumers regarding trust of different well-known news organizations (Pew, 2020). Schools can help bridge this divide by teaching students to rely on multiple, reliable sources for news and information. Technology is only going to become more advanced. Teaching students how to determine bias in an article or news source will prepare them for a lifetime of research. The fight against bias will never end but teaching students to recognize it will lessen its persuasive power over them (Ryan, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

Global citizenship and media literacy have become intertwined with one another due to the expanding notion of what each represents. Empathy is a powerfully simple idea that, when applied, can foster true connections between students and ideas. This is especially significant when one considers the implications of expanding students' sense of global citizenship through media literacy. It is paramount that students not see these events and those whom they impact as abstract. Rather, students must see these events as empathetic, thoughtful, responsive, and inclusive members of a greater global world.

We have argued the essential role media literacy plays in students' participation in the world community due to their need to navigate a complex landscape of information and misinformation. Furthermore, this landscape is quickly changing and what we have presented are a series of skills which will help students be able to find their way, regardless of the source of the information. We have used these activities successfully in classrooms and can attest to how powerfully beneficial they can be. However, these activities and growing students' media literacy are not something to be engaged in lightly due to the high stakes. At the present, the United States is engaged in a presidential election which will require students to navigate and unpack a multitude of sources and ideas. However, through this framework, we believe students can and will be successful, not only now, but in the future as well.

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# Critically Examining War: A Classroom Catch-22

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## Abstract

This article uses Captain John Yossarian's conundrum in Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22* as a metaphor to highlight social studies teachers' dilemma in teaching war authentically in our current ideologically divisive and politically charged atmosphere. As in Heller's novel, a catch-22 is "a paradoxical situation from which an individual cannot escape because of contradictory rules or limitations." Social studies teachers are charged with providing students with historical content and understanding as well as developing their critical sensibilities and skills of civic action. War has been present in the lives of Americans since the American Revolution though rarely are students provided a genuine opportunity to critically examine the causes or executions of U.S. wars. The current climate makes this even more difficult but also more necessary. This article examines the catch-22 and provides advice on how to do this successfully.

## Introduction

In his tragicomedy *Catch-22*, author Joseph Heller spells out the title and the main rub of his novel this way:

*There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr (another pilot) was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle.*

*"That's some catch, that Catch-22," he observed.*

*"It's the best there is," Doc Daneeka agreed (p. 46).*

"It's the best there is." It is an ironic statement, made by a doctor obeying the strict rules laid out to keep men bombing, maiming, and killing. Teachers are caught in catch-22s all over the place as well, never more so than in the teaching of war. In recent studies I have conducted on the teaching of war (Gibbs, 2019a, 2019b, 2020) in various school communities in North Carolina, in conversations I have had with teachers at conferences and conventions across the country, and in pointed conversations I have had with former university students and colleagues in California (where I used to teach), two words come to mind when teaching about war: tension and fear. In more conservative, as well as in more liberal-leaning spaces of the country, teachers report feeling

pressure to not teach war critically (Gibbs, 2019; 2020b). The reasons given are the social-emotional health of students, it is unpatriotic, and an attempt to indoctrinate students. The standards don't ask for it, the end of course exams don't assess it, so why teach it? And why risk it? It is a common refrain I have heard from many teachers, some I quote below who teach at the high school level in the rural and suburban South and Mid-Atlantic area. Yossarian, the protagonist of *Catch-22* might respond to them by saying, "because it's honest, because it's truthful, and because it's necessary." Students need an honest accounting of the United States at war both in the past and in the present to develop clear decision making toward good citizenship.

Like Yossarian and Doc Daneeka, educators operate under strict rules as well. These rules are formal—the curriculum guides and the test—but there are the unspoken rules, that teaching truthfully is dangerous, exposing students to the complexities of war rather than just the adventure of war can inflict wounds, do psychic damage to students, but perhaps most significantly, get a teacher in trouble (Gibbs, 2019a, 2019b, 2020a, 2020b). The following quotes come from a study currently under review (Gibbs, 2020c) on how to critically teach content in ideologically and politically conservative school spaces. As a teacher recently explained:

To critique a past war, is to critique a current war...and to critique a current war is to critique Trump. To critique Trump is to, well...ask for it. It's odd...Trump doesn't have much of a foreign policy. He has maintained the wars but hasn't expanded them but has threatened to a few times...North Korea, more recently in Iran...but he has captured this patriotic mentality. It's happened to me and friends of mine in other schools...if you teach war critically, you are anti-American and by default anti-Trump. This seems to activate some kind of visceral response.

The "ask for it," as the teacher explained, amounted to pushback, critique, angry emails, and phone calls. Students, parents, and other community members often saw a direct link between a critique of a historic war to the critique of the current Trump administration military policy. As a teacher explained:

We examined war and I was told I was unpatriotic, anti-military even though I served for five years and I was asked if I was blaming Trump. We were teaching the Mexican-American War. It was several parents, so I don't know if it was a particularly crazy time or what...but I was flabbergasted.

There is tension, static, on top of the already difficult job of teaching. As another teacher explained:

There's no back up. No cavalry. No support. The standards don't say to do it...the standards say teach war lightly<sup>1</sup>...so they (students) know how it begins and ends, but don't teach it too closely, some heroics, yeah alright, but nothing that shows what actual war looks like and the actual damage that it causes.

Teachers report accusations of indoctrination and being unpatriotic when they teach war through a more critical lens (Gibbs, 2019, 2020). Teachers also report feeling underprepared to teach war critically and fear inflicting or re-awakening trauma within their students (Gibbs & Papoi, 2020). Teachers are caught in a catch-22.

### **War Is Everywhere in the Social Studies**

War, however, is everywhere in our curriculum but remains largely taught without depth, relegated to the quick gloss over, with teachers hitting important dates, people and places, but rarely taught thoroughly. As one teacher explained, "A drive by is how I define how I teach war." This teacher indicated he would like to teach war more in depth but understands, "It's a landmine." As soon as he takes the time and offers a critical examination,

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<sup>1</sup> Social Studies standards in California, North Carolina, Texas, Main, Oregon, Wyoming, and Florida were examined in response to several teacher responses similar to this one. These states encourage teaching war as cause and effect with some narrative of what was done during the war that is typically nationalist in theme. No standards encourage a thorough examination of the justness/unjustness of war in how war was conducted.

“who knows who it upsets?” As Noddings (2012) argues, content standards, textbooks, and curriculum guides are wrapped around and distorted by war. War breathes in all the oxygen meant for other content. State content guidelines too often encourage war to be taught as cause and effect only (see footnote 1: what caused the war, and what was the effect or impact on foreign policy, the economy, etc. The human tragedy of war—the brutality, the racism, the rape, the murder, and sheer terror—are not taught. “Because this isn’t taught,” as one teacher explained, “is why we keep having war.” Too often taught as a series of historic events long since passed with no analysis of difficult people placed in complicated situations. Few seem to want war taught critically and authentically. This includes teachers, principals, parents, and policymakers. Teachers reading our present political landscape understand that questioning U.S. military policy (Parkhouse, 2017) means running the risk of accusations of unpatriotic teaching (Gibbs, 2019). Schools in communities open to a more critical teaching of war don’t necessarily want a more authentic or deeper understanding of war, they accept a critical examination of war or a critical presentation of the participants, but want to end it there. Even these parents would rather avoid the blood and guts of battle (Gibbs, 2019b, 2020).

