

Second Version TEKS review

A. Introductory Remarks

Although there has definitely been some strong improvements in the second version of the Social Studies TEKS in regard to including the influence of the Bible and the Christian faith in the settlement and founding of our country, there are still significant omissions which must be redressed in order to present a truthful picture of colonial America. I address these specifically below.

B. Edits for Elementary Social Studies Grades Kindergarten – Grade 5

Kindergarten, (a) Introduction (1): It seems inappropriate to pose as a goal for our students that we are trying to “establish the foundation for responsible citizenship in a global society.” While acknowledging that modern communications and the modern interconnectedness of many of the world’s economies has knit the global community much closer than in the past, we should emphasize the uniqueness of American culture, and properly prepare our children for American citizenship. Also, the word “self” should be stricken from the sentence, since “self” is not a developmentally appropriate subject of study for a kindergartner.

Kindergarten, (1) History (A): Independence Day should not be removed here, because the children need to know the reasons for its celebration more than any other patriotic holiday we have. In (B) the point is to *identify customs* associated with these holidays, so it is *not* redundant to again list Independence Day.

Grade 1 (a) Introduction: Same objection as in Kindergarten, (a) Introduction (1).

Grade 1, (2) History, (B): Add to the list of inventors Pedro Flores (invented the yo-yo); Ellen Ochoa (invented optical analysis systems and is an astronaut for NASA); and Lewis Latimer (invented the carbon filament component of the light bulb, working in Thomas Edison’s laboratory).

Grade 2, (4) History, (B): Add to the list of inventors Elijah McCoy (invented an oil-dripping cup for trains. Knockoffs of his cup proved to be inferior products, giving rise to the expression “the real McCoy”).

Grade 3, (1) History, (C): The phrase Founding Fathers needs to be capitalized to avoid confusion about who this refers to.

Grade 3, (10) Government. Section (C) needs to be added here: Identify the United States as a republic, and explain the difference between that and a democracy.

Grade 4, (19) Citizenship. Even though the phrase “democratic society” is meant as an adjective here, it would be preferable to say: “The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a society with a republican form of government.”

Grade 5, Introduction. Same phrase as in the above Grade 4, (19) Citizenship, needs to occur here.

Grade 5, (2) History. This section needs an additional subsection (A): “Describe way in which the First Great Awakening unified the colonies, and its impact on the movement for independence.”

The Great Awakening forged a commonality among the colonies, and helped to create a national identity among the colonists as Americans. The leveling effect of the Gospel preaching – that every individual, no matter what his or her station might be in society, had equal value in God’s sight – created a revulsion against the superior attitudes of British aristocracy and a revolt against British tyranny.

Grade 5, (3) History. (B): In addition to Madison and Sherman other men who had a hand in shaping the Constitution need to become familiar to the students: James Wilson, George Mason, Luther Martin, Charles Pinckney, George Mason, Elbridge Gerry, Edmund Randolph, etc. An indelible impression was made upon me in Grade 8 when my Social Studies teacher assigned two Constitutional Convention delegates to each of us, and then we role-played the formation of the U.S. Constitution. A brilliant way to teach it that I have never forgotten.

Grade 4, (4) History. This section needs an added subsection (A): “Describe the social impact on American society of the Second Great Awakening.” The point here is that every reform movement in the 19th century (for example: prison reform, the first ministries to the deaf and the blind, the temperance movement, the anti-slavery movement, and the women’s movement) was founded by Christian believers, who had come to faith during this lasting and sweeping religious revival.

Grade 5, (1) History. (B): While Anne Hutchinson is a favorite of modern feminists, she simply is not sufficiently “significant” to deserve inclusion with William Bradford, John Smith, William Penn, and Roger Williams. She should be omitted from this listing.

Grade 5, (5) History. (C): The inclusion of more names in this subsection satisfies my objection to the earlier version that paired Cesar Chavez with Ben Franklin. This list is much more acceptable.

Grade 5, (19) Citizenship. Instead of having the introductory sentence read: “. . . the importance of effective leadership in a democratic republic,” it would be far less confusing to delete the word “democratic.” So it would read: “leadership in a republic.”

Grade 8, (1) History. (C): A serious omission here in this list of dates is 1628-30 – the arrival of the Puritans in Massachusetts, and the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Grade 8, (2) History. (B): The sentence should read: “Compare political, economic, religious, and social reasons for establishment of the 13 colonies.” Again, omitting the religious motivations for the settlement of the Pilgrims and Puritans in New England, William Penn’s Quakers in Pennsylvania, the Moravians in the Carolinas, and others, renders accurate teaching of American history impossible.

