Common Core, Informational Texts, and the Historical (Mis)Representations of Native Americans within Trade Books

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Abstract
State and national initiatives have repositioned elementary teachers' emphases. These mandates increase the frequency with which teachers utilize informational texts and students' exposure to diverse perspectives of the same event or era. In short, history and social studies content will likely have a more prominent position within the incorporated literature in English/reading class. Teachers will intentionally supplement age-appropriate, engaging tradebooks with relevant, interrelated informational texts, like primary source material. To guide interested elementary teachers, we focused on tradebooks that centered on Native Americans, an oft-included topic in elementary curricula. We evaluated the tradebooks for their historical representation (and misrepresentation), located germane primary source material, and proffered discipline-specific activities.

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Common Core prescribes intensive readings of informational texts within both English/language arts curricula and history/social studies at the elementary level (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). For purposes of simplicity and clarity, the term Native Americans will be used when referencing the general populations. When appropriate, specific names of tribes will be employed. With regards to Columbus, initial European contact with Native Americans, and the Columbian Exchange, researchers have conducted six different content analyses (Bigelow, 1998a; Bigelow, 1998b; Field & Singer, 2006; Henning et al., 2006; Peterson, 1998). Since the Common Core definition of "informational text" includes pretty much everything The Times publishes, from articles, essays and opinion piece to "diverse media and multimedia" such as photographs, infographics and video, reading the paper can prepare your students for their futures in myriad ways. Before Reading. Preview Text Types and Text Features: Make sure students know what kind of text they're about to read, what to expect from it, and how to use additional information, such as hyperlinked sources or appended graphics, to learn more. For instance, how is an Op-Ed or editorial different from a hard news article? And in Beyond the Book Report, we new suggest ways for students to respond to literature using New York Times models. What are we missing?