Teacher Perspectives on Non-Western History and Student Knowledge

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This master’s research project is dedicated to my parents, John and Jacqueline Spinnati, for instilling in me the confidence to strive for my dreams, and to my great-aunt, the late Diana Spinnati for her love and support.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

History has long been taught as an integral part of the social studies discipline. Traditionally, history courses in the United States of America have been subdivided into two categories, United States history, and World History (Andrews, 2009; Voeltz, 2010). Western-centered World history and U.S. history have gained prominence and importance while non-Western history has been relegated to the “backburner”. Non-Western history has struggled to gain prominence in an educational setting resulting in poor pedagogy, lack of teacher training, and lack of student knowledge. Many public schools include non-Western history as part of their World History courses, taught from a Euro-centric/Western perspective, while U.S. history is offered as part of the regular curriculum. Many public schools offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses in European History, U.S. History, and/or World History, but there is no Non-Western History course offered. This is due, in part, to a lack of understanding as to what non-Western history is and what non-Western historians do.

Non-Western historians study all history that does not look at history through the lens of Western Europeans and Americans. This lens (perspective) is deemed to be a pro-Western one in which all other continents, countries, cultures, and peoples are relegated to secondary status. As such, non-Western civilizations are deemed to be acted upon and have no history besides those which entail their interactions with the West. This view of history, also known as “history written by the conquerors”, has been the main focal point of the history centered social studies curriculum in most public schools. Non-Western teachers and historians examine how these
interactions were viewed by the people of Africa, Asia, and South America. This view of history seeks to throw off the veil of European and U.S. history in which native peoples are deemed to be “barbarians”.

Recently, non-Western history has been gaining recognition as an integral part of the curriculum at the K-12 and university level. First, many social studies educators have a limited knowledge of non-Western history as a field of study. Non-Western history does not receive the attention garnished by pro-Western World history and U.S. history. This has resulted in a lack of teacher training in this area. Many prospective social studies educators are required to take more European and U.S. history courses than non-Western history courses. This lack of preparation has led to many teachers being ill-prepared and ill-motivated to teach non-Western content.

Second, this lack of preparation has a negative impact on their perspectives on non-Western history as a discipline and as part of curriculum. If teachers do not understand non-Western history, they may not understand the rationale for teaching this subject. Not surprisingly, if a teacher does not deem teaching non-Western history a worthwhile endeavor then he or she will make little to no effort to incorporate non-Western history into his or her lessons. This lack of impetus to include non-Western history has led to a lack of student knowledge of non-Western history.

Statement of Problem

In recent years, the study of world history has begun to shift in perspective. Non-Western history has gained more prominence in the K-12 and university level. Many social studies educators have been prepared by an education system centered on a pro-Western perspective. As a result, their perspectives on non-Western history are greatly distorted which has led to
teachers’ lack of content knowledge. This lack of knowledge and distorted perspective have led to lackluster instruction and limited learning opportunities for students in the classroom.

Research Questions

1. What are social studies teachers’ perceptions of non-Western history?
2. What backgrounds do social studies teachers have in non-Western history?
3. How do social studies teachers’ perspectives on non-Western history impact their instruction of non-Western material?
4. How do social studies teachers’ perspectives on non-Western history impact their students’ knowledge of non-Western history?

Purpose and Significance of Study

While many studies have noted the need for a social studies curriculum centered on globalization and multiculturalism, little research has been conducted to assess social studies teachers’ perspectives on non-Western history (Arias et al, 1998; Dunn, 2008; Jones, 1968; Merryfield, 1998; Rapoport, 2009; Zevin, 1993). An examination of teachers’ perspectives on non-Western history, as well as their educational backgrounds in non-Western history, and of student knowledge of non-Western history will offer insight into the present state of non-Western history instruction.

Limitations

This study was limited to social studies teachers and students at one middle school, grades 6-8, in Southeast Ohio. This middle school serves a rural population which covers the entire county. Nearly every educator and student at this school was white. Consequently, the findings of this study are all limited to this case.
The articles gathered and analyzed in the literature review for this study were only utilized if they were available through the OhioLink Network or Alden Library at Ohio University.

**Methodology**

The literature review for this study was composed utilizing resources found through the OhioLink Network and Alden Library at Ohio University. The EBSCO search engine was used to locate articles. Key terms searched were “world history”, “non-Western history”, “teacher perspectives”, “instructional methods”, “social studies”, and “student knowledge”. These terms were then combined to narrow and refine the results to obtain relevant articles. Articles were limited to the last twenty years unless they provided historical context for this study.

The participants in this study were identified and approached based upon their employment as a social studies teachers in a middle school setting and their enrollment in a 6th, 7th, or 8th grade social studies course. Social studies teachers were interviewed to assess their background in, perspectives on, and instructional methods of non-Western history. Students enrolled in these teachers’ social studies courses were then given an instrument to assess their knowledge of non-Western history. Students from each class were then chosen to be interviewed based upon their assessment scores. Students were asked to what degree to which their teachers had contributed to their knowledge of non-Western history.

**Organization of Study**

Chapter One of this Master’s Research Project defined non-Western history and its place in the study of world history. The purpose of the study, research questions, and statement of the problem were presented. The research question and a brief summary of the methodology used to collect the data were presented.
Chapter Two of this Master’s Research Project presents a review of the literature.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology of the study includes information on the instrumentation, participants, and procedures.

Chapter Four presents the findings section. It includes the results of the teacher interviews, student interviews, and student assessment.

Chapter Five presents the conclusions and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

In the last century policy makers and educators have made efforts to change how world history is taught and what is included in world history curriculum in the K-12 and university settings. These efforts to change the world history curriculum have largely dealt with what should be taught, especially with respect to non-Western cultures and history (Zevin, 1993). Some contend that non-Western cultures should take a secondary role to Western cultures. Others believe that the world history curriculum should be strengthened by focusing on both the non-West and the West. These beliefs have evolved into debates waged over whether a Eurocentric world history or a global world history should be taught in schools today (Dunn, 2008).

