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Illinois Council of Social Studies



Untold Stories: Using Common Core State Standards to Give Voice to Japanese Americans

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Introduction

This article explores the idea of facilitating the use of Common Core State Standards, more specifically the Comprehensive Instruction Sequence (CIS) Model, in the social studies classroom. There should be a greater emphasis on student exposure to marginalized topics or topics frequently overlooked in the dominant classroom discourse. As noted by boards of education (Illinois State Board of Education, 2016), Common Core initiatives are effective because they enhance student engagement by providing authentic learning activities and prompt students to present evidence for arguments. Simultaneously, these initiatives allow educators to tailor their content to their students' needs. Proponents claim the majority of states implementing this initiative will benefit from raising standards of learning and a clear means of improving college and career readiness for all students. The CIS Model, when used as classroom pedagogy and instructional tool, promotes critical inquiry and encourages a sense of agency (i.e. race, religion, sexual orientation, language, socioeconomic background) for the student population exposed to Common Core initiatives in more than 40 states. Furthermore, by providing various entry points for content exposure and in-depth exercises to promote comprehension, this model debunks one of many myths about the Common Core State Standards Initiative which claims that "standards only include skills and do not address the importance of content knowledge" (2016). Included in this article is a brief exploration of how the author reflects upon teaching marginalized topics in the social studies and suggestions for implementing the CIS Model, as well as a user-friendly handout to facilitate this strategy.

Personal Journey

My earliest memory of feeling a need to advocate for the silenced minority and expose historical injustices was during my internship as a teacher candidate. My need extended beyond simply being involved in various clubs and social organizations in college, but began to emerge in my reflections and pedagogy in my coursework. One of two schools where I was assigned during my teacher candidacy / internship phase was at a detention center for adjudicated teen males. While designing an American History lesson capturing key historical events during the 1920's and 30's, I came across the Scottsboro Boys Trial (1931) in a Teaching Tolerance supplementary resource book: *Us and Them: A History of Intolerance in America* (Carnes, 1999). My major was Social Studies Education, but I had never heard of this trial during my high school or undergraduate years and could not find it anywhere within the assigned textbook. Over the next few days, out of excitement and curiosity, I designed three lessons related to this trial and including stories surrounding the



lives of the people involved in this miscarriage of justice. While researching this era, I quickly uncovered many other marginalized topics rarely discussed throughout the mainstream social studies curriculum such as the purpose and impact of the Willie Lynch Letter provided in a speech on the James River in Virginia in 1712, trials and tribulations of Harvey Milk, and Navajo Code Talkers who fought during World War II. My motive for researching and incorporating these topics grew throughout my teaching career. Although textbooks are seemingly reluctant to highlight these stories and share voices of silenced populations, I developed a personal need to expose related historical tragedies and achievements to embrace a comprehensive and balanced representation of history.

After graduating and serving more than ten years in the secondary social studies classroom, I felt a continued obligation or duty to embed the stories and voices of silenced groups in America within many of my lessons. As a result, during my work, multiple reflective questions arose such as:

Why are these topics so taboo? Will students feel as if their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic class is less relevant if they are not landmarked in textbooks or highlighted in lesson plans? Which topics are school-appropriate and are there some that are too controversial? Why do some stories get voiced while others are left untold? How do I maintain the interest of students whose stories are consistently highlighted in history versus those who belong to historically-disenfranchised groups in America when discussing marginalized topics?

Over time, answers emerged to some of those questions while others remained undertheorized. However, there always exists angst to align topics of controversy, marginalized groups throughout history, and evident acts of justice into teaching and learning.

Theoretical and Practical Significance

Even with the push for a more inclusive and diverse content and pedagogy in social studies education today, the hierarchical structures in society continue to influence education that lacks representation of marginalized populations. Consequently, when consciousness of diversity is limited in education, the dominant culture continues to dominate, thereby, often leaving the voices of oppressed and marginalized populations silenced in many ways (Howard, 2006; Kumashiro, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Ndimande, 2004). For example, during a unit on World War II, students may be exposed to resources highlighting the heroic efforts and militaristic skills of the 101st Airborne Division such as the famous photo with General Dwight D. Eisenhower the day before the D-Day Invasion in 1944. A discussion may be held surrounding the strategic air landings over the beaches of Normandy, France and military accomplishments during the Battle of the Bulge. On the home front, a brief portion of a lesson may focus on propaganda highlighting the symbolism of Rosie the Riveter and the shift from women in domestic roles to factory workers. In both lessons, and throughout many social studies classrooms in the United States today, a teacher may overlook or neglect equally important layers of history. Alternatively, a well-rounded



