May 23, 2016

Dear Parent(s) and Student:

Welcome to Advanced Placement United States History. We are looking forward to another great year at West Springfield High School.

This letter is to inform you of the summer assignment for the course. One of the greatest challenges in AP US History is the amount of material students are expected to know. This summer assignment is designed to help give students a “jump start” on some of the information and to expose them to the early events in American history. It will ease them into the rigorous pace required of the course, which their competition around the nation typically begins coursework 1-2 weeks prior to Labor Day.

The summer assignment has two parts. Part I consists of identifying key terms from the first chapter of the textbook, *American History: A Survey* by Alan Brinkley. Students should pick up their textbook from Mr. Heintz (room 259) or Ms. Pendry (room 260) BEFORE June 3.

Part II of the assignment requires each student to read and type (minimum) 1-page summaries or “reductions” from two articles written by reputable scholars on topics from this period. They are: 1491, by Charles C. Mann

*Representing the Portrayal of Pilgrims in Elementary History textbooks and the Myth of the Founding of the American Nation*, by C. Parks

Both parts of this assignment will be due on September 6th or 7th (depending on which day is the first AP US History class). Absolutely no late assignments will be accepted. There will be an in-class graded assessment during the first week of school tied to both the textbook and article readings.

In addition, every student should purchase a new 2016 AMSCO review book. These books can become backordered quickly, so students are strongly encouraged to purchase the book early in the summer. *United States History: Preparing for the Advanced Placement Examination* by John J. Newman ISBN: 978-168240455-3. It can be purchased directly from the publisher at: http://www.amscopub.com/us-history-preparing-for-ap-exam

Parents, one of the things you can do to help your child succeed in AP US History is to make sure they do not procrastinate in completing this summer work. Students who do it over time, in small manageable amounts, are more likely to benefit.

Thanks for your time, attention, and support. Your positive attitude and patience is a vital piece to success in AP US History. Again, we look forward to an academically rigorous, yet fulfilling school year. If you have questions, you may contact us via email during the summer.

Sincerely,

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Joanne Pendry
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AP UNITED STATES HISTORY
Summer Assignment
Part 1

You should read chapter 1 in Alan Brinkley's American History. You should pick up your textbook in room 259 or 260 BEFORE June 3. You should take notes on these pages in addition to the assignment below. You will be responsible for the information in these chapters and all of it may not be discussed in detail in class. By doing this assignment over the summer, you will be in a much more advantageous position to succeed next year.

You also need to answer the IDENTIFICATIONS. These will be collected the first day of class (September 6th or 7th).

IDENTIFICATION: Identify
1. What/who these people were
2. A time reference
3. and the SIGNIFICANCE of them.

TYPED or HAND-WRITTEN is acceptable!

Chapter 1: The Meeting of Cultures
1. Woodland Indians
2. Cahokia
3. Nationalism
4. Christopher Columbus
5. Smallpox
6. Conquistadors
7. Catholic missions
8. de Oñate, Juan
9. Encomienda
10. Pueblo Revolt
11. Spanish rigid control
12. Columbian Exchange
13. Mestizos
14. Atlantic World
15. African slave trade
16. Mercantilism
17. Predestination
18. Church of England
19. Puritan Separatists
20. Fur trade
21. Spanish Armada
Rubric For APUSH Article Reductions/Summaries (one for EACH article)

Each summary is:

- □ Typed
- □ At least 1 page long. (Font no larger than 12, Times New Roman or smaller, margins no larger than 1 inch.)
- □ Summarizes the entire article and NOT the introduction.
- □ Summarizes the author’s main points, arguments within the 1st paragraph.
- □ Brings up 2-3 specific points from the reading, and uses quotes to illustrate those points.

Before it became the New World, the Western Hemisphere was vastly more populous and sophisticated than has been thought—an altogether more salubrious place to live at the time than, say, Europe. New evidence of both the extent of the population and its agricultural advancement leads to a remarkable conjecture: the Amazon rain forest may be largely a human artifact.

BY CHARLES C. MANN

Historians have long wondered how many people lived in the Americas at the time of contact. "Debated since Columbus attempted a partial census on Hispaniola in 1496," William Denevan has written, this "remains one of the great inquiries of history." (In 1976 Denevan assembled and edited an entire book on the subject, The Native Population of the Americas in 1492.) The first scholarly estimate of the indigenous population was made in 1910 by James Mooney, a distinguished ethnographer at the Smithsonian Institution. Combing through old documents, he concluded that in 1491 North America had 1.15 million inhabitants. Mooney's glittering reputation ensured that most subsequent researchers accepted his figure uncritically.