Curriculum guidelines and end-of-course exams don’t make this any easier. Teaching something as complex as war critically takes time and effort, and little to none of this analysis and understanding will be on the exam. Most teachers feel unprotected and exposed when they teach controversial issues (Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015). According to curriculum guidelines, teachers aren’t supposed to ask students to investigate and discuss the justness of America’s involvement in war, nor whether the war was fought justly, nor what the true horror of war is (see footnote 1). Hedges (2001), a war correspondent who holds a masters of divinity from Harvard University, has described war as “organized murder;” Gellhorn (1936) called war “an endemic disease and countries are its carriers;” and General William Tecumseh Sherman called the glory of war all “moonshine,” arguing that only those who have never “fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded cry aloud for blood” would glorify it. We don’t ask our students to examine the hard, complicated and agonizing questions of right and wrong when it comes to war (Percy, 2015, 2016). Students are not typically asked what reasons justify going to war nor how wars should be fought. Students are not typically asked to examine the horror of combat, to analyze actions made by soldiers on the field of battle, nor by the generals in charge. Students typically aren’t asked to examine the human cost of war, or the impact that war has on American soldiers who return. Students do not typically explore the rules of war current or historic nor reflect on whether the United States has violated these. Students are not asked to explore the race and gender violence endemic in war (Ritner & Roth, 2016). If history is worth anything more than the interesting story, it must be a lens through which to thoughtfully examine past actions, choices, governmental decisions made no matter how admirably seen at the time in a new light. In our classrooms, the past must be connected to the present. History ought to be a guide, but we don’t allow it to be in schools. Teachers usually know this, know what history ought to be, but feel trapped, hence the Catch-22.

### **The Catch**

Teachers are caught. They realize the horrors of war and understand to teach it with any accuracy and authenticity it should be taught critically. However, most, under pressure, teach it as a series of interesting events to be left unexamined or at least under evaluated. Teachers feel community pressure, pressure to meet standards, testing pressure, and the social-emotional pressure of presenting difficult material to students. War and its teaching need to be reframed as difficult knowledge (Levy & Sheppard, 2018; Zembylas, 2014). Difficult knowledge is most often defined as content that describes horror or horrible things (Gibbs, 2019b), traumatic events (Levy & Sheppard, 2018), and content that carries an emotional burden for both students and teachers (Zembylas, 2014). In the teaching of war, difficult knowledge can include studying horrific moments like the Holocaust, vivid combat, photographs, post-battle impact on soldiers, but can also include examining the American role and responsibility in war. Teachers indicate they feel unprepared to navigate the political and social pressures as well as the pedagogical and curricular pressures of teaching war (Gibbs, 2019a, 2019b, 2020). I’ve

been studying how war is taught in different social, political, and ideological contexts over the past few years and in each study teachers reveal they feel pressured to teach war as one teacher said, “down the line,” or as another described “just the facts ma’am” (Gibbs, 2019). They felt pressure to teach historic wars as if they were unavoidable moments in history that had no anti-war movement and focused on the parables of heroics or soldiers doing difficult things for their country rather than the more difficult narrative of death and destruction, of loss of physical and emotional life (Gibbs, 2019). When taught this way, war becomes sanitary; an adventure story that avoids the horror of living through seeing friends killed and grievously wounded. It avoids looking at the killing and the soldiers returning who have to live with the weight of their memories, their wounds, and at times their inhumane actions. The safe narrative avoids the devastation wreaked on the war’s host country—in U.S. wars rarely the U.S., and therefore in U.S. history courses, the devastation is typically overlooked. Students need to have a full view of what war is and what war does to the environment, economy, and people involved.

Students can learn to examine current foreign policy decisions involving war and combat by critically examining past decisions and historic wars. The social studies disciplines are meant to help students use the past to better understand and examine the present. In January 2020, President Trump ordered a drone strike on an Iranian general Qassem Suleimani as he was boarding a plane in Iraq. This needs to be discussed. Almost immediately, Iran promised swift and dire retaliation. In response, Trump indicated that he had 52 cultural sites in Iran he would “hit” if America or Americans are targeted (Haberma, 2020). As Trump tweeted, “Iran is talking very boldly about targeting certain USA assets for revenge. Let this serve as a warning that if Iran strikes any Americans, or American assets, we have targeted 52 Iranian sites” (Etehad, 2020) identifying the sites that would be hit. Days after the killing of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani, Vice President Mike Pence argued his death was justified because of Soleimani’s connection to the events of 9/11. In a series of tweets Vice President Pence suggested Suleimani “assisted in the clandestine travel to Afghanistan of 10 of the 12 terrorists who [eventually] carried out the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States” (Etehad, 2020, para. ). There is no evidence linking Soleimani to 9/11 yet Pence has stood by this assertion (Montague, 2020).

Students need to understand the larger context within which wars occur; otherwise they could easily believe unsupported statements from government officials or anyone. Students can gain this by looking authentically at historic wars. Wars are typically years, if not decades, in the making. The long view must be taught if students are to fully understand the ramifications of our present day. Too often wars are taught in isolation as if in a historical vacuum. The treaties, negotiations, and military actions that precede the start of wars need to be identified and analyzed. Civics and civic education have been a cornerstone of why schools exist but for too long this has been code for “love America, follow the rules and conform.” For students to become critically aware citizens they need to fully understand the complexities of war. For the construction of authentic citizens, war needs to be taught truthfully for the horror that it is.

### **What Is Missing**

As I traveled through classrooms in North Carolina, Wisconsin, and California during the last few years of the war in Afghanistan, I took note that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known commonly as the Iranian Nuclear Deal, special forces operating in Niger, and the ongoing threat of nuclear war with North Korea were rarely presented to students and need to be. These events were left unconnected to similar events from the past, to be used as guides (as history should be used) of what might happen in the present if certain paths are taken. The historic wars taught were typically presented quickly with little student voice, investigation, discussion, or connection to the present. It was as if the wars currently raging across the globe were not happening, soldiers were not in harm’s way, people were not dying, the environment was not being contaminated by uranium contained in spent ordinance, and futures were not being destroyed. Even when taught critically the critiques occur quickly, continuing the march through time, rather than exploring and examining the complexities (Gibbs, 2020). Teachers indicate a variety of reasons for this oversight from testing and standards pressure, to exposing

their students to trauma, to lack of content knowledge. Most cite fear of a larger community backlash. As one teacher explained, "I don't just mean the parents of my students when I say community. I mean I've gotten antagonistic emails about something I've taught from someone that I have never heard of." The internet has broadened the scope of pressure on teachers exponentially.

Students need time to sit with, think through and about, war. Importantly, they need a thoughtful guide to help them sift through all the complications of war. The students I have spoken with, whether identifying politically or ideologically right or left, want to talk about war and peace. All the students spoke as if in one voice. They don't want to be told what to think but they do desperately want a thoughtful teacher to present information to them, cultivate an atmosphere of discussion and be allowed to think through and about war. The students also regularly complained about not learning how to "stop things like this," as one student said. Students, from across the political and ideological spectrum want to be taught how to engage in civic action to end violence and make their worlds a more livable and just space.

We are currently living through a period of intent polarization of politics and ideology that has led to a hyper vigilance of teachers (Gibbs, 2019, 2020). As a teacher in such a politically conservative suburban context explained:

To teach a historic war critically is to teach all war critically, and if it's all war that is criticized that means our current war. To teach against war is to be against war and that is considered unpatriotic by members of the larger school community. That is just how it's seen. There's a jump from the Mexican-American War to Afghanistan. It's different now. It wasn't always like this.