World history began in the nineteenth century as general history courses grounded in ancient history and classical studies meant to emphasize civics and democratic ideals (Marino, 2011). This iteration evolved into the Western civilization course in the aftermath of World War I during the 1920s and was a direct result of the U.S. government’s insistence that “its soldiers have a basic understanding of the cultural values and background of European civilization so that they would know what they were fighting for” (Voeltz, 2010, p. 84). This movement was a conscious effort to prepare children and young adults to become better citizens and to take part in the democratic process. As the Western civilization course grew and became widespread, the ideas and periods associated with Western civilization were applied to the rest of the world despite the fact that non-Western history does not conform to it (Jones, 1968). This made the teaching and learning of the non-Western world a tedious process.
Over the next forty years this so-called “world” history course changed. During the 1950s, curriculum was designed with United States history and Western civilization as the backbone of General Education requirements (Andrews, 2009). In light of global interconnectedness after World War II, the teaching of world history took on new relevance (Tarbox, 1973). No longer was distance measured in miles (Wasi, 1973) but rather the United States of America with its place as a world power had to be able to relate to nations around the world because “we must know one another or die” (Wasi, 1973, p. 100). W.R. Jones (1968) noted that a history teacher was “admonished to pay heed to the world beyond Europe and to counterbalance his discussion of European and American affairs with descriptions of China, India, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa” (p. 328). This sentiment came at a time when the history course was widening to include many subfields such as social history, women’s history, and world history (Sipress & Voelker, 2011).

In 1982, teachers and historians founded the World History Association firmly establishing world history as a field of study (Arias, Hitchens, & Roupp, 1998). Since its foundation, historians and teachers alike have made the effort to move the field towards a multicultural perspective. This effort is in response to globalization (Merryfield & Kasai, 2004). This new world history broke away from the Eurocentric view of its earlier iterations. The new world history of the 1980s and 1990s dismissed Western culture as its cornerstone moving away from Western civilization and absorbing the ideas that represent a greater understanding of the world (Dawson, 2003; Marino, 2011).

As referred to above, there is a debate among historians and teachers concerning what should be taught in schools and universities in the United States of America. Currently, there are
two models of teaching world history in use in America: the Western civilization model and the global education model.

The Western civilization model is characterized by its use of Western ideas, events, and peoples to shape the history of the world. This model starts with the idea that America’s origins go back through Western Europe, Rome, and Greece (Dunn, 2008). Advocates of this model typically associate its purpose with creating cultural literacy and developing exemplary members of the democratic community. Teachers in this model believe that world history education should establish a national consensus about the past (Dunn, 2008). The aim of these teachers is to argue that history in schools should transfer Western political, intellectual, and cultural ideals in order to strengthen each generation’s loyalty to the United States, democracy, and capitalism (Dunn, 2008). As such, textbooks should be geared towards the teaching of democratic values (Romanowski, 1996).

These historians and teachers worry that a non-Western, negative focus, on history will negatively affect U.S. citizens’ views of the United States and the rest of the West (Merryfield & Kasai, 2004; Vail, 2004). This worry is typical among historians who believe the use of non-Western perspectives undermines patriotism (Rapoport, 2009). This portrayal, they argue, has led to disengagement on the part of students from our political system (Vail, 2004). Many agree that the aim of schooling is to encourage and promote participation in mainstream United States culture (Lemlech, 2002) and to provide “mainstream interpretations of history and American values” (Leming, 1992, p. 293).

The global education model is based on the premise that world history should investigate the planet as whole, which includes non-Western cultures and histories, rather than the narrow perspective of the Western civilization model (Dunn, 2008). This inclusion stems from the
criticism of world history by multiculturalists. These multiculturalists insist the excessively Eurocentric curriculum be altered to include the histories of the ancestors of African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Native-Americans (Dunn, 2008). Multiculturalists believe that, by limiting the curriculum to European-American views, “many children have grave difficulties in classrooms” (Lemlech, 2002, p. 36). Presenting only the mainstream perspective means that students fail to learn about their own culture and those of other peoples (Lemlech, 2002).

These historians and teachers, in favor of a global world history, believe that the “primary goal of global education is to prepare students to be effective and responsible citizens in a global society” (Merryfield & Kasai, 2004, p. 355). Proponents also argue that students will benefit from knowledge of the interconnectedness of cultures, economies, political ties, and technologies from regions around the world (Merryfield, 1998). The studies of an interconnected world should give students a better understanding of sharing the planet with people from the rest of the world (Zevin, 1993).

Teacher Preparation

While the body of literature suggests that many teachers are ill-equipped to teach world history, there is a lack of studies focusing on 7-12 grade teachers’ preparation in non-Western history. The limited literature suggests that most teachers in K-12 public school systems do not have an adequate background in non-Western history. Most world history in secondary and post-secondary programs has a narrow focus of the subject (Arias et al., 1998). Teachers are only exposed to a pro-Western approach to world history in their given programs of study. Most universities require world civilization or Western civilization but not both (Voeltz, 2010). In fact, many colleges and universities have reduced world history to one semester or simply do not
teach it (Betterly, 2000). This has led to the problem of social studies teachers having a significant background in European and United States history while having little to no knowledge of the non-Western world (Singer, 2006).

Many studies have noted a lack of content knowledge by history teachers (Brown, Osunde, & Tlou, 1996; Singer, 2006; Yilmaz, 2009; Zevin, 1993). Robert Bain (2010) has noted that history teachers must have knowledge of their subject matter to effectively teach history. There is little consensus over what knowledge teachers need to aid students in learning history of the world and where teachers should go to acquire this knowledge (Harris & Bain, 2011). Typically content knowledge for teaching is associated with the content knowledge gained through university majors and minors (Harris & Bain, 2011). There is a hotly debated issues today among historians and teachers about two different approaches to world history: whether it should be global or pro-Western (Dunn, 2008). Most of this content knowledge is taught in a manner that focuses on a Western perspective which renders other peoples and nations as less important and less intelligent than those from Europe (Zevin, 1993).

One study that notes this lack of knowledge and preparation found that out of a sample of 100 pre-service social studies teachers, the majority displayed a lack of basic knowledge about Africa (Brown, et al., 1996). Brown, et al. found that many of the respondents frequently used of words such as “tribes”, “primitive”, “cannibals”, and “savages” when referring to people and events in Africa. Further, Africa was found to be the least understood region of the non-Western world. Brown et al. assert that this lack of knowledge and skewed view comes from a background in Eurocentric education. According to one teacher interviewed in the study when teaching a unit on Africa, he “buzzes” through it because he is not knowledgeable. While others
acknowledge that they simply skip Africa as a whole or only teach stereotypical material (Brown et al., 1996).