That changed in 1966, when Henry F. Dobyns published "Estimating Aboriginal American Population: An Appraisal of Techniques With a New Hemispheric Estimate," in the journal Current Anthropology. Despite the carefully neutral title, his argument was thunderous, its impact long-lasting. In the view of James Wilson, the author of The Earth Shall Weep (1998), a history of indigenous Americans, Dobyns's colleagues "are still struggling to get out of the crater that paper left in anthropology." Not only anthropologists were affected. Dobyns's estimate proved to be one of the opening rounds in today's culture wars.

Dobyns began his exploration of pre-Columbian Indian demography in the early 1950s, when he was a graduate student. At the invitation of a friend, he spent a few months in northern Mexico, which is full of Spanish-era missions. There he poked through the crumbling leather-bound ledgers in which Jesuits recorded local births and deaths. Right away he noticed how many more deaths there were. The Spaniards arrived, and then Indians died—in huge numbers, at incredible rates. It hit him, Dobyns told me recently, "like a club right between the eyes."

It took Dobyns eleven years to obtain his Ph.D. Along the way he joined a rural-development project in Peru, which until colonial times was the seat of the Incan empire. Remembering what he had seen at the northern fringe of the Spanish conquest, Dobyns decided to compare it with figures for the south. He borrowed into the papers of the Lima cathedral and read apologetic Spanish histories. The Indians in Peru, Dobyns concluded, had faced plagues from the day the conquistadors showed up—in fact, before then: smallpox arrived around 1525, seven years ahead of the Spanish. Brought to Mexico apparently by a single sick Spaniard, it swept south and eliminated more than half the population of the Incan empire. Smallpox claimed the Incan dictator Huayna Capac and much of his family, setting off a calamitous war of succession. So complete was the chaos that Francisco Pizarro was able to seize an empire the size of Spain and Italy combined with a force of 168 men.

Smallpox was only the first epidemic. Typhus (probably) in 1546, influenza and smallpox together in 1558, smallpox again in 1589, diphtheria in 1614, measles in 1618—all ravaged the remains of Incan culture. Dobyns was the first social scientist to piece together this awful picture, and he naturally rushed his findings into print. Hardly anyone paid attention. But Dobyns was already working on a second, related question: If all those people died, how many had been living there to begin with? Before Columbus, Dobyns calculated, the Western Hemisphere held ninety to 112 million people. Another way of saying this is that in 1491 more people lived in the Americas than in Europe.

His argument was simple but horrific. It is well known that Native Americans had no experience with many European diseases and were therefore immunologically unprepared—"virgin soil," in the
metaphor of epidemiologists. What Dobyns realized was that such diseases could have swept from the coastlines initially visited by Europeans to inland areas controlled by Indians who had never seen a white person. The first whites to explore many parts of the Americas may therefore have encountered places that were already depopulated. Indeed, Dobyns argued, they must have done so.

Peru was one example, the Pacific Northwest another. In 1792 the British navigator George Vancouver led the first European expedition to survey Puget Sound. He found a vast charred house: human remains "promiscuously scattered about the beach, in great numbers." Smallpox, Vancouver's crew discovered, had preceded them. Its few survivors, second lieutenant Peter Puget noted, were "most terribly pitted ... indeed many have lost their Eyes." In *Fox Americana*, (2001), Elizabeth Fenn, a historian at George Washington University, contends that the disaster on the northwest coast was but a small part of a continental pandemic that erupted near Boston in 1774 and cut down Indians from Mexico to Alaska.

Because smallpox was not endemic in the Americas, colonials, too, had not acquired any immunity. The virus, an equal-opportunity killer, swept through the Continental Army and stopped the drive into Quebec. The American Revolution would be lost, Washington and other rebel leaders feared, if the contagion did to the colonists what it had done to the Indians.

"The small Pox! The small Pox!" Join Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail. "What shall We do with it?" In retrospect, Fenn says, "One of George Washington's most brilliant moves was to inoculate the army against smallpox during the Valley Forge winter of '78." Without inoculation smallpox could easily have given the United States back to the British.

So many epidemics occurred in the Americas, Dobyns argued, that the old data used by Mooney and his successors represented population nadirs. From the few cases in which before-and-after totals are known with relative certainty, Dobyns estimated that in the first 130 years of contact about 95 percent of the people in the Americas died—the worst demographic calamity in recorded history.

