



A Closer Look at Textbooks

In the debate over textbook content, the two major points of contention always seem to be the teaching of evolution, and American history overall. Students are schooled to believe that evolution is a fact, not a theory, and that America is a democracy, when it is in fact a Constitutional Republic, and that the Constitution is a living document that evolves over time.

Perhaps most disturbing is the absolute rewriting of history and blatant falsities that are being presented to the influential young minds in some textbooks, including concepts like “FDR saved America from depression” and “Woodrow Wilson was a progressive hero.”



In light of the recent controversy surrounding the Texas Board of Education, and what may be an improvement on the information taught to America’s youth, I suddenly became curious about the “facts” found in the textbooks in my own state of residence: Florida.

On evolution, *Florida’s Holt Science and Technology* textbook for eighth graders indicates: “Scientists observe that species have changed over time. They also observe that the inherited characteristics in populations change over time. Scientists think that as populations change over time, new species form. Thus, newer species descend from older species. The process in which populations gradually change over time is called evolution.” When discussing the evidence for evolution, the textbook refers to fossils and fossil records, case studies of whales, and DNA. Of course, there is an entire section dedicated to the greatness that was Charles Darwin, and much of the speculative language disappears. However, the textbook does refer to Darwin’s hypothesis on natural selection as a theory.

The problem with the *Holt Science* textbook, however, is that even though it was copyrighted as recently as 2006, there is no mention of the alternative discoveries that dispute the theory of evolution. In 2001, the Discovery Institute launched a list of hundreds of scientists who dissent from Darwin’s Theory of Evolution. According to the Institute, “During recent decades, new scientific evidence from many scientific disciplines such as cosmology, physics, biology, “artificial intelligence” research, and others have caused scientists to begin questioning Darwinism’s central tenet of natural selection and studying the evidence supporting it in greater detail.” The letter of dissent states, “We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged.”

Of the reasons for the dissent, the Center for Science and Culture indicated that Darwin’s theory of “microevolution,” changes within existing species, is uncontroversial and supported by a plethora of evidence, but that his theory of “macroevolution,” large-scale changes over geological time, was “controversial right from the start.” The Center states, “In the first few decades of the twentieth century, skepticism over this aspect of evolution was so strong that Darwin’s theory went into eclipse.”



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Dissenting scientists argue that the genetic mutations necessary to account for the theory of “macroevolution” would produce mostly harmful effects, not positive effects like the development of the human eye.

Now, I do not pretend to thoroughly comprehend evolutionary theory, but one thing seems certain. Evidence uncovered after Darwin’s death has created a divide between scientists who do and do not subscribe to the theory of macroevolution, and that it is certainly worth mentioning in the Science textbooks. According to the Center for Science and Culture, “Since the controversy over microevolution and macroevolution is at the heart of Darwin’s theory, and since evolutionary theory is so influential in modern biology, it is a disservice to students for biology curricula to ignore the controversy entirely ... it is inaccurate to give students the impression that the controversy has been resolved and that all scientists have reached a consensus on the issue”.

It seems fair to say, unfortunately, that political correctness plays too much of a role in the content of school textbooks. In fact, according to a Rasmussen poll, 55 percent of parents believe that to be the case. If a science textbook even suggests that Darwin’s theory of evolution may be false, the writers are charged with supporting creationism. To avoid that clash, they simply leave out contradictory data.

In the same Rasmussen poll, a mere 31 percent of parents believed history textbooks portray American History accurately. On Glenn Beck’s May 25 episode, he furiously discussed how history is being rewritten to be politically correct. He pointed to a Virginia State McDonald Publishing History textbook that discussed the Declaration of Independence and said, “The declaration expanded these ideas that all men are created equal and they are endowed ... with certain unalienable rights.” The words “by their Creator” were removed and replaced by ellipses.

Fortunately, *Florida’s McDougal Littell Creating America* eight grade textbook does not attempt to remove God’s role from the founding of American independence from British rule.

Where the textbook falls short, unfortunately, is in the discussion of FDR’s presidency. The book accurately asserts that “the New Deal did not end the Depression” and even states that the New Deal did forever change the U.S. government. However, in the half-page mention of the Japanese internment camps, little focus is given to the overall and blatant injustice of the internment program. The program is summed up as follows:

In the days and weeks after Pearl Harbor, several newspapers declared Japanese Americans to be a security threat. President Roosevelt eventually responded to the growing anti-Japanese hysteria. In February 1942, he signed an order that allowed for the removal of Japanese and Japanese Americans from the Pacific Coast. This action came to be known as the Japanese-American internment. More than 110,000 men, women, and children were rounded up. They had to sell their homes and possessions and leave their jobs. These citizens were placed in internment camps, areas where they were kept under guard. In these camps, families lived in single rooms with little privacy. About two-thirds of the people interned were Nisei, Japanese Americans born in the United States.

And that’s it. There is no mention of what happened to the Japanese after the war, no real focus of what life was like in these internment camps, and no discussion of how most of these citizens did not have their properties restored to them upon their release.

Likewise, the textbook does not mention the other prejudiced practices under FDR, including the imposition of restrictions on Italian and Germans living in the United States. According to the German



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American Internee Coalition, FDR “interned at least 11,000 persons of German ancestry” even though the law stated only “enemy aliens” could be interned. Under FDR, the Department of Justice (DOJ) “instituted very limited due process protections for those arrested.” Also under FDR, “pursuant to the Alien Enemies Act, DOJ created a network of prohibited zones and restricted areas. Enemy aliens were forbidden to enter or remain in certain areas and their movements severely restricted in others.... Pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 9066, the military could restrict the liberties of citizens and aliens, as it deemed necessary.”

Yet none of that information appears in the *McDougal Littell* textbook. Nor does the textbook discuss FDR’s creation of the Office of War Information, which virtually regulated all information in print, inhibiting freedom of press and speech.

The issue with leaving out such pertinent information is that it lulls American students into a false sense of security about their government. To know history is to avoid repeating it. People who accuse governments’ critics of being “conspiracy theorists” are unaware that much of what people say could “never happen in America” already has.

For these reasons, and many more, it is certainly no wonder the Texas Board of Education felt compelled to investigate the content of the textbooks. It should even prompt other states to take similar actions of scrutinizing textbooks to examine what is being left out or glossed over.



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