lesson should provide the opportunity, even if only briefly, for students to discuss demographics or groups of persons “not” mentioned in the textbook or teacher-selected supplementary materials. One should also seamlessly embed marginalized or minority populations within the lesson to avoid the phenomena of simply mentioning or othering (Kumashiro, 2000) groups outside the mainstream discourse who also participated in history. It can be practical for teachers to construct those same lessons while simultaneously giving voice to historically marginalized topics. Throughout many easily-accessible resources lie enriching facts and details on the 761st Tank Battalion of the United States Army and the Canary Girls of the United Kingdom. Also known as Patton’s Black Panthers, this all-Black tank battalion successfully defeated enemy divisions throughout the European front during World War II. This duty to serve their nation took place in a time when the military was segregated and there was an absence of Civil Rights for African Americans back home in the United States. The Canary Girls worked in militarized factories of the United Kingdom during World War II with the sole purpose of loading gun powder into bomb shells for the military. Paired with the risk of accidental detonations of those bombs in the factory, the gun powder consisted of trinitrotoluene (TNT). This substance posed serious health risks for the women and their unborn children years later. With the incorporation of both race and sex in said lessons, a sense of agency and inclusion can be provided in that same classroom.

Rather than continuing to utilize a narrow or superficial lens to view multicultural education, as argued by Takaki (2008), a different mirror must be employed to incorporate a genuine multicultural perspective. Success or oppression should not be limited to a particular group, but rather education must focus on how all people have overcome obstacles and made achievements through the years. Takaki (2008) further asserts that multicultural perspectives usually focus on just one minority. While this may enrich and deepen “our knowledge of a particular group, this approach examines a specific minority in isolation from the others and whole” (p. 6). Furthermore, representing people or groups in isolation is problematic as it encourages development of a narrow perspective that often includes misrepresentations. As Adichie (2009) underscores in *The Danger of a Single Story*, constantly portraying people through a single lens can lead to the belief that there is no alternative lens. As a result, it is essential to remember no story should be silenced or presented through a single, narrow, isolated lens. These ideas are critical, especially when social studies educators attempt to shift the paradigm and adjust the narrative of the dominant discourse throughout the curriculum in attempt to make it more equitable and inclusive.

Practical Approach in the Classroom

The CIS Model is practical and can be used for multiple content areas within the social studies curriculum. Furthermore, the level of engagement with students is adjustable for various learning levels and styles, making it user-friendly for students who need accommodations, enjoy working in collaborative groups, thrive while taking extensive notes, and/or take pride in group leadership roles.



Below, you will find sequential steps for implementation of the CIS Model by the teacher, students, or both teacher and students. Before and during each step in this process, it is key to: (1) discuss the overall purpose of the CIS Model as a tool of Common Core initiatives and related to increased content comprehension embedded in the lesson, (2) clearly explain directions and asses for understanding, and (3) group students based on best practices (i.e. random, mixed-ability, etc.) Subsequently, all learners will likely experience some level of success, further motivating students and their groups to complete the process while increasing their comprehension of the skills and content provided in the lesson.

CIS Steps

1. Hook

- The teacher provides a hook (i.e. question, statement, photo) to prompt students' thinking about the lesson topic or controversy surrounding the content.
- The hook should be brief, taking no longer than five minutes to facilitate.

Write a journal entry to address the following: *Imagine you have 30 minutes to gather important belongings in a small suitcase before being sent to an unknown place for an unspecified period of time. You may not take any electrical or battery-operated items such as laptops, cellphones, hair dryers, etc. What items do you choose and why? Briefly describe your thoughts and feelings while being forced to leave your home.*

2. Prediction Question (Question #1)

- The teacher will create a question meant to activate prior knowledge of the students. It should be answered independently by the students.
- Upon completion, the students may turn to their neighbor and briefly share their individual response to the questions.

Questions #1: *Before reading the text, what factors do you think impacted the lives of Japanese-Americans throughout U.S. history?*

3. Providing the Literature

- The teacher will provide literature to students (do not begin reading until step 7).

Home Was a Horse Stall

From: Teaching Tolerance

Source URL: <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/home-was-horse-stall>

4. Number Paragraphs

- The teacher will model for students how to number each paragraph in the reading.
- This process is necessary so students may briefly revisit a specific part of the text whenever necessary by referring to the numbered paragraph.



5. Pre-Teach Vocabulary

- After the teacher pre-reads the literature, choose terms that students may not be able to define on their own or through context clues. This activity allows a common level of familiarity with terms amongst all learners in the classroom.
- The teacher may use any literacy strategy to increase comprehension of terms throughout the reading.
- Ultimately, students will be able to define the terms before reading.

Sample Terms:

Rheumatism-physical condition which negatively effects the joints
Internment-imprisonment of a people without trial

6. Assign Text-Marking

- The teacher will model how to mark the text for referencing throughout the activity.
- The students do not have to agree on uniform text-marking, but similar reference points or topics may overlap (i.e. political, social, economic, military, etc.).