Dobyns's ideas were quickly attacked as politically motivated, a push from the hate-America crowd to inflate the toll of imperialism. The attacks continue to this day. "No question about it, some people want those higher numbers," says Shepard Krech III, a Brown University anthropologist who is the author of *The Ecological Indian* (1999). These people, he says, were thrilled when Dobyns revisited the subject in a book, *Their Numbers Become Thinned* (1983)—and revised his own estimates upward. Perhaps Dobyns's most vehement critic is David Henge, a bibliographer of African at the University of Wisconsin, whose *Numbers From Nowhere* (1998) is a landmark in the literature of demographic fulmination. "Suspect in 1966, it is no less suspect nowadays," Henge wrote of Dobyns's work. "If anything, it is worse."

When Henge wrote *Numbers From Nowhere*, the fight about pre-Columbian population had already consumed forests' worth of trees; his bibliography is ninety pages long. And the dispute shows no sign of abating. More and more people have jumped in. This is partly because the subject is inherently fascinating. But more likely the increased interest in the debate is due to the growing realization of the high political and ecological stakes.

**INVENTING BY THE MILLIONS**

On May 30, 1539, Hernando de Soto landed his private army near Tampa Bay, in Florida. Soto, as he was called, was a novel figure: half warrior, half venture capitalist. He had grown very rich very young by becoming a market leader in the nascent trade for Indian slaves. The profits had helped to fund Pizarro's seizure of the Incan empire, which had made Soto wealthier still. Looking quite literally for new worlds to conquer, he persuaded the Spanish Crown to let him loose in North America. He spent one fortune to make another. He came to Florida with 200 horses, 600 soldiers, and 300 pigs.

From today's perspective, it is difficult to imagine the ethical system that would justify Soto's actions. For four years his force, looking for gold, wandered through what is now Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Texas, wrecking almost everything it touched. The inhabitants often fought back vigorously, but they had never before encountered an army with horses and guns. Soto died of fever with his expedition in ruins; along the way his men had managed to rape, torture, enslave, and kill countless Indians. But the worst thing the Spaniards did, some researchers say, was entirely without malice—bring the pigs.

According to Charles Hudson, an anthropologist at the University of Georgia who spent fifteen years reconstructing the path of the expedition, Soto crossed the Mississippi a few miles downstream from the present site of Memphis. It was a nervous passage: the Spaniards were watched by several thousand Indian warriors. Utterly without fear, Soto brushed past the Indian force into what is now eastern Arkansas, through thickly settled land—"very well peopled with large towns," one of his men later recalled, "two or three of which were to be seen from one town." Eventually the Spaniards approached a cluster of small cities, each protected by earthen walls, sizeable moats, and dead-eye archers. In his usual fashion, Soto brazenly marched in, stole food, and marched out.

After Soto left, no Europeans visited this part of the Mississippi Valley for more than a century. Early in 1682 whites appeared again, this time Frenchmen in canoes. One of them was René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle. The French passed through the area where Soto had found cities cheek by jowl. It was deserted—La Salle didn't see an Indian village for 200 miles. About fifty settlements existed in this strip of the Mississippi when Soto showed up, according to Anne Ramenofsky, an anthropologist at the University of New Mexico. By La Salle's time the number had shrunk to perhaps ten, some probably inhabited by recent immigrants. Soto "had a privileged glimpse" of an Indian world, Hudson says. "The window opened and slammed shut. When the French came in and the record opened up again, it was a transformed reality. A civilization crumbled. The question is, how did this happen?"

The question is even more complex than it may seem. Disaster of this magnitude suggests epidemic disease. In the view of Ramenofsky and Patricia Galloway, an anthropologist at the University of Texas, the source of the contagion was very likely
not Soto's army but its ambulatory meat locker: his 300 pigs. Soto's force itself was too small to be an effective biological weapon. Sicknesses like measles and smallpox would have burned through his 600 soldiers long before they reached the Mississippi. But the same could not have held true for the pigs, which multiplied rapidly and were able to transmit their diseases to wildlife in the surrounding forest. When human beings and domesticated animals live close together, they trade microbes with abandon. Over time mutation spawns new diseases: avian influenza becomes human influenza, horse-rinderpest becomes measles. Unlike Europeans, Indians did not live in close quarters with animals—they domesticated only the dog, the llama, the alpaca, the guinea pig, and, here and there, the turkey and the Muscovy duck. In some ways this is not surprising: the New World had fewer animal candidates for taming than the Old. Moreover, few Indians carry the gene that permits adults to digest lactose, a form of sugar abundant in milk. Non-milk-drinkers, one imagines, would be less likely to work at domesticating milk-giving animals. But this is guesswork. The fact is that what scientists call zoonotic disease was little known in the Americas. Swine alone can disseminate anthrax, brucellosis, leptospirosis, tetanus, trichinosis, and tuberculosis. Pigs breed exuberantly and can transmit diseases to deer and turkeys. Only a few of Soto's pigs would have had to wander off to infect the forest.