Another study which notes a lack of teacher preparation in non-Western history found that much of the literature used to teach about Latin America is highly Eurocentric. Typically, the conquest and colonization of Latin America deal largely with European history and place the history of the native peoples in a secondary role (Besse, 2004). Besse notes that students have many pages devoted to European motives and technological advances but very little information pertaining to Native American societies unless this information portrays those societies in a negative manner. Further, Besse argues that Latin American history is relevant in the United States where the Hispanic population has surpassed the African American population.

The literature is rich on how to address teacher preparation in world history. Part of this stems from the recognition that many social studies lack a significant degree of non-Western history content knowledge. This recognition has been further compounded by the fact that world history is the fastest growing course in social studies (Harris & Bain, 2011). In addition, the rapid development of an advanced placement (AP) program in world history has added to this growing problem (Voeltz, 2010). These two factors along with the addition of world history courses as part of general education requirements and as part of the requirements for history majors have shed light on the lack of teacher preparation in world history (Voeltz, 2010).

In order to correct this significant lack of world history content knowledge, there must be a recognition of “the critical need to increase and improve our efforts in world history teacher education for preservice and inservice teachers” (Bain, 2010, p. 34). Bain explains that the first step in correcting the problem is to increase course work in world history. This, Bain argues, would give teachers a deeper knowledge of world history which would make a difference since
teachers cannot teach what they do not know. However, he further states that this increase in content knowledge is not sufficient in and of itself. Many teachers find that they are unable to fit pieces together in a coherent manner to drive inquiry because, often, world history is viewed as a fragmented study with little to no attention paid to interconnections except to draw attention to differences among groups. This leads to a call for teachers of history courses to move beyond the teaching of mere facts and the ways in which historians’ make sense of and represent their content knowledge to others (Bain, 2010).

Teacher education programs must move beyond outdated textbooks filled with skewed facts about non-Western peoples and stereotypical representations of non-Western peoples. In the case of Africa, classes must move away from sources that portray the views of colonizing Europeans and toward sources written by African scholars (Brown et al., 1996). This will provide teachers with a view and understanding of Africa that is not marred by European (Western) influences. These programs must also examine the diverse cultures, histories, and literature of the non-Western world. In the case of Africa, Brown at al. (1996) believe that these steps will help debunk existing stereotypes and misconceptions.

Advocating for the implementation of global education in programs, Merryfield (1998) described efforts in teacher preparation. According to Merryfield, there are four areas in which teachers need preparation: making connections across cultures, world regions, and civilizations and across global issues instead of teaching them; identifying historical antecedents to current world issues, events and problems, and identifying the processes of cultural diffusion and borrowing over time; linking global content to the local community; and teaching tolerance and appreciation of cultural differences (p. 345). Adequate preparation in each of these areas creates
effective global educators. These educators can effectively create links between students’ lives and those of people in the non-Western world.

Teacher Perspectives

A large body of research examines teachers’ perspectives on history (Trumbull, 1987). Teacher perspectives can be defined as a socially defined evaluation of experiences which serves as a basis for future actions (Yilmaz, 2008). These perspectives are sets of interrelated beliefs, conceptions, and perceptions (Yılmaz, 2008). Teacher perspectives are influenced by a variety of factors. These factors include their experiences, knowledge, cultural diversity, and critical thought (Merryfield & Kasai, 2004).

These perspectives on history can and often do vary from teacher to teacher (Evans, 1990). These perspectives are important. Teacher perspectives guide curricular decisions within the larger context of schooling and standards (Evans, 1990). What teachers believe, in relevance to social studies, is what is most assessed and most valued (Winstead, 2011). This means that if teachers do not deem a subject, such as non-Western history, valuable it will neither be assessed nor have value placed on it in their classrooms.

Teachers have a considerable amount of power over what is taught in their classrooms. Teachers’ perspectives are identified as the most important factors in their decision-making process (Merryfield, 1998). This autonomy allows teachers to gloss over or skip entirely events and facts which they do not perceive as necessary or valuable. While there are standards which must be covered, teachers have control over the day-to-day aspects of curriculum and instruction (Thornton, 1994). Thornton (1994) asserts that “decisions concerning planning, instructional strategy, assessment of student learning, and so forth are the key determinants of what students
take away from the classroom” (p. 5). This means that standards which do not take into account teacher perspectives will not be effective (Heilman, 2001).

The materials being used to teach world history need to be examined. World history textbooks often include a majority of content in European history and a dependence on a “Western” conception of time (Lemlech, 2002; Marino, 2011). Many of textbooks used in world history courses contain some form of bias. “Textbooks are influenced by the political, ideological or moral beliefs of their authors” (Romanowski, 1996, p. 170). Romanowski (1996) notes that these biases although more subtle can have a very powerful effect on how students and teachers perceive events and facts throughout history. As previously discussed, these misconceptions and stereotypes must be addressed in teacher preparation programs to eliminate teacher bias toward the non-Western world. The use of misconceptions and stereotypes by teachers results in a skewed view of the non-Western world such as in the use of terms such as “savages” and “tribes” to describe non-Western people (Brown et al., 1996).

Teacher perceptions of history can greatly affect student achievement and learning in the classroom. Beliefs held by teachers “determine both the subject matter and experiences to which students have access” (Evans, 1990, p.102). Student conceptions of history are inherently affected by those held by their teachers (Evans, 1990). Evans (1990) also noted that when teachers have a positive attitude toward a subject, students are more likely to enjoy the subject. Wilson (2012) states that students learn better when teachers are excited by what they are teaching.

Teacher enthusiasm for their content is further explored by Larkin and McKinney (1982). High teacher enthusiasm does not always produce greater achievement in students. However,
enthusiastic teachers do have a far greater positive impact on student achievement than their lethargic counterparts.

Current Trends in World History Pedagogy

How teachers are teaching world history must be defined. Instruction in the traditional model is based primarily on lecture. This instruction is rooted in the skill and drill methods and strategies that are used in teaching history (Roberts, 2011). The traditional model of world history has its roots in Western civilization.

