

## editor's notes

*With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.*

—Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865



Editor Linda Bennett and  
Guest Editor Eric Groce

Although Lincoln spoke these words over one hundred and forty years ago, I believe they are quite fitting for our era as well. Complicated times call for creative and thoughtful problem solving. In this issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, the authors share an assortment of critical thinking skills, especially in the use of nonfiction, that will facilitate the growth of independent learners and prepare them to become the contributing global citizens needed to address the problems of tomorrow.

Our issue begins with a pair of invited authors, Linda Gambrell and Barbara Marinak, sharing their expertise in the field of reading and literacy. The introduction, “Sometimes I Just Crave Information! Teaching and Learning with Information Text,” establishes social studies as an excellent context for learners as they strive to comprehend informational text. The authors cite notable research connecting nonfiction sources to general literacy skills, especially in the primary grades.

In the first article, “Authenticating *Number the Stars* Using Nonfiction Resources,” Robin Groce provides a format for combining the genres of historical fiction and nonfiction to strengthen the research process. She describes how teachers can authenticate the popular novel, set in Denmark during World War II, with complementary nonfiction sources.

The second article, “Beyond Heroes and Role Models: Using Biographies to Develop Young Change Agents,” is by Laura E. Meyers, Teri Holbrook, and Laura A. May. This trio encourages readers to tell “the whole story” when using biographies in the classroom. They suggest children can make a more meaningful connection when they learn about all aspects of a historical figure’s life, including his or her reliance on other civic leaders, supporters, and predecessors.

This issue’s pullout features a hot topic among the younger set: historical pirates. In “Pirates in Historical Fiction and Nonfiction: A Twin-Text Unit of Study”, Elizabeth Frye, Woodrow Trathen, and Kelley Wilson share their literature-based interdisciplinary unit on buccaneers that features strong

connections to economics, history, and geography. Having been in Mrs. Wilson’s classroom many times, I am excited that she has shared ideas with us from her fourth grade class.

In their article, “Service-Learning and Nonfiction Texts,” Janet Lear and Marjori Krebs ask readers to consider using nonfiction texts with direct connections to service learning in order to increase student motivation about a topic. Several literature selections are detailed using this process, and the article includes suggestions for possible service projects.

In “Pairing Folktales With Textbooks and Nonfiction in Teaching About Culture,” David C. Virtue and Kenneth E. Vogler explain a process of combining rich folk literature with informational texts to promote a deeper understanding of culture as well as a balanced literacy approach within the classroom.

The Children’s Literature section features two articles that review a number of nonfiction texts. In “A Closer Look: The Representation of Slavery in the *Dear America* Series,” T. Lee Williams reviews several books within the popular series on the basis of their historical accuracy concerning slavery in America. She cautions teachers and librarians to emphasize to readers that the books are indeed works of fiction and present only a singular perspective. Teachers should use the books in conjunction with nonfiction resources to portray a fuller picture of this period in our nation’s history.

The last article, “Happy Birthday, Mr. President! New Books for Abraham Lincoln’s Bicentennial,” reviews new books about our sixteenth president. Terrell A. Young, Barbara A. Ward, and Deanna Day describe and evaluate fifteen books of varying lengths, topics, reading levels, and artistic presentations. Through these books, the stories of Honest Abe’s life (from his childhood to the day of his assassination) should be accessible for all learners. 📖

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