Indeed, the calamity wrought by Soto apparently extended across the whole Southeast. The Coosa city-states, in western Georgia, and the Caddoan-speaking civilization, centered on the Texas-Arkansas border, disintegrated soon after Soto appeared. The Caddo had had a taste for monumental architecture: public plazas, ceremonial platforms, mausoleums. After Soto's army left, notes Timothy K. Pertula, an archaeological consultant in Austin, Texas, the Caddo stopped building community centers and began digging community cemeteries. Between Soto's and La Salle's visits, Pertula believes, the Caddoan population fell from about 200,000 to about 8,500—a drop of nearly 96 percent. In the eighteenth century the tally shrank further, to 1,400. An equivalent loss today in the population of New York City would reduce it to 56,000—not enough to fill Yankee Stadium. "That's one reason whites think of Indians as nomadic hunters," says Russell Thornton, an anthropologist at the University of California at Los Angeles. "Everything else—all the heavily populated urbanized societies—was wiped out."

Could a few pigs truly wreak this much destruction? Such apocalyptic scenarios invite skepticism. As a rule, viruses, microbes, and parasites are rarely lethal on a wide scale—a pest that wipes out its host species does not have a bright evolutionary future. In its worst outbreak, from 1347 to 1351, the European Black Death claimed only a third of its victims. (The rest survived, though they were often disfigured or crippled by its effects.) The Indians in Soto's path, if Dobyns, Ranenofsky, and Pertula are correct, endured losses that were incomprehensibly greater.

One reason is that Indians were fresh territory for many plagues, not just one. Smallpox, typhoid, bubonic plague, influenza, mumps, measles, whooping cough—all rained down on the Americas in the century after Columbus. (Cholera, malaria, and scarlet fever came later.) Having little experience with epidemic diseases, Indians had no knowledge of how to combat them. In contrast, Europeans were well versed in the brutal logic of quarantine. They boarded up houses in which plague appeared and fled to the countryside. In Indian New England, Neal Salisbury, a historian at Smith College, wrote in Mortality and Providence (1982), family and friends gathered with the shaman at the sufferer's bedside to wait out the illness—a practice that "could only have served to spread the disease more rapidly."

Indigenous biochemistry may also have played a role. The immune system constantly scans the body for molecules that it can recognize as foreign—molecules belonging to an invading virus, for instance. No one's immune system can identify all foreign presences. Roughly speaking, an individual's set of defensive tools is known as his MHC type. Because many bacteria and viruses mutate easily, they usually attack in the form of several slightly different strains. Pathogens win when MHC types miss some of the strains and the immune system is not stimulated to act. Most human groups contain many MHC types; a strain that slips by one person's defenses will be nipped by the defenses of the next. But, according to Francis L. Black, an epidemiologist at Yale University, Indians are characterized by unusually homogeneous MHC types. One out of three South American Indians have similar MHC types; among Africans the corresponding figure is one in 200. The cause is a matter for Darwinian speculation, the effects less so.

In 1966 Dobyns's insistence on the role of disease was a shock to his colleagues. Today the impact of European pathogens on the New World is almost undisputed. Nonetheless, the fight over Indian numbers continues with undiminished fervor. Estimates of the population of North America in 1491 disagree by an order of magnitude—from 18 million, Dobyns's revised figure, to 1.8 million, calculated by Douglas H. Ubelaker, an anthropologist at the Smithsonian. To some "high counters," as David Henige calls them, the low counters' refusal to relinquish the vision of an empty continent is irrational or worse. "Non-Indian 'experts' always want to minimize the size of aboriginal populations," says Lenore Stiffarm, a Native American-education specialist at the University of Saskatchewan. The smaller the numbers of Indians, she believes, the easier it is to regard the continent as having been up for grabs. "It's perfectly acceptable to move into unoccupied land," Stiffarm says. "And land with only a few 'savages' is the next best thing."

"Most of the arguments for the very large numbers have been theoretical," Ubelaker says in defense of low counters. "When you try to marry the theoretical arguments to the data that are available on individual groups in different regions, it's hard to find support for those numbers." Archaeologists, he says, keep searching for the settlements in which those millions of people supposedly lived, with little success. "As more and more excavation is done, one would expect to see more evidence for dense populations than has thus far emerged." Dean Snow, the Pennsylvania State anthropologist, examined Colonial-era Mohawk Iroquois sites and found "no support for the notion that ubiquitous pandemics swept the region." In his view, asserting that the continent was filled with people who left no trace is like looking at an empty bank account and claiming that it must once have held millions of dollars.