When teaching world history, different cultures can seem exotic to outsiders (Zevin, 1993). Teachers need to overcome this feeling in students who only see Africa, Asia, and South America in stereotypical, exotic terms. Zevin (1993) contends that Western civilization contains a very myopic view of history which is often skewed. The current model of teaching world history separates culture and history into chronological and geographic divisions which do not effectively integrate the various regions of the world. This view can be altered by using: “a geographic view of the world which emphasizes place and region as these interact with people; a cross-cultural view that focuses on human evolution and change, particularly similarities, differences, and diffusion of ideas; a world-systems view that promotes looking at the globe as an interactive system influenced by economic, political, social, and cultural factors that lead to dominance or dependency; and a thematic view that seeks to integrate cultures and people into a comparative framework of ideas” (p. 85). Through these approaches, the world can be seen as a social system in which actions and decisions in various regions around the world affect large portions of the world’s population.

Another approach to teaching world history is the World History For Us All (WHFUA) model (Morrison, 2010). Morrison (2010) describes WHFUA as an approach that divides world
history into Big Eras. This is in stark contrast to the typical model in which students are fed events and facts in the chronology associated with Western history. The lessons in this model fall into three categories: Panorama, Landscape, and Closeup. Panorama lessons address cross-cutting themes on a global scale. Landscape lessons address major developments in history, but do so in more focused manner than the Panorama lessons. Closeup lessons concentrate on particular topics such as the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and European exploration. This division allows students to focus on more than just the Western perspective of historical events and even moves away from categorizing events in terms of Western civilization.

A prominent model in use today is inquiry-based instruction. Inquiry-based lessons allow students to actively engage in the exploration content and finding appropriate answers to questions (Tanner, 2009). This promotes student self-efficacy in the world history classroom.

Merryfield and Kasai (2004) promote the use of various activities in the instruction of global perspectives on world history. Interdisciplinary approaches such as exploring the biological effects of the Columbian Exchange can enhance students’ understanding of the topic by drawing, writing poetry, and making films on the topic. Simulations and role-plays can be utilized in global education. Students can gain a better understanding of the perspectives of various societies around the world if they are placed in their shoes. Participation and action promote the use of real-life skills as they encounter new knowledge. Teachers also need to use online and video technologies to connect their classrooms to the various regions they are discussing.

The Internet is frequently used to give students an enhanced view of world history and to develop content knowledge (Shand, Winstead, & Kottler, 2012). The Internet connects students to online resources that can be used to make history come to life (Tanner, 2009). Students can
access photographs and virtual tours of many archaeological sites. The use of technology has become a necessity for capturing the attention and imagination of students in a world history classroom filled with Media Generation students (Tanner, 2009).

Summary

Many studies have attempted to address the inclusion of non-Western history. Historians and teachers have voiced their concerns for and against the addition of non-Western content in world history since its formation at the turn of the 20th century. World history has been in a constant flux since its formation. Even today a debate is occurring between advocates of a pro-Western world history and advocates of a global world history.

There must be focus on teacher preparation. Teacher preparation in non-Western history has historically been insufficient. There is a need for teachers to have adequate content knowledge as well as pedagogical methods. Content knowledge and pedagogical methods greatly effect instruction and learning in the classroom.

Pedagogical strategies put forth in the literature emphasize the use of higher order thinking skills, integrating technology, and personal connections. These coincide with the pedagogical methods in use in other fields. The literature also suggests that teachers’ perspectives on history have an impact on their students’ achievement and learning outcomes. The relationship between teachers’ perspectives on and student achievement in non-Western history needs to be examined.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research and Design

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher perspectives on non-Western history and student knowledge of non-Western history. A literature review was conducted including current trends in world history pedagogy, teacher perspectives, and teacher preparation. Data for this study was sequentially collected through teacher interviews, an assessment of student knowledge of non-Western history, and student interviews.

Participants

This study took place in a middle school in southeastern Ohio. This middle school serves a rural population. It contains grades six through eight. Five social studies teachers were approached to be part of this study. All five teachers agreed to participate. The participating teachers are all women. The sixth grade teachers were Darla and Mary. Darla and Mary both have K-8 certifications in all fields. Darla has been teaching social studies for almost all of her 32 years in the field. Mary has been teaching for 30 years. However, she is new to teaching social studies and has been a social studies teacher for less than a year. Prior to being moved to 6th grade social studies she taught 7th grade mathematics. Gwen and Sarah are the 7th grade social studies teachers who participated. Like Darla and Mary, both Gwen and Sarah have K-8 certifications. Gwen has been teaching for 14 years. She has been in a social studies classroom for six years. She previously taught 8th grade U.S. History but now teaches 7th grade World History. Sarah has been teaching for 17 years. She has not been in a position for more than two
years at a time and often changes subjects. Currently, Sarah teaches both 7th grade World History and 8th grade U.S. History. The final participating teacher was Lily. Lily has been teaching for 20 years. At one time, she was the principal of an elementary school. Lily teaches 8th grade U.S. History.

After securing the consent of the social studies teachers, student and parental consent forms were sent home with all 511 students in grades six through eight. Seventy-five students, representing a 15% response rate, returned both the signed student assent form and parental consent form.

Data Collection

Each of the teachers was asked to be interviewed and to allow their classrooms to be used in the study. The teachers were interviewed using a predetermined protocol (see Appendix A). The questions asked the teacher participants about their background in non-Western history and their perspectives on non-Western history. Additional questions included: Were there any courses that prepared you to teach non-Western content? What are your thoughts on non-Western history? Do you deem non-Western history as important as Western history? In the course of the interviews additional questions were asked when necessary. Their responses were audio recorded and transcribed.

Data from the interviews informed the student assessment. The resulting assessment was administered to each of the 75 students and asked questions to determine their level of non-Western history content knowledge (see Appendix B). Questions covered facts, events, and ideas from the histories of Asia, Africa, the Americas (omitting questions concerning the history of the United States of America), and the Middle East.
After the students completed the assessment, students from each of the five teacher’s classes were randomly selected to be interviewed. Three students were chosen from each of the participating teachers’ classes based upon their scores on the assessment. These three students were chosen from the entire group of scores for each class. The students in each of the five classes were then divided into three categories based on their scores: scores 75-100 percent, 50-75 percent, and 0-50 percent. The number in each category varied depending on how many students chose to participate in the study in each of the participating teachers’ classes. One student from each category was randomly selected to participate in a semi-structured interview (see Appendix C). Students were asked questions pertaining to their interest in history, how they felt about the assessment in general, and if their teacher, had prepared them for this assessment in any way. Questions included: Do you believe that your teacher prepared you for this assessment in any way? How often do you learn about the information asked in the assessment?

