

Editor's Notebook

As we look forward to summer and its refreshing opportunity for creative reading and enjoyment of the arts, this issue of *Social Education* will hopefully help our readers to take advantage of the interlude with its suggestions for the use of literature and the arts in the classroom, and its exploration of some highly creative teaching ideas.

The issue opens with an illustrated Teaching with Documents feature on the survey of the Yellowstone region in Wyoming in the 1870s. After Congress appropriated funds for the survey in 1871, the expedition leader included a photographer and a painter in the team. Their artwork captured the imagination of the American public by depicting the region's key geological characteristics and magnificent landscapes. Lee Ann Potter, Elizabeth K. Eder, and Michael Hussey introduce readers to the expedition and suggest teaching activities that focus on a letter and artwork by members of the survey team.

The Supreme Court will soon issue its decision on the Obama Administration's health care legislation. The Court heard oral arguments about the case in March. Our Looking at the Law column offers lucid summaries of the four key issues that are central to the Court's decision. The contributors to this month's column are Bradley W. Joondeph, Bryan Camp, Jordan Barry, Elliot B. Pollack, Erwin Chemerinsky and Steven Schwinn.

The Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s was an extraordinary period of Chinese history. Among the publications describing its impact are books that are suitable for students of school age. Lindsey Cafarella and Chara Haeussler Bohan identify five outstanding trade books that teachers can use in class, and provide a lesson plan for studying the Cultural Revolution that introduces students to the nature of propaganda and the power of media in a dictatorship.

Ji-li Jiang, a young student in China at the time of the Cultural Revolution, provides an insider's view of the events, which caused great suffering for her family. Ji-li is the author of *Red Scarf Girl*, the trade book that is the focus of the lesson plan of the previous article. She describes her experiences explaining the Cultural Revolution to American school children on her numerous school visits. The most important lesson that she derives from that turbulent period is the need for countries to avoid the concentration and abuse of political power.

This issue includes one of our members' favorite annual features, the list of Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, selected by a committee of NCSS members in cooperation with the Children's Book Council. The selection identifies books of exceptional social studies value that can enhance the school curriculum. The annotations by members of the selection committee identify the strands of the social studies standards to which each book is most relevant.

Complementing the Notable Trade Books are reviews of another set of outstanding books, which have received the annual NCSS Carter G. Woodson Award. These books have been selected for their exceptional educational value in enhancing

students' knowledge and understanding of ethnicity and race relations in the United States. This year's selected books deal with the 1960 Greensboro sit-in, the story of a nineteenth-century slave who was a skilled potter, the persecution of Leo Frank, and the kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till.

Collaboration between English teachers and social studies teachers can yield rich rewards by engaging students more deeply in their studies. Jana Kirchner and Tracy F. Inman describe the accomplishments of a world history/world literature class in their high school, focusing on sessions in which students read Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* at the same time as they studied British colonialism in Africa. The authors highlight the benefits of the class for developing critical thinking skills and a global disposition among their students.

Efforts to capture Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony and bring him to trial before the International Criminal Court have been strongly promoted by the *KONY 2012* video, which has gone viral on the Internet. Barbara B. Brown, John Metzler, Christine Root, and Patrick Vinck suggest ways of converting the popularity of the video into a teaching opportunity that can promote greater student understanding of Uganda and other African countries, while avoiding the inaccurate assumptions and analyses that often pervade discussions of Africa.

Linda A. Fernsten recommends cooperative learning strategies that work well in the social studies classroom and shows how they can be particularly effective when applied to the study of the civil rights movement. She points out that we live in an age when "classroom teachers must compete with all kinds of media for students' attention," (150) and shows how cooperative endeavors can stimulate achievements by students who underperform on reading assignments that require them to work on their own.

Axel Donizetti Ramirez offers a creative and intriguing lesson plan examining the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles in June 1943, in which naval servicemen clashed with Mexican Americans. In a simulation that also includes the Sleepy Lagoon judicial case of 1942, students take on the character of a young Mexican American living in East Los Angeles and examine the choices available to him. The activity offers students a deeper understanding of what it was like to be a Mexican American in Los Angeles during that troubled time.

Just as social studies education is under pressure by school systems seeking to assign more time to reading and math instruction, the teaching of arts and music in schools has also been jeopardized. C. Frederick Risinger points out, however, that music and art "are primary aspects of human history and culture" (157). His Internet column highlights the dangers of their erosion from the school scene, and identifies some outstanding music and art sites that can benefit the social studies classroom.

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