The low counters are also troubled by the Dobynsian procedure for recovering original population numbers: applying an assumed death rate, usually 95 percent, to the observed population nadir.
Ubelaker believes that the lowest point for Indians in North America was around 1900, when their numbers fell to about a million. Assuming a 95 percent death rate, the pre-contact population would have been 10 million. Go up one percent, to a 96 percent death rate, and the figure jumps to 12.5 million—arithmetically, doubling over two million people from a tiny increase in mortality rates. At 98 percent the number bounds to 25 million. Minute changes in baseline assumptions produce wildly different results.

"It's an absolutely unanswerable question on which tons of thousands of words have been spent to no purpose," Henige says. In 1976 he sat in on a seminar by William Denevan, the Wisconsin geographer. An "epiphanic moment" occurred when he read shortly afterward that scholars had "uncovered" the existence of eight million people in hispaniola. Can you just invent millions of people? he wondered. "We can make of the historical record that there was depopulation and movement of people from internecine warfare and diseases," he says. "But as for how much, who knows? When we start putting numbers to something like that—applying large figures like ninety-five percent—we're saying things we shouldn't say. The number implies a level of knowledge that's impossible."

Nonetheless, one must try—or so Denevan believes. In his estimation the high counters (though not the highest counters) seem to be winning the argument, at least for now. No definitive data exist, he says, but the majority of the extant evidentiary scraps support their side. Even Henige is no low counter. When I asked him what he thought the population of the Americas was before Columbus, he insisted that any answer would be speculation and made me promise not to print what he was going to say next. Then he named a figure that forty years ago would have caused a commotion.

To Elizabeth Fenn, the smallpox historian, the squabble over numbers obscures a central fact. Whether one million or 10 million or 100 million died, she believes, the pall of sorrow that engulfed the hemisphere was immeasurable. Languages, prayers, hopes, habits, and dreams—entire ways of life hissed away like steam. The Spanish and the Portuguese lacked the germ theory of disease and could not explain what was happening (let alone stop it). Nor can we explain it; the ruin was too long ago and too all encompassing. In the long run, Fenn says, the consequential finding is not that many people died but that many people once lived. The Americas were filled with a stunningly diverse assortment of peoples who had knocked about the continents for millennia. "You have to wonder," Fenn says. "What were all those people up to in all that time?"

When Columbus appeared in the Caribbean, the descendants of the world's two Neolithic civilizations collided, with overwhelming consequences for both. American Neolithic development occurred later than that of the Middle East, possibly because the Indians needed more time to build up the requisite population density. Without beasts of burden they could not capitalize on the wheel (for individual workers on uneven terrain) or the plow (for carting; they never developed steel. But in agriculture they handily outstripped the children of Sumeria. Every tomato in Italy, every potato in Ireland, and every hot pepper in Thailand came from this hemisphere. Worldwide, more than half the crops grown today were initially developed in the Americas.

Maize, as corn is called in the rest of the world, was a triumph with global implications. Indians developed an extraordinary number of maize varieties for different growing conditions, which meant that the crop could spread throughout the planet. Central and Southern Europeans became particularly dependent on it; maize was the staple of Serbia, Romania, and the Russian plains. The nineteenth century. Indian crops dramatically reduced hunger, Crosby says, which led to an Old World population boom.

Along with peanuts and manioc, maize came to Africa and transformed agriculture there, too. "The probability is that the population of Africa was greatly increased because of maize and other American Indian crops," Crosby says. "Those extra people helped make the slave trade possible." Maize conquered Africa at the time when introduced diseases were leveling Indian societies. The Spanish, the Portuguese, and the British were alarmed by the death rate among Indians, because they wanted to exploit them as workers. Faced with a labor shortage, the Europeans turned their eyes to Africa. The continent's quarrelsome societies helped slave traders to siphon off millions of people. The maize-fed population boom, Crosby believes, let the awful trade continue without pumping the well dry.

Back home in the Americas, Indian agriculture long sustained some of the world's largest cities. The Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán dazzled Hernán Cortés in 1519; it was bigger than Paris, Europe's greatest metropolis. The Spaniards gawked like hayseeds at the wide streets, ornately carved buildings, and markets bright with goods from hundreds of miles away. They had never before seen a city with botanical gardens, for the excellent reason that none existed in Europe. The same novelty attended the force of a thousand men that kept the crowded streets immaculate. (Streets that weren't ankle-deep in sewage! The conquistadors had never heard of such a thing.) Central America was not the only locus of prosperity. Thousands of miles north, John Smith, of Pocahontas fame, visited Massachusetts in 1614, before it was emptied by disease, and declared that the land was "so planted with Gardens and Corn fields, and so well inhabited with a goodly, strong and well proportioned people ... [that] I would rather live here than any where."