Data Analysis

Since the teacher interviews provided both qualitative and quantitative data, a mixed analysis was used. Based on their responses to questions regarding the amount of time spent lesson planning and teaching non-Western content, mean and median values were calculated. Qualitative data was collected from the open-ended questions regarding teacher perspectives on non-Western history. These questions were analyzed for similarities and differences. The results of the assessments were analyzed to find the mean, median, and mode of scores for the entire sample as well as each individual classroom. Individual classroom results were compared and contrasted to determine correlations between individual teacher perspectives and the results of the assessments.
In addition, data from the student interviews was used to assess whether and to what degree non-Western content was taught. Similarly, interview data was also used to determine whether there was any correlation between the student responses and those of the teachers. The findings are reported in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Teacher Interviews

Two sixth grade teachers, Darla and Mary, one seventh grade teacher, Gwen, one eighth grade teacher, Lily, and one teacher who teaches both seventh and eighth grade, Sarah, participated in the interview process. The interview was done individually and using a predetermined protocol (see Appendix A).

Darla, Mary, Gwen, and Sarah stated that they had only taken the required courses in social studies education. These courses did not even deal with history; let alone non-Western history. Darla stated that they received no formal training social studies. This, she said, was due to the fact that during her time in college, it was not a requirement to take those classes for a K-8 license. Gwen stated that these courses were methodology courses in which they were taught how to teach social studies but nothing in terms of content knowledge. This was the case for all of the teachers who took part in this study. They all acknowledged that their teacher preparation programs did not delve very deeply into subject content. The participants stated that this was a direct result of their licenses being K-8. They were trained to teach every subject but not every aspect of each subject. Each respondent had obtained a master’s degree in education but confessed to spending little to no time on non-Western history in their studies. Sarah said, “I have a concentration in English. So I only took the required courses in history.” This lack of teacher preparation directly relates to the findings in the literature review. Most teacher preparation programs have not adequately prepared teachers to teach non-Western history. This is evidenced in this study by the responses of all five teachers.
When asked “What do you believe the term non-Western history describes and categorizes?” the teachers offered a variety of responses. After a long pause, Mary answered, “Non-Western history is history which focuses on history outside of the United States and Western Europe.” Sarah stated, “I think that non-Western history is anything that doesn’t have to do with the United States.” Even in such a small sampling there was confusion about what non-Western history is. This appeared to be due to the fact that the participants did not know how to categorize the West. This inability to categorize the West may well be due to their lack of teacher preparation in history.

When asked, “Are there any academic content standards devoted to non-Western history?” Darla, Mary, Gwen, and Sarah stated that nearly 100 percent of their academic content standards are devoted primarily to non-Western history. Mary responded, “Everything we learn is non-Western history. We learn about Egypt and the pyramids.” To the contrary, Lily stated, “There are no academic content standards devoted to non-Western history. In Ohio, eighth grade history focuses on U.S. history. We may cover Native Americans here and there but it is nothing substantial.” It appears students gain most of their world history knowledge in the two years prior to the eighth grade as both the sixth and seventh grade are solely devoted to its content.

When asked, “How many of your lessons solely deal with non-Western history?” the teachers gave similar responses. Three teachers, Darla, Mary, and Gwen, responded that nearly every lesson they plan and teach deals solely with non-Western history. Sarah who teaches both World History and U.S. History stated, “In my World History class all or most do so. However, in my U.S. History class, we focus on U.S. History as the title suggests.” The responses of the participants suggest that they do not deviate from the prescribed curriculum or the format set forth by the Ohio Academic Content Standards for Social Studies.
When asked, “How much time do you as a teacher spend planning lessons and units containing non-Western history on a weekly basis?” Lily stated, “I spend probably ten percent of my time throughout the entire year planning non-Western lessons. On a weekly basis, I would say I spend less than thirty minutes planning non-Western lessons.” The other four participants stated they spent an average of nearly three hours planning non-Western history lessons and units. When asked the question, Sarah responded, “For World History many hours were spent familiarizing myself with the topics. Now I have to reread the information right before presenting it to the students.” Sarah’s need to familiarize herself with the content was due to her recent move into a social studies position as she had only been teaching social studies for three years. It should be noted that the school provided five 45 minute planning periods throughout the week to each staff member, which amounts to 3:45 hours. The responses appear to indicate that World History teachers have a greater interest in teaching non-Western history lessons than their colleagues who teach U.S. History. This appears to be due to the curriculum pacing chart used in the school. Each teacher must cover a specific number of the Ohio Academic Content Standards in each of the school’s six week short-cycle assessment periods. Sarah stated, “We just don’t have enough time to teach anything but the standards.”

The teachers were also asked, “What are your thoughts on non-Western history?” and “Do you deem non-Western history as important as Western history?” Not surprisingly due to their limited background in the subject, four of the five teachers had a rather negative view of non-Western history as it pertains to students in the middle grades. Darla commented:

“Don’t get me wrong. Students should learn about world history and non-Western history, but these global concepts are too hard for students to grasp. This makes it hard to teach and often students do not even understand. I also believe that students are not
learning enough about U.S. History at this time. I think U.S. History should be substituted for World History in middle school.”

Darla, Sarah, and Lily echoed this view of non-Western and world history. They stated that while they deem it necessary in some aspects of their students’ lives, they would much rather teach about American history. Likewise Gwen stated, “These kids need to learn something about the history of where they are from before they can learn about other people’s histories.” These views of non-Western history are not surprising when the backgrounds of the participants are taken into account. Darla, Gwen, Sarah, and Lily have been members of the rural school community throughout their entire professional career. This rural area has a population that is predominantly Caucasian and does not have many outside influences. Their beliefs seem to reflect the general disposition of the community toward the non-West. These four teachers’ views were in stark contrast to those held by Mary. She responded:

“I believe that in today’s day and age students need to have an understanding of the world they live in. They need to know about other cultures and people in order to be successful in a world connected by the Internet and TV. I believe it should be taught to students and maybe even more should be added.”