Teachers have reported accusations of non-patriotism and anti-American indoctrination in rural, suburban, and urban communities. Accusation, or the fear of it, was universal across in conservative and progressive communities. As a teacher in a liberal suburban school district explained:

The parents here might be the worst. They want us to teach that war is bad and their children shouldn't get involved in war...they should go to college...but we shouldn't get too specific because their special snowflakes can't handle it. It's a cake-and-eat-it-too thing. Yes critique war but without really critiquing it. Convince them [students] it's bad...full stop.

Luckily, all wars, be they the Punic Wars, the Peloponnesian War, the Russo-Japanese War, or the American Civil War can be used as a lens to examine the present. Each can be used as a vehicle to examine war and peace as concepts, the ethics and cultural connections of war, war as an imperialistic motivation, what is considered justified reasons to enter war as well as fight war, and examinations of anti-war arguments, organizations, and movements. The teaching of any war can be an entry point to a multitude of examinations of different elements of war. It is possible to teach "what you're supposed to teach" well, critically and connected to the present.

### **Yossarians Among Us**

There are Yossarians among us who see the *Catch-22* and seek to work their way around it. It is only a rare breed of Yossarians who take the risk to present a critical examination of war. As Heller describes the character in his *Catch-22*, "he was going to live forever, or die in the attempt." (p. \_\_\_) The educator-Yossarians among us agree as Heller described, "that it was neither possible nor necessary to educate people who never questioned anything," so these teachers intentionally teach students to examine and question everything. These teachers work hard at engaging students critically, but, understand it could lead to professional difficulties. A critical examination of war seeks to disrupt the simple narrative of war by closely examining governmental power, actions, justifications, strategy, and marginalization of racial groups. As Percy (2016) points out, students are rarely asked what a "just war" is, and textbooks are largely celebratory of American involvement in war omitting

content countering this narrative and not asking students to evaluate neither the war's causes nor the participants' conduct (Leahy, 2010). Percy's (2016) work on students engaging with the concept of just war theory informed the creation of this instructional unit leading to the essential questions and the inquiry driven manner of the unit. Students examine and evaluate the motivations for war on the surface and below developing a more robust critical consciousness (Duncan-Andrade, 2007). While developing student critical awareness, there is also an intentional teaching of how to engage in acts of resistance and change including acts of analysis, use of voice through discussion and speech making, and analyzing the actions of historical actors who attempted to end war examining both the critique of these individuals and groups as well as their method of engaging in change. A critical examination of war asks students to examine civic and governmental institutions, their actions, evaluating them and then understanding the civic power individual students possess to create change.

### **Implications for Practice**

The following are some tips to more effectively teach war in the high school classroom.

- Keep students informed about current wars and potential warfare briefly at the beginning of each class when news is released. It isn't a discussion time but a time to gain knowledge and shake loose and correct any misconceptions. This can help students control the spin, ask questions for clarity, and it will keep events in front of students. This can also allow you to spend more time on the topic when needed more easily because students will already have the background knowledge.
- Design your instruction about war separate from other major events. Rather than teach war as an embedded part of other societal issues, keep it separated. Design your instruction about questions that are rich and will drive students to want to think through and about the difficult knowledge that will come from a unit exploring war. Some to consider are: What is a just war? How can we end war? Under the United States Constitution/War Powers Act when is it allowable for the military to be engaged? What role does the President/Congress/Supreme Court play? Investigate historic and present anti-war movements. What were their critiques of war? What tactics did they engage in to end war? What can be learned from them? Is war a form of terrorism? What is the difference between a patriot and a terrorist? How could this war have been prevented? How can we heal from this?
- Connect your teaching to the present. War has been and likely will continue to be ongoing. While teaching historic wars connect the content that can be thematically connected to the present. Work to help students understand the wars that are happening presently even if it is taking five minutes of class to keep students up to date.
- Examine the cultural differences between how wars are fought, what reasons are justified for engaging in war and how wars should be brought to an end. It would be quite interesting to have students examine how different cultural groups and at different times throughout world history justified conflict, war, and the various ways that war can be fought. There are various just war theories in most major religions. Students can explore these and examine which best match their conception of what constitutes just reasons for war. Mark Percy's (2016) work offers an interesting place to start.
- Teach resistance. Each major war that the United States has been involved in has had a fierce anti-war movement. These need to be taught, examined, and critiqued. Anti-war movements should be an embedded part of all teaching of war. Examine anti-war activists' strategies, read their speeches and articles. Interrogate their language and determine its effectiveness. How did it impact people? Could similar tactics or language work today? Why or why not? A more complex and authentic telling of all the

elements of anti-war movements are needed. Too often the assumption is that anti-war movements only existed during the Vietnam Era, while the truth is much more rich, complex, interesting and important.

- Have students analyze media representations of war and conflict. Begin historically with propaganda and images from past wars, as well as radio broadcasts, newspaper descriptions of war and bring this analysis forward. How are wars being covered by the media today? Do our current wars get the headlines, word count, and television coverage of past wars? Why or why not? Are there particular media sources that cover wars more authentically? Which ones, why and how?
- Use texts as a way to examine and gain content knowledge and also as vehicles for class discussion. Article I and II of the Constitution are a good place to begin to understand who has the right to carry out and declare war. The War Powers Act is also a good document to examine attempts to narrow the scope of who has power in times of war and why. Consider other texts, like selections from Phil Klay's (2014) *Redeployment*, a series of short stories inspired by his time in combat. In the collection, I have found *War Stories* and *OIF* to be particularly powerful and effective with high school students. William James's (1906) essay *The Moral Equivalent of War*, which is easily found online, where he argues that the strength needed to win a war is needed in anti-war movements to end war. Similarly, Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud exchanged letters during the 1930s, which are excellent documents that examine some of the follies of ending war. Excerpts of Simone Weil's (2005) *The Iliad or the Poem of Force* would also be an excellent way to think through and about war conceptually.

The Yossarians in the social studies are too few. They feel isolated and alone. We need to remove the Catch-22. Until then, we need to grow more Yossarians. Their approach universally was to engage students in broad philosophical questions to apply content to and well-defined discussions of those questions. Also, to bring the history forward to today. It is possible to critically teach war even now. The Catch-22 is real, but teachers have a responsibility to develop the most critically aware students possible--maybe now more than ever.

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# “What We Do in School Could Actually Matter”: A Novice Teacher and the Inquiry Design Model

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## Abstract

This case study investigated how a teacher planned, implemented, and assessed C3 Framework-aligned instructional materials created with the Inquiry Design Model in a unique context. Findings from this study indicated that his beliefs, life experiences, and pedagogical skills were aligned with inquiry-based pedagogy and that his experiences teaching with the C3 Framework were generally positive and transformative particularly when he adapted an inquiry to include a taking Informed Action project on Black Lives Matter. The study found that teachers require explicit training in how to scaffold complex disciplinary texts across the social science disciplines. Finally, it found that the C3 Framework, and Inquiry Design Model in particular, served as a useful tool in which teachers can engage students in authentic, seemingly controversial, social justice work.

## Introduction

Much has been written about the fact that traditional “stand and deliver” approaches continue to dominate many social studies classrooms. This is in spite of the now century-long reform efforts to make inquiry-based approaches more central to social studies instruction and teachers now having access to unprecedented amounts of inquiry-based instructional materials. Many students are still spending a majority of class time in classrooms with a focus on passively absorbing information (Homana & Passe, 2013; VanSledright, 2011). And too many report that their social studies classes are boring and lack purpose (Russell & Pelligrino, 2008).