Smith was promoting colonization, and so had reason to exaggerate. But he also knew the hunger, sickness, and oppression of European life. France—"by any standards a privileged country," according to its great historian, Fernand Braudel—experienced seven nationwide famines in the fifteenth century and thirteen in the sixteenth. Disease was hunger's constant companion. During epidemics in London the dead were heaped onto carts "like common dung" (the simile is Daniel Defoe's) and trundled through the streets. The infant death rate in London orphanages, according to one contemporary source, was 88 percent. Governments were harsh, the rule of law arbitrary. The gibbets pokin up in the background of so many old paintings were, Braudel observed, "merely a realistic detail."

The Earth Shall Weep, James Wilson's history of Indian America, puts the comparison bluntly: "the western hemisphere was larger, richer, and more populous than Europe." Much of it was freer, too.
Europeans, accustomed to the serfdom that thrived from Naples to the Baltic Sea, were puzzled and alarmed by the democratic spirit and respect for human rights in many Indian societies, especially those in North America. In theory, the sachems of New England Indian groups were absolute monarchs. In practice, the colonial leader Roger Williams wrote, "they will not conclude of ought ... unto which the people are averse."

Pre-1492 America wasn’t a disease-free paradise, Dobyns says, although in his "exuberance as a writer," he told me recently, he once made that claim. Indians had ailments of their own, notably parasites, tuberculosis, and anemia. The daily grind was wearing; life-spans in America were only as long as or a little longer than those in Europe, if the evidence of indigenous graveyards is to be believed. Nor was it a political utopia—the Inca, for instance, invented refinements to totalitarian rule that would have intrigued Stalin. Inveterate practitioners of what the historian Francis Jennings described as "state terrorism practiced horrifically on a huge scale," the Inca ruled so cruelly that one can speculate that their surviving subjects might actually have been better off under Spanish rule.

I asked seven anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians if they would rather have been a typical Indian or a typical European in 1491. None was delighted by the question, because it required judging the past by the standards of today—a fallacy disparaged as "presentism" by social scientists. But every one chose to be an Indian. Some early colonists gave the same answer. Horrifying the leaders of Jamestown and Plymouth, scores of English ran off to live with the Indians.

As for the Indians, evidence suggests that they often viewed Europeans with disdain. The Hurons, a chagrined missionary reported, thought the French possessed "little intelligence in comparison to themselves." Europeans, Indians said, were physically weak, sexually untrustworthy, atrociously ugly, and just plain dirty. (Spaniards, who seldom if ever bathed, were amazed by the Aztec desire for personal cleanliness.) A Jesuit reported that the "Savages" were disgusted by handkerchiefs: "They say, we place what is unclean in a fine white piece of linen, and put it away in our pockets as something very precious, while they throw it upon the ground." The Micmac scoffed at the notion of French superiority. If Christian civilization was so wonderful, why were its inhabitants leaving?

Like people everywhere, Indians survived by cleverly exploiting their environment. Europeans tended to manage land by breaking it into fragments for farmers and herders. Indians often worked on such a grand scale that the scope of their ambition can be hard to grasp. They created small plots, as Europeans did (about 1.5 million acres of terraces still exist in the Peruvian Ancóns), but they also reshaped entire landscapes to suit their purposes. A principal tool was fire, used to keep down underbrush and create the open, grassy conditions favorable for game. Rather than domesticating animals for meat, Indians retooled whole ecosystems to grow bumper crops of elk, deer, and bison. The first white settlers in Ohio found forests as open as English parks—they could drive carriages through the woods. Along the Hudson River the annual fall burning lit up the banks for miles on end; so flashy was the show that the Dutch in New Amsterdam bolted upriver to goggle at the blaze like children at fireworks. In North America, Indian torches had their biggest impact on the Midwestern prairie, much or most of which was created and maintained by fire. Millennia of exuberant burning shaped the plains into vast buffalo farms. When Indian societies disintegrated, forest invaded savannah in Wisconsin, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Texas Hill Country. Is it possible that the Indians changed the Americas more than the invading Europeans did? "The answer is probably yes for most regions for the next 250 years or so" after Columbus, William Denevan wrote, "and for some regions right up to the present time."
Representing the Portrayal of Pilgrims in Elementary History Textbooks and the Myth of the Founding of the American Nation

Cecelia L. Parks

Learning Outcomes

After reading this article, you will be able to:

- Recount the three elements of the Pilgrim story.
- Characterize the Pilgrims as they really were.
- Identify at least three negative impacts the Pilgrims had on the native tribes.