Mary is from the same region in southeast Ohio but is originally from a suburban community near one of the state’s major cities. She started her career in a suburban school. Her positive disposition towards non-Western history appears to be a reflection her suburban community background and may well be related to her recent re-assignment to teach social studies. Her mathematics background emphasizes global competition in today’s interconnected world. The responses of the participants reflect the literature on this subject. Teachers appear to be divided
about whether to globalize history or to concentrate on Western history, especially that of the United States.

The teachers were also asked to respond to, “Do you believe that non-Western history is given enough time and instruction?” and “Would you like to see more non-Western history in the curriculum?” Their responses varied. Darla and Gwen said that they preferred a curriculum that was filled with Western history specifically focused on the United States. Darla’s enthusiasm for a U.S. history focused curriculum may well have been the result of her thirty-year teaching career which started during the Cold War when American values and citizenship were the primary focus of social studies classrooms. Gwen argued that, “focusing on U.S. history in middle school would create better citizens later in life.” Her preference to focus on U.S. history might well have been due to having taught U.S. history for several years prior to her current assignment to teach world history. Lily simply stated that the curriculum should stay the way it is. Finally, Mary and Sarah believed that the curriculum needed to include more non-Western history. Whereas, Mary suggested students need to learn non-Western history due to global competition and cooperation. Sarah responded, likewise that, “In American History, more time should be given to compare Western to non-Western and discuss influences on history.” Their belief may be related to their recent assignment to teach social studies. Mary was assigned to a social studies class this year after years of being a member of the math department while Sarah has been teaching social studies for three years. Non-Western history is a divisive issue in schools across the U.S.A. and it appears that this is the case in this rural school as well.

Finally, when asked, “What type of methodology do you use? Is it inquiry-based, project-based, et cetera?” the majority of responses focused upon project-based learning. “My students seem to understand the different cultures we study if they are able to research it themselves,”
stated Darla. Expressing a similar view Gwen commented, “These kids need to understand that there are things happening at the same time all around the world and that these events relate to their lives.” Darla, Gwen, and Sarah believed that project-based learning was the best way for their students to learn non-Western history. The use of project-based learning in which students actively investigate the content on their own may be a result of the participants’ lack of content knowledge. Whereas direct and inquiry-based instructions require knowledge of and preparation in a subject of the lesson, project-based learning allows students to discover and learn content with less guidance from the teacher. In contrast, Mary and Lily both believed that direct instruction utilizing primary sources was the most efficient method of instruction. As Lily stated, “Students need to be prepared for high school classes. In those classes, they will be listening to lectures and taking notes.”

Student Assessment

All 75 students who agreed to take part in the study completed the assessment of non-Western history knowledge (see Appendix B). This assessment served to determine their content knowledge of non-Western history. The scores yielded were compared to the responses of the teachers who participated in this study to determine whether there were any correlations. On a scale of 0-100 points, the highest score on the assessment was 92 and the lowest was 8.

Two sixth grade classrooms participated in this study. A total of 19 sixth graders took the assessment. The overall mean value was 48. The median was 50 and the mode was 42 and 50%, both appeared four times. In Mary’s class, only three students participated in the study. The mean and median both were 50. The mode for this sample could not be calculated due to the small sample size. The second sixth grade class was Darla’s and it comprised 16 participants. Its mean was 48, its mode 42, and its median 46.
Two seventh grade classes participated in this study. A total of 47 seventh grade students completed the assessment. The overall mean was 59. The median was 42 while the mode was 58. Sarah’s class comprised ten participants while Gwen’s comprised 31 participants. Sarah’s class had a mean of 53, a mode of 58, and a median of 58. Gwen’s class had a mean of 46, a mode of 33, and a median of 42.

Two eighth grade classes participated in this study. A total of 15 eighth grade students completed the assessment. The overall mean was 60 while the median and mode both were 58. Lily’s class comprised of 10 participants had a mean of 66, a median of 58, and a mode of 58. The second class, Sarah’s class, with five participants had a mean of 52, a median of 58, and a mode of 58.

The means of each grade level and those of the individual classes were then compared. The sixth grade’s mean was 48, the seventh grade’s mean was 59, and the eighth grade’s mean was 60. The data suggests that during their sixth grade year students acquire basic content knowledge in non-Western history. This basic content knowledge is then built upon in the seventh grade World History course. This is shown by the 11 percent increase from the sixth to seventh grade. This increase may be due to their completion of the sixth grade World History course and their current placement in the seventh grade World History course. The small increase from seventh to eighth grade indicates that the eighth grade students do not receive substantial non-Western history content in their courses. Due to the fact that eighth grade history is U.S. history, this is not surprising. This conclusion also suggests that the two eighth grade classes’ higher scores may be a direct result of their successful completion of the World History courses in the sixth and seventh grade. The views of their teachers may not have had any discernible impact on their scores.
The individual class scores within the grade levels suggest that there was little deviation between each class. In the sixth grade, Darla’s class had a mean of 48 and Mary’s class had a mean of 50. A difference of 2 percent is miniscule and does not suggest there was any significant difference in content knowledge between the two classes. In the seventh grade, Gwen’s class had a mean of 46 while Sarah’s class had a mean of 53. The difference between the two values was 7 percent. This disparity was not a result of any tracking system in the school. The composition of each class was similar. These scores likewise do not suggest there was any significant difference in content knowledge between the two classes. In the eighth grade, Lily’s class scored a 66 while Sarah’s scored a 52. This was a disparity of 14 percent. The compositions of the two classes were comparable which means that class composition was not an underlying factor in the disparity.

Correlations

Subsequent to student assessment these teachers’ perspectives were compared to the students’ scores in their respective classes to discern any correlation.

Two teachers who participated in this study, Mary and Sarah, had a positive disposition towards teaching non-Western history. Expressing her perspective on the importance of teaching non-Western history, Mary stated,

“I believe that in today’s day and age students need to have an understanding of the world they live in. They need to know about other cultures and people in order to be successful in a world connected by the Internet and TV. I believe it should be taught to students and maybe even more should be added.”

Her response suggests she values non-Western history in her classroom and works towards helping students become global citizens. Expressing a similar view, Sarah responded, “Our
students need to be exposed to different cultures. They need to realize that their community is not a bubble but part of a larger world.”

Mary and Sarah’s students scored near the median of the total sample. In comparison to the scores of their peers, their scores were not significantly higher than those of their peers suggesting that their perspectives on non-Western history were a not a determining factor impacted.