Compounding the problem has been a lack of intention in many social studies classes to the lived experiences of minoritized populations, both past and present, and the overall whitewashing of the social studies curriculum (Peterson, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Thus, many students are learning a false historical narrative that promotes elitism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and nationalism (Loewen, 1995). Furthermore, students rarely have meaningful opportunities to practice citizenship in authentic settings, and they may be prone to developing apathetic political and civic attitudes. As adults they may become unwilling and/or unable to participate positively in civic life. In this manner, it is clear that traditional approaches in social studies classrooms have often served to undermine the essential goal of social studies education- to develop civic competence.

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (NCSS, 2013) represents the latest wide-scale effort to move social studies classrooms away from traditional instructional

approaches towards student-centered, inquiry-based pedagogy. Originally designed to support state standard revisions efforts, it also offers direct instructional guidance to teachers with its inquiry arc that threads through four dimensions or steps in the inquiry process. Authors of the C3 Framework created an instructional tool to support teachers in using the inquiry arc and bringing the C3 Framework to life in their classrooms. This instructional tool, called the Inquiry Design Model (IDM), provides teachers with a blueprint template to construct their own C3 Framework-aligned “inquiries” or learning segments that fall anywhere on the continuum between a lesson plan and a unit.

The C3 Framework and IDM approach to inquiry aims to be engaging, relevant, and rigorous. They are both supported by research efforts regarding teaching practices. However, empirical studies are still relatively nascent, although proliferating at an accelerating rate. Understanding how specific teachers plan for instruction, implement C3 Framework-aligned inquiries, and assess student learning in a C3 Framework-aligned curriculum is still largely unexplored territory.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study employed a social constructivist theoretical lens to capture some of the interplay between the individual participant and the local environment or context in which the study took place. Social constructivism views learning as a process of enculturation or gradual acquisition of the norms of a group (Creswell, 2013). As such, it is particularly well-suited to case studies situated within a rare context. And this case study focused on a context that was quite rare and compelling: a second-year teacher creating a new elective course (simply called Inquiry) from scratch using innovative instructional materials. Furthermore, the goal of this study was to honor the participant’s perspectives. Exploring the participant’s experiences, instructional decision-making, and environmental influences suits the social constructivist approach that views knowledge as socially and historically constructed and co-constructed. Social constructivism helped guide (consciously and unconsciously) the research focus, methodology, and interpretation of findings in this study.

### **Relevant Literature**

Scholarly support for constructivist, inquiry-based pedagogy was initially supported mostly from the learning sciences (e.g., Barron, Schwartz, et al., 1999; Davis, Sumara, et al., 2000). This was followed by a wave of empirical efforts to evaluate the largely positive impact of methodologies that promote disciplinary-specific thinking (e.g., Britt & Aglinskias, 2002; Barton, 2005; Lee, 2005; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008; Hicks & Doolittle, 2008). Research on historical thinking has revealed numerous benefits including improved acquisition of factual knowledge (Donovan & Bradsford; 2005) and increased general reading ability (Reisman, 2012). Researchers have also found a variety of empirical benefits from disciplinary inquiry more broadly in both elementary (e.g., Barton & Levstik, 2004) and secondary settings (e.g., Parker, Mosborg, et al., 2011).

Inquiry-based teaching in social studies is not without its challenges. Researchers have consistently revealed that teachers and students require additional supports to succeed in inquiry-rich environments. This is particularly true of students who already struggle with general reading and writing skills (Rossi & Pace, 1998; Felton & Herko, 2004). Moreover, researchers have identified lack of practice (Lee & Weiss, 2007) and habituation to lecture (Barton & Levstik, 2004) as major hurdles to effective historical inquiry for students. Impacting students’ ability to analyze primary sources is often a lack of background knowledge (Saye & Brush, 2004), which is needed to help contextualize documents in historical thinking tasks. Moreover, too much emotional arousal can erase many of the benefits of inquiry approaches (Endacott, 2014).

Disciplinary inquiry places the role of the teacher in stark relief as they attend to disciplinary processes, pedagogical implications from these processes, and unique student needs (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, et al., 2005; Monte Sano, De La Paz, et al., 2014; Rossi & Pace, 1998). The fact that C3 Framework-aligned inquiries also

embed service learning makes the role even that much more complex. Service learning experiences in themselves have led to positive effects of academic success such as improving students' motivation to learn, performance on subject matter tests, and engagement (Wade, 2008). They have been linked to increased attendance and even tolerance for cultural diversity (Billig, 2000).

Recently, there have been several empirical efforts alongside this own study related to C3 Framework-aligned inquiry initiatives (e.g., Thacker, Lee, et al., 2018; Thacker, Friedman, et al., 2018, Mueller, 2018; Casey, DiCarlo, et al., 2019; Martell, 2020). Such work has generally focused on teacher perceptions and implementation lessons learned from such early C3 Framework inquiry "pioneers." Recently, some scholars have begun proposing a critical inquiry framework as a way to bridge between the C3 Framework and critical pedagogies (Long, 2017; Crowley & King, 2018) although empirical efforts to evaluate such proposed methodologies are still forthcoming

## **Methodology**

This study was structured as an instrumental case study. Case studies require extensive analysis of a single, bounded unit. In this study, the individual teacher, Mr. James (pseudonym), was bounded by his individual classroom, time, and his student's grade band. This study follows Stake's (2005) conceptualization of case study research instead of following a particular methodology. As is consistent with other case studies, this one sought to explore each case in a real-life or naturalistic setting and to provide an in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2011).

### **Participants and setting**

The study took place at Heritage Charter School (pseudonym), which is a small public charter school in a suburban/rural setting serving about 300 students in grades 6 to 12. The school is located in the southeastern part of the United States. Heritage Charter School is fairly homogenous with less than 14% of the student population being identified as racially minoritized and only 3% of the population considered economically disadvantaged.

Participant selection occurred via purposeful or criterion-based sampling (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Purposeful sampling is well-suited to research projects that want to select information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). Case study sampling requires two levels of purposeful or criterion-based sampling (Merriam, 2009). The criteria for case selection was that a participant had familiarity with the C3 Framework and IDM. Secondly, the study required that participants agreed to use IDM-designed instructional materials. Additionally, cases needed to meet Stake's (2006) criteria regarding relevance to the quintain, whether it provided diversity in context, and whether it provided an opportunity to learn about complexity.

Mr. James had just completed a MAT in social studies education where he was introduced to the C3 Framework and Inquiry Design Model. This happened at the same time he finished his first year teaching, and he felt that his teaching that year had been a bit muted. The district-mandated curriculum had many content demands in it, and he found himself teaching more through lectures and worksheets than he wanted. Inertia seemed to take effect or as he put it "that's just the way my education was in social studies." Thus, he reverted back to PowerPoints and worksheets.

After his first year, Mr. James's was asked to teach a sociology elective course. However, he had little interest in doing so. Instead, he sought and gained permission that summer to create a new elective course from scratch to replace the sociology course. This would give him the opportunity to implement many of the concepts he had been taught in the MAT program and to bypass many of the curricular demands placed upon him in his regular history courses. He named the new course Inquiry and used the theme: "towards a more

perfect union.” He created a scope and sequence based entirely around published C3 Framework-aligned inquiries related to diverse topics such as Declaration of Independence, Affordable Health Care Act, national security, protest, and inequality. Word of mouth regarding Mr. James’ pioneering C3 Framework course spread to me through mutual acquaintances, and I recruited him to be a research participant.