Every American knows something about the Pilgrims: they were Puritans (or Separatists) who emigrated from England to freely practice their own form of Protestantism. They were first to the Dutch Republic, but about thirty-five members of the party desired complete separation from other religions. These thirty-five Puritans, along with sixty-seven other emigrants, set out in the Mayflower for the New World, ostensibly for Virginia. They landed instead in Massachusetts in November of 1620 and chose a site for a settlement, which they named Plymouth. Plymouth lay outside the jurisdiction of the Virginia Company, with whom the Pilgrims were contracted, so they created the Mayflower Compact, which set up what is often seen as a democratic system of government. Unfortunately, because the settlers arrived in November, they were unable to grow food and about half of the group died in the first winter. Luckily for them, however, Squanto, a Native American—and later others—came to help. They taught the settlers how to grow crops and gather food in their new environment. Squanto and his allies also acted as ambassadors and translators to the other Native Americans in the area. At the end of the harvest that year, the Pilgrims celebrated the “First Thanksgiving” with their Native American friends.

This paper will examine how this common representation of Pilgrims in elementary history textbooks reflects and disseminates an American nationalist mythology. This representation communicates this myth specifically through the portrayal of Thanksgiving, the relationship with the Native Americans, and the Pilgrims’ “American ideals.” Many historical facts are omitted or distorted in this depiction of the Pilgrims’ story. The representation of the Pilgrims is examined in two elementary United States history textbooks, Social Studies: United States History, published by Houghton Mifflin in 2004, and United States History: Beginnings to 1877, published by Holt McDougal in 2010. These texts’ representation of the Pilgrims’ story prevents a true understanding of America’s complex history and identity.

The theory of invented tradition plays a significant role in the discussion of the Pilgrims and their representation in history textbooks. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger define invented tradition as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules...these ritual or symbolic acts seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition...implying continuity with the past.” Importantly, an invented tradition does not have to be a specific event, such as a holiday, though it often takes the form of one. “Tradition” can also mean a longstanding set of beliefs or a doctrine that is woven into the fabric of society. The representation of Pilgrims in textbooks constitutes just such a series of invented traditions.

Textbooks are a particularly effective way to examine the representation of the Pilgrims because they play an integral role in teaching United States history. Frances Fox Piven notes in her seminal examination of history textbooks, “Children have to read textbooks; they usually have to read all of each textbook and are rarely asked to criticize it for style or point of view.” Classroom curricula are often based in textbooks, ensuring that the books’ representation of the facts will be spread even if the students do not specifically engage with the text. Additionally, the public sees textbooks as a reliable source of correct information about the subject. They purport to contain an unbiased presentation of the facts that students can easily reference. The
American Textbook Council, an independent research organization dedicated to reviewing history texts, addresses the important role of textbooks:

American history textbooks are the official portraits of our country’s past that are purchased by local and state governments and that are assigned to students with the foreknowledge that these students will someday participate in public affairs. How much these students know and what they think about our nation and world will indelibly affect civic character. Students learn much of what they know about the United States from history textbooks; therefore, the representation of events in this nation’s past in textbooks is key to students’ perception of those events.

Both textbooks analyzed here are credible examples of the norm in elementary United States history textbooks. The Houghton Mifflin textbook is on the American Textbook Council’s list of most widely used elementary history textbooks in the country. Both books convey essentially the same basic information about the Pilgrims (although the Holt McDougal book devotes slightly more text to them), as well as providing similar resources for teachers, such as online lesson plans provided by websites like TeacherLINK.

American national mythology is spread in part by the portrayal of the Pilgrims in elementary United States history textbooks. One of the most prominent examples is the myth of Thanksgiving. Most people perceive the First Thanksgiving as a celebration by the Pilgrims of a successful harvest with their Native American friends. Textbooks represent it as a three-day-long feast with about ninety Native Americans, including Massasoit and Squanto. Most Americans see the First Thanksgiving as a celebration of the Pilgrims’ hard work and perseverance through their first year in Plymouth.

Today, Americans celebrate Thanksgiving each year on the fourth Thursday in November. It is a time to remember the Pilgrims, spend time with family, eat turkey, watch football, and (in some cases) actually give thanks. When we celebrate the Pilgrims, we celebrate the values they supposedly upheld. Waters comments, “Today’s uniquely positive American values like the rule of law, freedom of religion, cultural diversity, farming, and hand work are logically celebrated by acknowledging the role Pilgrims and Indians played in developing the new society.”