Grade 8, (3) History. (C): An easy way to respond to the comments about this SE being redundant compared to 8.3A is to modify 8.3A to read: “Explain the reasons, including the religious ones,

for the growth of representative government and institutions during the colonial period.”

Grade 8, (4) History. (A): Here again, in the beginning of this section a new subsection needs to be added which reads: “Describe way in which the First Great Awakening unified the colonies, and its impact as one of the causes of the American Revolution.”

Grade 8, (4) History. (B): To this list of individuals I would like to add Mercy Otis Warren, a close friend of Abigail Adams, the sister of Patriot orator James Otis, in her own right a strong Patriot leader in Massachusetts, and one of the first historians of the American Revolution.

Grade 8, (7) History. (D): There is a glaring omission in this list of those who played important roles in the Congressional conflicts prior to the Civil War: John Quincy Adams. The solitary struggle of this former President against the slavocracy Representatives of the House is one of America’s greatest stories of heroism and courage.

Grade 8, (25) Culture: I suggest that there should be a new subsection at the head of this section: (A): “understand the religious motivations for the reform movements and the creation of benevolent societies in the first half of the 19th century, including the belief that all people are created in the image of God, and therefore have equal worth and dignity.”

Grade 8, (25) Culture. (B): To this list of reform movements should be added “ministry to the deaf and blind.”

World History Studies

(1) History. (E): I find the wording confusing and misleading here. It is not clear whether “the Renaissance and its impact on the arts, government and intellectual thought” is one separate turning point, to be followed by the Reformation; the decline of the Roman Catholic Church, etc. as other turning points, or what. It needs to be re-written, using semi-colons to separate the “important turning points.”

(4) History. (D): A new subsection needs to be added here, right after (C): “Describe the political, economic, social, and religious impact of Islamic conquests of, among other places, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and the Iberian Peninsula.” This is an important development in world history, and needs to be included in order to make proper sense of the Crusades.

(18) Government. (B): A regrettable omission here is “democracy,” which needs to be added so that the distinction can be clearly made between it and “republic” – an important distinction unfortunately lost on most Americans these days.

(19) Government. (A). There is no mention of the huge influence of the Puritan Reformation teachings on civil government on the “process by which democratic-republican government evolved.” This would be a good place to insert it. Instead of the phrase “through developments in England” I would recommend saying: through English Puritan teaching on civil government, and continuing with the Enlightenment;” etc.

United States Government

(1) History. (A) I would recommend editing this by adding at the end of the sentence: “and how these ideas effected the formation of the U.S. Constitution.”

(1) History. (B): I want to repeat and underscore Daniel Driesbach’s remarks on this subsection, because I most emphatically agree with him when he says that it is imperative that both the Bible and William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Law* be added to the list of sources that created the important documents of the Founding period. In his revealing article in the *American Political Science Review* #78 (March, 1984), Donald S. Lutz reported that the Bible was the authority most often quoted by the Founding Fathers during the formation of American government – slightly more than one third of the time. Specifically, the Biblical book of Deuteronomy was “cited almost twice as often as all of John Locke’s writings put together,” according to Lutz. (Donald S. Lutz, “The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought,” *American Political Science Review* #78, March, 1984). Sir William Blackstone was the single most cited theorist in American political writing from the 1790s to the early 1800s. And between 1760 and 1805 only Baron Montesquieu of France was cited more frequently. In court cases between 1789 and 1828, Blackstone’s Commentaries were cited 6.6% of the time, “more frequently than any other text” (Dennis R. Nolan, “Sir William Blackstone and the New American Republic: A Study of Intellectual Impact,” *New York University Law Review* #51, November, 1976, 753).

(7) Government. (F): The mention of “beliefs and principles” here gives no examples, which is a serious omission. I would suggest that it be rewritten to say: “Explain how American society is impacted by these beliefs and principles reflected in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution: the belief that “all men are created equal;” the principle that government is only legitimate when it has “the consent of the governed;” the belief that there is a fixed moral law derived from God and nature; and the principle that government exists primarily to protect the God-given inalienable rights of every individual.

(15) Citizenship. I recommend editing this sentence by taking out the word “democratic” and simply have it read “in U.S. society.” The problem here is that it tends to perpetuate the widespread misunderstanding that the U.S. is a democracy, whereas it is a republic.