The building principal placed much trust in, and few restrictions on, Mr. James when he designed the course. As he put it, “I never felt monitored. They have been very good about supporting me.” However, he seemed to also be aware of the uniqueness of his situation as he later went on to say that “[my principal] might be more trusting than he should be.”

Mr. James does not fit the stereotypical image of a high school social studies teacher. He is soft-spoken, cerebral, and of rather short stature; yet he maintains an orderly and calm classroom with a blend of confidence and positivity. This calmness dissipates only when students are engaged in a feisty political discussion. After talking with Mr. James, it is easy to forget that he is still learning the ropes as a second year teaching and that he is balancing a heavy teaching load of five course preparations. Luckily for Mr. James, he found that Inquiry required less preparation time than his standard history courses.

Mr. James also comes across as more confident and mature than most second-year teachers. As a child Mr. James spent time living in Europe and moving between several states. He attended a large public university to earn a history degree before obtaining his MAT. Although Mr. James frequently discusses politics, he keeps his personal political opinions closely guarded unless asked directly. He identifies as a Christian conservative, and he is an active participant in his local Baptist church. However, one would be hard-pressed to see his political or religious worldview on display in his teaching.

## **Data Collection**

The main data sources from this study were observational field notes, semi-structured interviews, teacher artifacts, and student artifacts. Data was first analyzed through a six-week, saturated data collection period. Each interview took place in the participant’s classroom during prep time or after school. The first two lasted approximately 45 minutes and the third interview took about 75 minutes to complete. I refrained from recording any notes by hand during the interviews in order to maintain the most natural conversation style possible and in order to limit participant-researcher distance. Yet, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by hand.

This study also employed 20 separate observations over the course of the six-week period, and each incorporated Merriam’s (2009) field note protocol to focus observations on physical setting, participants, activities, conversations, and subtle factors. Mr. James’s instructional planning documents, supporting instructional handouts, and assessments (both formative and summative) were collected throughout the six-week period, many of which were created and stored in Google Classroom. This included recent planning documents as well as documents from the previous summer. Finally, student artifacts or work samples were collected throughout the study.

## **Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed in this study using what is referred to as constant comparative analysis. First I combed through each line of each document to orientate myself and to begin to reflect on possible connections to other research efforts addressed in the literature review. Then I identified what are often referred to as open codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) which can be seen as “essence-capturing” units (Saldaña, 2013). This helps ensure that I am engaging in an initial deep and meaningful close reading and am working to unpack each line of every piece of data collected. Then I followed Merriam’s (2009) recommendation to begin comparing my

open codes with one another. This helped me to think about some of the consistencies and inconsistencies I was finding across various data sources.

My next step was to read through each line of data again. In this round of coding, I deleted open codes that were redundant, combined some codes that overlapped others, and changed some codes to be more specific. This left me with what are referred to as selective codes. From there I read through all data sources again using the selective codes to guide my thought process and to begin classifying the selective codes into emerging themes that helped to encapsulate the teaching practices and experiences of Mr. James. These themes make up the general findings of the study. In order to practice ethical research, I gave Mr. James an opportunity to read through all interview transcripts and observation notes to ensure that I accurately captured each of encounter. This also gave him an opportunity to request that I refrain from publishing any information that would potentially embarrass him. This process is known as member checking (Corwin & Clemens, 2012; Maxwell, 2005). Mr. James did not issue any requests.

### Results

This research study revealed three salient themes and subthemes that were particular to Mr. James’s experiences enacting the C3 Framework in his high school classroom (Table 1). In the sections that follow, each theme and subtheme is presented and unpacked with relevant supporting data.

**Table 1** Emerging Themes: Mr. James

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Changing perceptions, attitudes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Connecting instead of covering.</li> <li>● Experiencing a tipping point.</li> <li>● Finding passion and seeing purpose.</li> </ul>
2. Becoming a scholar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Creating experts and taking ownership.</li> <li>● Sourcing as a habit.</li> <li>● Responding to unsubstantiated claims.</li> </ul>
3. Learning to be flexible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Changing plans.</li> <li>● Embracing inquiry teamwork.</li> <li>● Grading more purposefully.</li> </ul>

### Theme 1: Changing perceptions and attitudes.

The C3 Framework offers teachers a novel way to teach inquiry-based social studies. This theme encapsulates how Mr. James’s perceptions and attitudes after teaching with the C3 Framework changed in regards to both how he views inquiry-based social studies and social studies in a more general sense. Four descriptive findings, each described below, illuminate the changes that Mr. James experienced.

**Connecting instead of covering.** Along the way, Mr. James began to push himself to incorporate current events into every lesson. Even in his traditional history classes, Mr. James credited his emerging understanding of the C3 Framework with leading him to rely less on content coverage. Mr. James came to view such approaches as privileging compartmentalized tidbits of knowledge. Instead of asking how particular historical events unfolded, Mr. James wanted to prompt students to consider “how did these apply to today.” Throughout the semester, Mr. James made these connections with an expanding focus on current events as evidenced in table 2 below.

**Table 2** Comparison of Inquires Planned with Inquiries Covered

Original Plan for Inquiry Topics	Inquiry Topics Covered
1. Independence Movements around world	1. Independence Movements around world
2. National Security/Japanese Internment*	2. National Security/Japanese Internment
3. Racism and Civil Rights*	3. Racism and Civil Rights
4. Protest and Vietnam*	4. Protest and Vietnam
5. Johnson vs. Reagan	5. Gender Wage Gap
6. Religious Freedom*	
7. Affordable Health Care Act	
8. The Constitution	
9. Emancipation Proclamation	
10. Student-created Inquiry	

He stated that his focus “shifted from just answering the questions based on the documents to considering the sources and what is going on right now and how it applies.” This became evident after he moved away from his initial list of inquiry topics and selected an inquiry on racism to couple with recent news events regarding police brutality against black citizens. He then intentionally selected an inquiry that focused on the role of protests in civic life to coincide with the presidential election in anticipation that protests would break out regardless of the election outcome. The gender wage gap was selected as the FIFA World Cup was gearing up and as news stories of gender wage gaps across US national teams abound.

### **Experiencing a tipping point**

Mr. James found that the inquiry course hit a “tipping point” during the inquiry on racism. Students investigated both the Civil Rights Movements and emerging threats to civil rights since the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 through a series of interviews students accessed from the Library of Congress website. Mr. James extended the inquiry by having students explore the perspectives of Black Lives Matter activists and critics in preparation of writing an op-ed from both points of view. Black Lives Matter had been a particular contentious topic throughout the presidential election.

Mr. James then prompted his students to compile discussion questions and to help facilitate an after-school community issues panel that discussed the issue of racism in the criminal justice system he helped co-plan and implement during the first week of November. Although Mr. James was nervous, especially at the potential explosiveness that could come from discussing divisive issues, he reflected later, “Everyone still got along, with nobody yelling at each other. The ceiling didn’t fall.” According to Mr. James that is when “they finally understood empathy. They finally realized the way people believe today is affected by the past.” Students had not been engaged civically in that manner before and Mr. James experienced what he called a “metaphorical high.” Perhaps most importantly, Mr. James felt like his students were making some connections. As he put it, “I think it opened a lot of what we do here could actually matter. What we do in school could actually matter.”