The three other teachers, Darla, Gwen, and Lily, who participated had a relatively negative disposition towards the importance of non-Western history. Gwen said during the interview:

“I believe that these kids need to know about their country and where it came from before they learn about the world. Many of these kids will not need to know about the rest of the world but they will need to know about their own country when they get older.”

Darla, Gwen, and Lily’s perspectives appear to have had a little impact on their students. Their students averaged 48, 46, and 66. The two lower means of 46 and 48 were by Darla and Gwen’s students, respectively. Their scores were not dissimilar to those of Mary and Sarah’s whose students scored 50 and 53, respectively. The score of 66 was achieved by Lily’s eighth grade students. Her students’ scores were 14 percent higher than the other eighth grade students in Sarah’s class who scored a 52. Their higher scores are likely due to their successful completion of both World History courses in the sixth and seventh grade and not to the views of their teacher on non-Western history.

The students’ scores suggest that the individual perspectives on non-Western history of the participating teachers had little impact upon achievement. Darla and Mary’s sixth grade
classes’ lower scores are likely due to her students’ lack of exposure to non-Western history as compared to their peers in the seventh and eighth grades. The score of Gwen’s students was not significantly lower than that of Mary’s and Sarah’s to suggest that her disposition had any affect upon her students’ achievement. Sarah’s class’ higher score than those of Darla and Mary may be a result of her students’ completion of 6th grade World History and their enrollment in her World History course. The difference between the eighth grade classes of Sarah and Lily was 14 percent. This disparity was not due to any sort of tracking in the school system. This suggests that Lily’s relatively negative disposition and Sarah’s positive disposition toward non-Western history did not have a significant impact on their students’ achievement. These differences between the scores of all five participating teachers’ classes indicate that in this study there was no clear correlation between teacher perspectives on non-Western history and student achievement.

Student Interviews

After completing the assessment, students were randomly chosen from three groups based on their scores on the assessment from each participating teacher’s class to be interviewed. Three students were chosen from each participating teacher’s class. These three students were chosen from the entire group of scores for each class. Students were divided into three groups based on their scores: scores 75-100 percent, 50-75 percent, and 0-50 percent. One student from each group was randomly selected to participate in a semi-structured interview (see Appendix C). These students exhibited mixed feelings towards non-Western history.

When asked, “What do you think about world history?” students offered a variety of responses. Jessica, a sixth grade student, stated, “History is fun, sometimes. I like learning about Egypt but other things like China are boring.” Their views are echoed by students in both the
high scoring group and the low scoring group. John, an eighth grade, said, “I love history. It is easy for me. I wish we talked more about Egypt and Japan.” In general, all 18 students indicated a favorable view on non-Western history.

During the interview, students were asked, “Have you seen any of the facts or ideas on the assessment prior to taking it?” “What have you learned in your social studies class this year?” and “Do you believe your teacher prepared you for this test?” Students in the sixth grade stated, “We have learned about Egypt and Mesopotamia but nothing else”. Arthur, a seventh grade student in Gwen’s class, said, “I remember talking about places in Africa and Asia like Egypt, China, and Mali but nothing about America. That’s why I didn’t know anything about Indians.” “I have seen most of the things on the test but can’t remember any of it,” added Gerard, an eighth grade student. The teachers’ responses mirror the responses of their students. Another eighth grade student, Colin, commented, “We haven’t learned anything about this stuff this year. We just learn about America.” This statement directly reflects the responses of Sarah and Lily who previously stated that they did not teach any substantial content about any non-Western group to their eighth grade classes.

Another question posed to students during the interview was, “Do you think your teacher enjoys teaching you history?” Students arrived at a variety of conclusions. Jared believed, “She [Darla] is not all smiles when she teaches but she seems excited. Well, at least most of the time, I think.” A student, Ericka, from Lily’s class stated, “I think they are just doing their job. They don’t seem excited at all and it makes class boring, so I don’t pay attention.” These statements indicate that students are aware of their teacher’s disposition toward non-Western history. In some cases, their teacher’s lack of enthusiasm toward the subject is reflected in their instruction
which directly affects their students’ perceptions of the content. As evidenced by Ericka’s response, a teacher’s lack of enthusiasm can have a direct impact on student motivation.

Several students did not think their teachers were excited about their content area. A student said, “Well they [Mary] just moved to social studies from math, so I think they just don’t know what to do.” This student’s judgment might well have been correct since all of the participating teachers did not take any teacher preparation courses or content courses for social studies or history. This lack of preparation could be compounded for Mary and Sarah due to their unfamiliarity with history and their recent placement into a social studies classroom.

To determine whether there were any external factors that might contribute to the students’ performance on the assessment, a final question asked, “When you are out of school do you read books or magazines or watch films or television series on any of the subject covered in the assessment?” Eleven of the 18 interviewed students stated that they neither watch any films or programs outside of school that deal with history nor read any books on the subject. Seven students did state they watched some history programs. Six students said they watched the History Channel as well. A seventh grade student, Andy, added, “I watch the History Channel but only the cool stuff like gods and goddesses.” Sierra, a sixth grade student, admitted, “I usually don’t watch anything like that. My dad does so I end up watching the History Channel with him.”

Summary

In this chapter, both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. The teacher interviews were analyzed to determine the perspectives on non-Western history of five teachers, Darla, Mary, Gwen, Sarah, and Lily. Darla, Gwen, and Lily had a rather negative disposition towards non-Western history while Mary and Sarah had a positive disposition. In conjunction
with the teachers’ dispositions, the students’ assessments were then analyzed to compare scores at each of the three grade levels. In general, the findings in this study suggest that the teachers’ perspectives on non-Western history had no significant impact on their students’ content knowledge of non-Western history. Finally, data from the student interviews suggests the students were able to perceive the attitudes and beliefs of their teachers.
Conclusions

The literature review showed that although world history as a field of study is nearly a century old, it is still changing in design and pedagogy. The design of world history courses has moved from one centered around Western civilization toward a globalized view of history. The world history course’s move toward globalized content has been met with both resistance and praise. This was evidenced in the data collected through teacher interviews. Three of the five teachers believed that world history should focus more on the U.S. and Western cultures in order to create successful citizens. Two teachers believed that world history needs to take a global view of history and to include non-Western history because students need to be prepared to communicate and work in an interconnected world.