United States History Studies Since Reconstruction

(3) History. (A). The word “expansionism” should be retained, instead of using the word “imperialism.” Rationale: Imperialism is a pejorative term, especially when used as an adjective: imperialistic. As commonly used by historians, the word imperialism reflects a certain political bias, whereas “expansionism” is a more neutral term, and more accurately reflects America’s overseas dealings. The European nations were truly imperialistic in their dealings with African, Latin American, and Asian countries – militarily conquering large areas and folding them into their empires. In comparison to the conquer-and-hold practices of the Europeans, our beyond-the-borders adventures have been relatively minor. We returned to Mexico over half of the territory taken during the Mexican/American war, drawing the border only where we had claimed it to be before the war –

the Rio Grande River. Off the continent we have taken only Hawaii into the Union. The Philippines were first a U.S. territory, then a commonwealth, and then given their independence in 1946. Puerto Rico is a self-governing commonwealth, as is the Northern Marianas. Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands are territories.

(3) History. (B). Same as above – retain the word “expansionism.”

(3) History. (D). This should be left in.

Rationale: This is the only mention of the American involvement in the battles of World War I and the contributions of individuals. John J. Pershing should be included, but also Sergeant York and and flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker.

(6) History. (D). According to comment [A47]Admiral Nimitz was supposed to be added here, but his name does not appear.

(7) History. (B). I emphatically agree with Comment [A54], which calls for the students to learn about the Verona Papers, which confirm as truth many of Senator McCarthy’s accusations about Soviet spying in the U.S.

(8) History. (C). The list of “significant leaders and political activist organizations of the Civil Rights movement” (capitals should be used here) seems to be rather unbalanced toward a leftist political persuasion. If SNCC and AIM are going to be included, where is the NAACP?

(10) History. (B). I would like to edit this SE to read: Identify significant conservative advocacy organizations and individuals, such as Newt Gingrich, Jim Dobson (Focus on the Family), Phyllis Schlafly (Eagle Forum), Rush Limbaugh, the Moral Majority, and the National Rifle Association.

I personally do not have a problem with adding an SE that would include liberal organizations such as Planned Parenthood, Move On.org, and the Sierra Club, **provided** the students are made aware of Planned Parenthood’s funding of abortion clinics.

(15) Economics. (D). I would like to edit this SE to read: Compare Herbert Hoover’s and Franklin Roosevelt’s approaches to resolving the economic effects of the Great Depression and evaluate the effectiveness of New Deal measures in ending it.

(22) Citizenship. (B). I think the objective of this SE is confused. What exactly is a “social leader?” (Someone who organizes the Christmas office party?) I agree with Comment [A111] in that the determining factor in selecting people seems to have been the desire to express diversity rather than accomplishments. The people listed were leaders, but I wouldn’t call any of them “significant *political and social* leaders.” First let’s decide what *types* of leaders we want the student to learn about, and then pick some new examples.

(23) Culture. (A). The use of the word genre here is inappropriate. Genre means “a class or category of artistic endeavor having a particular form, content, or technique” (source: online dictionary). I think that “era” was the appropriate word, given that the object here seems to be to deal with works of art, music, and literature from different periods of U.S. history.

(23) Culture. (B). All of the examples listed are modern. We need earlier examples, such as the Federal Period in architecture and furniture, the Hudson River School of painting, the Romantic Movement in literature, etc.

Both (23) and (24) are weak. They need focus and clarity.

(24) Culture. (D). This list of women needs some additions from earlier periods, such as Dorothea Dix, the Grimké sisters, Emma Willard, Lydia Maria Child, Mercy Otis Warren, and Ida Tarbell. There are also some female entrepreneurs worthy of inclusion, such as Mary Fields (Mrs. Field's cookies), Elizabeth Arden (cosmetics), Madame C.J. Walker (African-American hair products) and Martha Stewart. In fact, it might be worthwhile to separate this into two SEs, one for the political and social contributions of women to American society, and an additional SE requiring the student to: "Identify the contributions of women entrepreneurs to American society."

Sociology

If it is optional to drop the sociology half-credit course as an elective for High School students I would recommend doing so. Due to the high probability that a sociology course would not be terribly popular with high-school level students (sociology courses are not usually oversubscribed by college students) it seems to me to be a less than appropriate use of educational resources.

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