### **Finding passion and seeing purpose**

Mr. James’s attitude on teaching became increasingly positive throughout the semester. Teaching with the C3 Framework made him “want to teach forever. If I could do inquiry all day and every day, that is what I would do.” As a student in a master’s level social studies program, Mr. James was admittedly skeptical about some of the lofty progressive ideals he heard: “what we learned in college is what [teaching] should be or what dreamers think it is...and then at the end of inquiry I was like wait, but it could be.” Mr. James’s skepticism about the practical utility of inquiry-based pedagogy seemed to have been largely erased as a result of his experiences teaching the C3 Framework. In this sense, it helped him to “go all in on my beliefs” and to continue seeking innovations in the field. Mr. James’s students also appeared to see a greater purpose to their learning as a result of taking his course. As he put it, “in inquiry class they were always engaged and following a pattern, always going in a certain direction.”

## **Theme 2: Becoming a scholar**

Mr. James’s experiences led to a greater focus on scholarship. Although there were some missed learning opportunities, Mr. James’s students regularly used disciplinary tools as they examined disciplinary sources and developed the scholarly habits of mind related to making claims and using evidence.

### **Creating experts and owning the material**

Observations and interviews reveal Mr. James wanted his students to become experts about the content and that they needed to “own the material.” The focus on expertise was even mentioned as a core course goal.

As Mr. James put it to his students, “part of the reason that this class is important is that you guys are getting informed at becoming experts on this material.” Mr. James believed that the students in his inquiry class, “could run circles around [his students in traditional classes] in discussion...and in terms of navigating historical thinking between documents.” Parents appeared to be convinced at the growing expertise of their students as evident in Mr. James’s assertion that “we had multiple parents be like, ‘my student is talking to me like they are an adult.’” Expertise among students was a goal for Mr. James, and the process for getting there was largely due to a focus on sourcing.

### **Sourcing as a habit**

Mr. James created a culture where the act of making claims and using evidence became a habit amongst the students. Mr. James used the term “sourcing” as a catch-all term to refer to the scholarly habit of making claims with evidence and properly attributing the claims and evidence to sources. Mr. James attempted to teach sourcing habits and even explicitly talked about scholarly definitions of sourcing. He referenced it explicitly in preparing students for readings on Supporting Question 1:

Teacher: What do we call it when we research author and background of what we are reading?

Student: Stalking?

Teacher: The scholarly term is Sourcing. It is what a lot of historians do before they read...you want to understand the holistic picture of background, what direction they are leaning, so you can understand a little more. It’s not to say it’s not credible, but it can help to understand. It gives you the larger picture of what you are reading

At different points throughout the semester students could be overheard asking from where students got their information. A question Mr. James regularly posed to students was “where did you read this and where is the evidence?” When he assigned formative performance task 2, which prompted students to write a paragraph that explains how the gender wage gap narrowed over time, he told his students to “make sure you mark in your paragraph where you are getting your information from with specific quotes and paragraph numbers so that when we are discussing your post you know where to go to.” Mr. James insisted on citing, even if the inquiry blueprint did not explicitly prompt students to do so in this instance.

### **Responding to unsubstantiated claims**

Mr. James’s tolerance of students’ opinions sometimes led him to miss opportunities in terms of correcting unsubstantiated claims or faulty logic. Mr. James wanted to allow all student voices to be heard and would correct misstatements from time to time; however, he often let some faulty claims go unchecked. Sometimes he would affirm opinions that were not grounded on evidence. This was clearly evident in one exchange between students when they were discussing documents related to whether or not raising the minimum wage would positively impact the gender wage gap.

Student A: I’m just not seeing a wage gap there. This is something that has to be there for a capitalist country to work. You want opportunities for the rich to show the poor people, you want to be here, you need to work and have the motivation to get these opportunities?

[....]

Student B: You start off by saying there isn’t a gap but now saying a gap is natural, so what is your point?

Teacher: Let's not get personal. I get what [student A] is saying.

In this exchange a frustrated student can be seen correcting another student for making two contradictory statements. This came after several observed moments in which Student A had dismissed featured sources that contradicted his initially strong-held belief that a wage gap did not exist. Mr. James missed an opportunity to correct the error in logic and instead affirmed the students' opinion that was grounded more in his political ideology than in an analysis of the evidence presented in class.

### **Theme 3: Learning to be flexible**

Mr. James learned the benefits of flexible lesson planning and assessment after a few early struggles. With time, Mr. James came to accept the fact that many of his initial plans would have to change. He began to add more of his own personality and brought his own pedagogical personality to the inquiries. These elements of flexibility include adjustments to the IDM blueprint, focusing on collaborative teamwork, and using grade strategically.

#### **Changing plans**

Mr. James often did not complete inquiries in the manner of which he first planned. His original plan for the entire course was to cover nine inquiry topics and to have students create their own inquiry blueprints from scratch using an online tool called the Inquiry Generator. This original plan required that each inquiry would be completed in about two weeks. However, he soon realized that inquiries were taking longer to complete than expected. The average inquiry ended up taking 3.5 weeks long thus preventing Mr. James from getting a chance to cover half of his initially planned inquiries. One factor was that he felt that students were struggling with background information. He decided to add one week of independent pre-inquiry research to most inquiries. Students would have an opportunity to explore the compelling question or a related issue and then present their findings to classmates at the end of the week.

#### **Embracing inquiry teamwork**

Mr. James became increasingly collaborative with a middle school colleague even going so far as to have their students collaborate on some assignments together. Students in the two classes critiqued summative podcasts they created and jointly participated. Both teachers realized the benefits of partnering and decided to integrate their courses more formally for the rest of the semester. According to Mr. James, "we quickly found out that we are probably pretty much teaching the same course now despite developing different courses...If inquiry was a department we would be co-chairs of it." The partnership was evident in almost every observation as the middle school teacher would stop by each morning and do a quick check-in of where his class was, what has been going well, and what next steps are in the courses.

#### **Grading more purposefully**

Mr. James's burdensome grading demands dampened his experience with enacting the C3 Framework. He had, by his own account, been too rigid with an "expectation that there had to be this amount of grades." This led him to formally grade every formative performance task listed on the inquiry blueprints. However, he did not provide feedback as he went along. Instead, he created a whole-inquiry rubric sheet that was handed back to students after the inquiry was over. According to Mr. James, many students ended up submitting summative arguments that contained inaccurate claims. He felt that he could have helped to correct students' misunderstandings by offering more immediate feedback throughout the course of the inquiry instead of waiting until the end to give it.

However, Mr. James felt overwhelmed by trying to formally grade student assignments on an almost daily basis. Taking the advice of a mentor, Mr. James learned to provide more informal feedback to his student, often without numbers, in class. When students were charged with independently reading in class, Mr. James would then take out his tablet and begin grading whatever assignment had just been posted in Google Classroom. He learned that “grading and materials are much better if I do a lot of the checking on the front end” and began providing quick, to-the-point feedback on students almost daily.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

This study helped to address the dearth of empirical research studies related to inquiry-based classroom practices in social studies and addresses specific calls for rich case studies regarding disciplinary inquiry in social studies (Saye, 2017). The findings reported here yielded numerous insights about how teachers conduct disciplinary inquiry and service learning in their classrooms in particular contexts. This study provided a rare glimpse into teachers’ experiences enacting disciplinary inquiry and the C3 Framework and a rarer glimpse into how teachers engage in curricula decision-making outside the confines of existing curricula constraints. This study’s findings attest to the utility of IDM materials in terms of helping ambitious teachers anchor coherent and meaningful disciplinary learning experiences throughout a course.