Teacher preparation programs are not providing an adequate background in non-Western history to its students. Teachers are ill-equipped to teach most non-Western history content. This study has verified these findings. Teachers who participated in this study communicated their lack of preparation in non-Western history. All participating teachers took only the required social studies courses which were mainly methodology based classes and did not receive any formal education in non-Western history.

Pedagogy has moved away from the standard lecture model. Models are now being used which include connecting themes across cultures such as *World History For Us All* (Morrison, 2010). This study found that in order to create these connections teachers focus on project-based
learning. This approach provides students with an opportunity to engage in their learning as well as engage in connecting with different cultures.

Teacher beliefs about the significance of what they teach directly impacts their instruction and their students’ achievement. The experiences they provide to their students determine how they view their courses. The mixed results of the student assessment in this study fail to suggest that teacher perspectives directly impact student achievement. While classes whose teachers had a favorable disposition towards non-Western history scored higher than half of the classes whose teachers had a unfavorable disposition towards non-Western history, there was one class whose teacher had a unfavorable disposition towards non-Western history that scored significantly, i.e. 13 %, higher than those whose teachers who had a favorable disposition towards non-Western history.

Implications

The significance of the findings of the study is limited due to the low participation rate of 15% (75 out of 511) of students. This sample only represents a small number of participants and can therefore not be taken as an indication of all 511 students. Future studies should develop more efficient data collection methods in which parents are directly approached rather than students being held responsible for returning the necessary forms. Future studies may be improved by including observations of lessons to account for any biases in either the student or teacher interviews. Additionally, future studies may be improved by utilizing different assessments for each grade level. Due to the Ohio Academic Content Standards, unlike the seventh and eighth grade classes who had completed at least one year of history with a world focus, the sixth grade classes were only just beginning to engage in world history content.
Recommendations

Improving knowledge of non-Western history among teachers and students will continue to be a multifaceted endeavor. Considering the literature on the subject and the findings of this study, there are three areas which must be addressed: teacher preparation, teacher perspectives on non-Western history, and pedagogy.

To provide better classroom instruction, teacher preparation programs need to be reevaluated. These programs do not require adequate background knowledge of non-Western history. Their graduates then impart superficial and stereotypical accounts of non-Western cultures and histories. This problem needs to be addressed at both the university level and in mentoring programs. Teacher preparation programs should require content courses in non-Western history. Mentoring programs should provide lectures, resources, and workshops highlighting current trends in pedagogy and new teaching strategies in non-Western history. These programs should be provided by teachers in the K-12 setting and by faculty at the university level. As the findings of this study suggest insufficient content knowledge is not the only problem facing non-Western history instruction in the K-12 setting. Teacher perspectives on non-Western history are directly related to teacher preparation. Many social studies teachers do not deem non-Western history as important as Western history including the history of the United States of America. This is due in part to their lack of preparation in non-Western history. Because they lack content knowledge, they do not know how to relate it to their lives or those of their students. This view allows them to devalue non-Western history. This view needs to be changed. Teachers need to be guided by the aforementioned teacher preparation and mentoring programs about how to make connections to students’ lives. This will make the curriculum more meaningful for teachers and students alike.
Teaching strategies need to be addressed in order to facilitate meaningful learning in non-Western history. The outdated methodology of lecture cannot be the sole medium through which students are exposed to non-Western content. Teachers need to attend seminars and workshops to provide them with an opportunity to learn what works in the classroom, what new instructional strategies to use, and how best to create cross-cultural themes. These are all crucial factors in the successful integration of non-Western history content in K-12 social studies.

Lastly, teachers need recognize their responsibility to define, legitimize and continue learning about non-Western history. Teachers need to advocate for non-Western history at both the state and federal levels to affect change in policies. Only then will we be able to develop a citizenry that is more knowledgeable of non-Western history.
APPENDIX A

TEACHER INTERVIEW

What do you believe the term non-Western history describes and categorizes?

What are your thoughts on non-Western history?

Do you deem non-Western history as important as Western history?

Are there any academic content standards devoted to non-Western history? If so, how many?

How many of your lessons solely deal with non-Western history?

How much time do you as a teacher spend planning lessons and units containing non-Western history?

Do Western history lessons and units garner more time and attention than those of non-Western history?

Do you believe that non-Western history is given enough time and instruction given to it?

Do you believe that this is appropriate?

Would you like to see more non-Western history in the curriculum?

How much time is spent on non-Western history such as Chinese, Japanese, Native American, African, etc.?
Multiple Choice: Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. What ancient civilization controlled the Nile River delta from 3150 B.C.E. to 30 B.C.E.?

2. What ancient civilization built the Ziggurat?
   a. Africa  b. Egypt  c. Mesopotamia  d. India

3. What civilization developed gunpowder?

4. The Mongol Empire was located on what continent?

5. The Japanese had a warrior class called ________?

6. What role did Africans have in the slave trade?
   a. Africans were captured by Europeans and sold to other Europeans.
   b. Africans were captured by Africans and Europeans, sold among the African states, and sold to Europeans.
   c. Africans did not do anything except become slaves.
   d. Africans were not traded by Africans.

7. What religion was created in India?
8. What Native American tribes formed a confederation in the northeastern region of North America?
   a. The Iroquois    b. The Algonquin    c. The Shawnee    d. the Sioux

9. What Native American culture controlled most of the West coast of South America including modern-day Chile and Peru until the arrival of Europeans?
   a. Inca    b. Aztec    c. Mayan    d. Olmec

10. The Taj Mahal was built by Shah Jahan who was ruler of this empire
    a. Mughal Empire    b. Mali Empire    c. Europe    d. Roman Empire

11. Montezuma ruled this empire located in modern-day Mexico

12. Native Americans failed in their attempt to defeat the European invaders in battle because
    a. They were weak savages.
    b. They were dying from diseases spread by Europeans.
    c. They did not have large enough armies to fight the Europeans.
    d. The Europeans were more advanced and smarter than the native barbarians.
How well do you feel you did on the assessment?

Do you believe that your teacher prepared you for this assessment in any way? If so, please explain.

Had you ever seen any of the material on the assessment beforehand?

When you are out of school do you read books or magazines or watch films or television series on any of the subject covered in the assessment?

What do you think about world history?

Do you think your teacher enjoys teaching you history?
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