This role, however, is largely an invented tradition. The Pilgrims did not actually have a Thanksgiving tradition, and if they had celebrated a day of thanks, it probably would have included prayer and fasting rather than feasting. In fact, Thanksgiving did not become a national holiday until the Civil War, when America desperately needed a holiday to inspire feelings of patriotism and solidarity. Thanksgiving, in its current incarnation, provided the perfect solution. Many Americans think of Thanksgiving as an organic tradition; rather, it was invented to remind a war-torn nation of its roots and to reunite the country.

However, none of this information is mentioned in elementary history textbooks. All the Houghton Mifflin text says of Thanksgiving is, “People in the United States remember this feast during Thanksgiving, a national holiday celebrated every November.” When people “remember this feast,” they also remember the Pilgrims, and all of the values and ideals that according to Waters, are attached to the Pilgrims.

The Houghton Mifflin text credits Squanto, saying, “Squanto taught the Pilgrims to plant crops such as maize (corn), pumpkins and beans...” By the fall of 1621, the colony had become more successful. The message sent here is that if the students work hard and persevere, they will be rewarded with help and a good harvest in whatever endeavors they are pursuing. These are the quintessential American values of hard work and equal opportunity.

The Holt McDougal text is more explicit in its presentation of Thanksgiving as an invented tradition. It reads, “This feast became known as the first Thanksgiving... This event marked the survival of the Pilgrims in the new colony.” By referring to the celebration as the “first Thanksgiving,” the textbook sets Thanksgiving up as an organic tradition started by the Pilgrims and continued by the rest of the nation, not a one-time event that was capitalized on during the Civil War. Thanksgiving was formally instituted as a national holiday around the same time policies towards Native Americans became much harsher. In the late nineteenth century, especially in the frontier states, “Exterminate or Banish” became a popular slogan regarding Native American policy. This exterminatory rhetoric translated to significant violence against Native Americans throughout the United States. Ironically the Pilgrims’ story and Thanksgiving, in which friendliness to the Native Americans plays a key role, rose to national prominence in this time in which general opinion and actions were anything but friendly to Native Americans. Mann posits that genocidal policies such as the ones practiced by the American government in the nineteenth century are “the dark side of democracy,” because he has found that ethnic cleansing occurs more in democratic regimes than authoritarian regimes. Since Democratic government also plays a key role in the myth of the Pilgrims, the institution of Thanksgiving as a national holiday demonstrates Lincoln’s need for a device that not only unified his people but also highlighted national mythology to ease the people’s conscience concerning Native American policy.

Most American schoolchildren are taught that the Pilgrims coexisted peacefully with the Native Americans. The myth is that the Pilgrims were generous, magnanimous settlers who were willingly helped by the friendly Native Americans. Though the settler-Native American relations were generally peaceful from the time of settlement until the Pequot War of 1637, the events that took place before Plymouth was founded were not so benign. Though the exact effect is difficult to quantify, a high percentage of Native Americans died as a result of European contact. Jennings cites an account of a settler:

In 1656, Adriaen Van der Donck wrote from his experience in New Netherland that “the Indians...affirm, that before the arrival of the Christians, and before the small pox broke out amongst them, they were ten times as numerous as they are now, and that their population had been melted down by this disease, whereof nine-tenths of them have died.”

The Native Americans often cooperated with the settlers because their numbers had been so diminished by disease that they felt they had no other choice. Loewen remarks, “Indeed,
the plague helped prompt the legendary warm reception Plymouth enjoyed from the Wampanoags. In fact, Plymouth was built on an abandoned Native American village called Patuxet that had been decimated by sickness. Another aspect of the myth of the Pilgrims is that "America was a virgin land, or wilderness, inhabited by people called savages...that civilization was required by divine sanction...to conquer the wilderness and make it a garden." America was already inhabited when the Pilgrims arrived; instead of forging new territory in a wilderness, they had to displace the current occupants and resettle the land. Pilgrims also were known to steal from the houses and graves of Native Americans. Without the Native Americans, the settlement at Plymouth would almost certainly have failed, because in spite of poor treatment by Europeans, the Native Americans helped the settlers grow crops and gather food as well as establish trading posts for the furs they trapped. However, this side of the European-Native American relationship is not often discussed, because Westerners try to avoid the image of mass murderers who essentially wiped out entire populations. The myth of the Europeans' good relations with the Native Americans is an invention that perpetuated the myth of the Pilgrims in particular as inherently good people who cohabitated harmoniously with the native peoples.

Notes

9. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 2.
15. Ibid., 15.
16. Loewen, Lies My Teacher Told Me, 75.

Critical Thinking

1. How do you think the myths around the Pilgrims got started?
2. What other interpretations could be applied to the impact that the Pilgrims and Puritans had on Native American cultures?
3. How do the myths and the reality of the Pilgrims differ?

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