**Administrators should grant ambitious teachers autonomy and leadership roles in curricula and course development.** The teacher in this study was provided a rare opportunity to construct an elective course from scratch with minimal oversight. This clearly contrasts with many teachers in the field losing autonomy due to standardized tests. Fewer social studies teachers today can construct their own curricula, much less create their own courses with anywhere near this level of autonomy. Past inquiry-based social studies efforts have stalled when teachers struggled to posthole inquiry-based lessons within existing curricula sequences. This had led to inquiry learning, whenever it is enacted at all, to serve in an ancillary, marginalized capacity in the social studies classroom (Scheurman & Reynolds, 2010). However, in this study the teacher was able to successfully create his own course with little training in course development and only one year of teaching experience.

**Teachers should seek out opportunities to engage in ongoing teacher-teacher collaboration even across grade levels.** This study found that Mr. James initially was not seeing the full benefits of IDM, as he was frustrated by a large assessment load and believed students were rushing through sources and tasks. Consequently, students were not seeing the full relevance of course content or real purpose to the inquiry course, as it did not appear to be much different from a typical social studies course that incorporated a lot of primary source reading activities. He alleviated these issues by exchanging ideas and resources with another colleague, in order to find joint solutions to their common problems. Neither believed that they would have achieved their goals on their own. Both teachers benefited from ongoing collaboration with one another and began including opportunities for their students to engage in cross-class activities and taking more-meaningful informed action experiences. In a sense, teachers may have been spreading the risk if something had gone wrong. Collaboration may thus help to alleviate teachers’ concerns related to teaching controversial issues and engaging in service learning projects that bring together diverse community voices.

**Curriculum developers should employ flexible course sequences that allow teachers to incorporate and adapt to emerging current events.** Mr. James moved from thematic planning to what may be considered relevance-based (or current event) planning. By incorporating the most relevant topics for his students to investigate, students were able to see a clear link between recent news stories, course content, and taking informed action experiences. The practice had personal benefits for Mr. James himself. As he put it, “I find myself studying more myself to be able to ask appropriate questions to be able to bring in current events and different topics.”

The shift to current events may have improved students' civic efficacy and interest in political events as they may have seen themselves as active participants, rather than passive observers of political news stories. Students may still benefit from taking informed action experiences on issues that are not particularly relevant or have widespread news coverage; however, flexible curricula sequencing can allow teachers to tap into current issues in seemingly real-time and to allow students the opportunity to feel as if they are taking part in the news itself. This may increase interest in featured sources and the perceived authenticity of the taking informed action tasks.

**Teachers require support from administrators to include controversial topics in social studies classrooms and engage students in meaningful taking informed action experiences.** Social studies classrooms are often devoid of meaningful controversy, and students are often disconnected from social and civic life (Loewen, 1995; Wade & Saxe, 1996). They often ignore topics seen as taboo like racism and sexism and thus promote a deeply flawed commitment to cultural colorblindness. This study's findings may testify to the utility of the C3 Framework in disrupting such narratives and serving as a useful avenue for social justice education. Students in this study engaged in discussions on a range of controversial topics in their class and were exposed to emotional competing narratives, both in text and in person. This could not have happened without the active support of the school administration, which not only allowed the teachers to organize a community issues forum, but also took part in it.

One administrator from the school even served as a panelist where she provided personal testament about her experiences with racial discrimination in public and private spheres. Mr. James received ongoing support and words of encouragement from the building principal and even a member of the school board. IDM may itself help teachers win approval from school leaders to discuss controversial issues because of the nature of inquiry as being an open-ended investigation, often into competing narratives and contradictory evidence. Principals need not fear that social studies teachers are attempting to indoctrinate students when they engage them with open-ended investigations and/or investigations that explore multiple perspectives.

**Teachers require explicit training in disciplinary and media literacy.** Teachers may require more than general content knowledge or general content area literacy strategies in order to facilitate meaningful civic discourse. They may require training in disciplinary literacy, which necessitates that teachers learn how to think, read, and write as experts do across the social science disciplines. From time to time, students in this study struggled to properly distinguish low and high-quality sources that provided contradictory viewpoints and were observed making credibility judgments based on alignment to worldview. Teachers in particular may benefit from professional development opportunities that specifically target ways to push back against partisan and/or relativistic thinking in students that ignores evidence in favor of an ideology.

Teachers may also benefit from training in how to use, adapt, or construct specific scaffolds within each social science discipline. Such training may also need to be coupled with guidance on dealing with students' epistemic stances or overall views on the nature of historical knowledge. This study found that students sometimes employed relativistic notions of historical knowledge when faced with contradictory evidence, and that they sometimes posed unsubstantiated claims or arguments that went unchallenged. Thus, teachers may benefit from having more guidance on how they can manage students' misconceptions, logical fallacies, and/or misunderstandings that may arise in an inquiry-based setting.

**C3 Framework initiatives would benefit from more focus on social justice issues.** Much of the success Mr. James had in regards to his course was a direct impact of engaging students publicly in racial discourse on Black Lives Matter. Before this point, his students perceived inquiry as mostly dressed up busy work. Watching adults engage in vulnerable, personally-meaningful discussions changed the nature of the course and the way that students engaged in materials. It created a culture of relevance and scholarship. However, he did not scaffold

students using critical pedagogies per se. Thus, there was no real opportunity for students to explore critical topics such as power asymmetries, historical and contemporary oppression, or meta-narratives. Students benefited from a competing narratives entry point into the discussion; however, it is unknown if any racial views were ever challenged. Thus, opportunities to engage students in anti-racist work were lost. Thus, future efforts should build off of existing ones (e.g., Long, 2017; Crowley and King, 2018) to embed culturally responsive practices and critical methodologies that encourage teachers and students to tackle systemic issues of oppression as part of taking Informed Action.

### Conclusion

This study provides a vision of the possible, a snapshot into a new alternate reality in social studies classrooms worth bringing to life. Social studies classrooms can do what they were originally designed to do: inform and engage future citizens. This study shows that students can partake in rigorous investigations into enduring controversies that are personally relevant and intellectually fruitful. They can learn how to “do” social science and how to “be” active and informed citizens at the same time.

Teachers can be empowered to design meaningful courses and curricula with ongoing support from administrators, parents, and community members. Of course, none of this could happen without the keystone of democracy itself: communal trust. Administrators can trust and empower teachers who can then in turn empower students to take ownership over their own learning. Teachers do not have to serve as mere curricula gatekeepers in which they begrudgingly implement, if at all, the top-down curricula mandates of others. Rather, teachers can work as curricula engineers in which they enact quality civic learning experiences that now matter more than ever.

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# State of the Social Studies

## 2019-2020 OCSS Survey Findings

Dr. Sarah Kaka, Ohio Wesleyan University



The Ohio Council for the Social Studies (OCSS) serves as the premier voice for the state's social studies professionals. We advocate for the vital role of social studies and assist educators in the delivery of effective and innovative curriculum and instruction. OCSS conducts this survey annually and invites Ohio social studies teachers to provide feedback, and how the organization can best support its members.

This year, we created a more robust survey instrument to gain a better perspective on the state of social studies in Ohio. In addition to OCSS membership questions, we integrated questions regarding K-12 methods, use of inquiry, and teacher views on social studies instruction. If anyone is interested in assisting with future survey creation, validation, or distribution, please contact Dr. Sarah Kaka, the OCSS Higher Education Representative, at [sjkaka@owu.edu](mailto:sjkaka@owu.edu).