Sample Text-Marking:

Write the letter P (Policy) or L (Law) next to any phrase or sentence highlighting a policy or law affecting the nation as a whole, Japanese-Americans, or Japanese Immigrants.
Write the letter R (Reaction to Policy or Law) next to any phrase or sentence highlighting reactions to oppressive policies or laws.

7. Reading the Literature

- Students will read independently or the teacher may suggest a preferred literacy strategy (i.e. Independent, Collaborative Reading Strategies, or Teacher-Guided) to complete this process based on the reading levels of the learners.

8. Assessment Question (Question #2)

- The teacher will create a question (i.e. exit slip) for students to answer individually or in pairs.
- This question should prompt students to refer to the text to construct an answer.

Exit Slip (Questions #2):

Based on the information from the text, what factors impacted the lives of Japanese-Americans throughout U.S. History? Please provide details where necessary.



9. Directed Note-Taking (use handout below)

- The teacher will model how to take notes in support of the Guiding Question in the Directed Note-Taking Handout provided to students.
- The teacher may adjust the handout to fit the content area, learner level, or goals of the lesson.
- At the completion of the handout, students will discuss which category (i.e. policies) to eliminate and which one(s) to keep for discussion surrounding the guiding question.
- Allow students to complete this process carefully, through quality discussion and compromise amongst group members.

10. Voting Process (Individual, Round One)

- Students vote as individuals (i.e. which policy had the most impact on the lives of Japanese Americans).
- Record vote in a visible place so students can witness the process and results.

	Individual Choice	Group Choice	Change of mind?
Category 1			
Category 2			
Category 3			
Category 4			

11. Voting Process (Group, Round Two)

- Students collaborate with their group to reach a consensus (i.e. which policy had the most impact on the lives of Japanese Americans).
- The teacher may record vote in a visible place so students can witness the process and results.
- Group must reach consensus.

12. Presentation of Argument

- Groups collaborate and present argument to whole group.
- If all the categories are not represented in the vote, the teacher may select a group to present those categories.
- Allow the group to select one or more presenters depending on learning styles.
- The teacher should emphasize all learners be knowledgeable of the argument to promote accountability.

13. Revote (Optional)

- Students may revote as individuals in order to see if anyone changed their vote based on the arguments presented.



14. Question Generator

- Allow students to complete the Question Generator activity at any point after students finish the Directed Note-Taking Handout
- The teacher will allow students, within groups, to create questions related to the reading that were not addressed in class discussions.
- Allow students within groups to research answers to questions of interest to the class

15. Summative Assessment (Question #3)

- The teacher will assign Question #3 for students to answer individually.
- As a summative assessment, allow students to refer to the text, providing as many details as necessary.
- In order to evaluate student responses, the teacher may use the Common Core Writing Rubric (2016) available at:
http://www.schoolimprovement.com/docs/Common%20Core%20Rubrics_Gr11-12.pdf

Summative Assessment (Questions #3):

Directions: Write your answer to the question using information learned from the reading and class discussion. Be sure to write a well-developed essay (i.e. introduction / thesis, body & supporting details, and conclusion), use complete sentences, accurate punctuation, and correct grammar & spelling.

Which policy has been the most damaging to the lives of Japanese-Americans throughout U.S. history? Please explain with as much detail as necessary.



Directed Note-Taking Handout

Directions: Record notes containing the most important information relevant to the guiding question.

Collaborative Work: After completing your chart, be prepared to compare your notes with those of your peers.

Home Was a Horse Stall

From: Teaching Tolerance

Source URL: <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/home-was-horse-stall>

Guiding Question: Which policies impacted the lives of Japanese-Americans throughout U.S. history more significantly?

Page / Paragraph #	NOTES	Naturalization Law of 1790	Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907	Executive Order 9066	Civilian Exclusion Order 27
Pg. 1 / 5	Only White immigrants were allowed to become naturalized citizens in the U.S., impacting the ownership of land as well.	x			



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Summative Assessment (evaluative)

Directions: Write your answer to the question using information learned throughout this activity from the reading and points of discussion from peers in the class. While creating a well-developed essay (i.e. introduction / thesis, body with supporting details, and conclusion), use complete sentences, accurate punctuation, and correct spelling & grammar.

#3 Which policy has been the most damaging to the lives of Japanese-Americans throughout U.S. history? Please explain.

[illegible]



Conclusion

As a neophyte educator in the field of social studies, I had minimal awareness to the theoretical dispositions that were regularly debated, reasoned, and pondered throughout higher education in graduate courses by both students and professors. With an increased exposure to students of various demographics and connecting to different content throughout the curriculum, I began to utilize theory to support practices while promoting the presence of frequently silenced voices in social studies lessons. With an occasional policy to assist best practices in the classroom such as the recent arrival and implementation of the Common Core initiative, it is important for all social studies educators to realize additional ways and means to promote inclusivity and diversity in their lesson plans. Ultimately, teachers will be able to amplify those histories otherwise silenced in curricula throughout classrooms in the United States.



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