- For those reached by our 2019-2020 annual survey, 139 responses were recorded.
- 55.8% of respondents have been teaching for more than 11 years, 44.2% ranged from pre-service to 10 years of teaching.
- 31.8% are in an urban district, 38% are in a suburban district, and 30.2% are in a rural district.
- 91.7% are white; 3.8% are black; 2.8% are Asian or Pacific Islander; 1.5% are multiracial; and 1% are Hispanic.
- 15.9% teach elementary school; 31% teach middle school; 49.1% teach high school; and 4% teach higher education.
- 70.4% have a master's degree.
- 48.5% coach or sponsor an extra-curricular activity; 51.5% do not.
- 57.2% are currently members of OCSS, while 42.8% are not.
- They were asked to rank the reason for teaching social studies, from most important to least. The most important reason chosen is "to teach students an appreciation and awareness of their community, nation, and world." This was followed closely by "to prepare good citizens." The least important, "because it is required by state standards."

- When asked about specific teaching methods and their frequency, whole class discussion is most often used daily, while cooperative learning, lecture, and primary source analysis are used weekly (1-2 times per week). Working with maps and globes and textbook-based reading are occasionally used (2-3 times per month).
- 79.9% of participants were not prepared in their teacher preparation program to use the C3 Framework and inquiry when planning social studies instruction. 20.1% were prepared.
- 79.1% indicated that they do use inquiry in their classroom, while 20.9% do not.
- When asked to describe what inquiry-based instruction looks like in their classroom, participants offered competing perspectives. The most common responses fell under the categories of questioning (65%), source work (25%), and research (30%). They cited the use of projects as being part of inquiry-based instruction (12%), and student-centered tasks that involved problem-solving (12%).
- When asked about the challenges involved in utilizing inquiry-based instruction, the most common challenge cited was time. 91% reported they don't have enough time to plan to integrate inquiry-based instruction effectively, and they don't have enough instructional time to use inquiry in a meaningful way. A lack of materials and age/skill-level appropriate resources was also cited (8%), which connected closely with many teachers' beliefs that they were not well-trained to incorporate inquiry-based instruction effectively (39%).
- When asked how they would currently assess the vitality and strength of the teaching and learning of social studies in their school by assigning a letter grade, they responded: 20.4% an A, 45.3% a B, 27% a C, 6.6% a D, and 0.7% an F.
- When then asked to assess the vitality and strength of the teaching and learning of social studies in Ohio's K-12 classrooms, responses varied: 4.4% an A, 25.5% a B, 56.9% a C, 10.9% a D, and 2.2% an F. The decline in grades at the state level were mainly due to the perception that social studies is less important state-wide than the other core content areas since it is no longer tested at most grade levels, though they do feel it is valued in individual schools as evidenced by the previous bullet.
- When asked to indicate how they believed their school leaders perceive the value of each content area based upon investments in hiring, professional development, and instructional resources, math was most valued, followed closely by English Language Arts. 49.2% believed that social studies is valued, while 47.7% believe the discipline is least valued.
- When asked about whether or not they had participated in social studies specific professional development activities in the previous year, 25.9% indicated they participated in three or more activities; 20.9% in two; 27.3% in one, and 25.9% of participants said they had not participated in any professional development in the previous year.
- OCSS has renewed its commitment to offering regional professional development workshops. The top three responses for which are most appealing are Using Debates, Simulations, and Student-Centered Instructional Methods such as Inquiry (62%), Primary Source Analysis and Information Literacy (56.9%), and Teaching Hard History and Controversial Issues (52.6%).

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



**Dr. James Moore**, is an Associate Professor of Social Studies Education at Cleveland State University with research interests in global education, civic education, Islam and teaching about Islam and other world religion, the First Amendment, and ethnicity. Dr. Moore teaches courses in social studies education and diversity.

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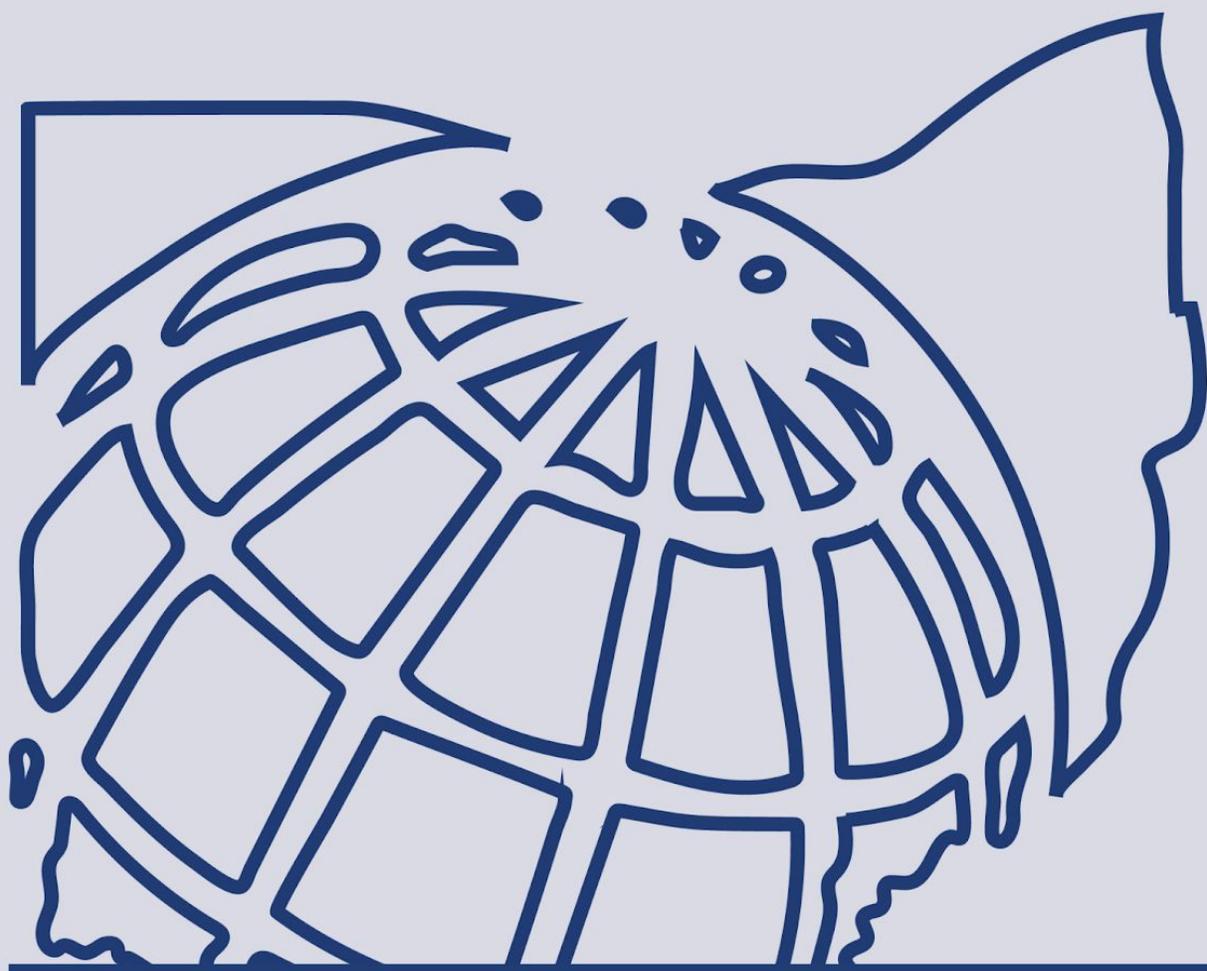
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