

Recent History in Threes

Nonfiction, Fiction, and the Web

by Marjorie R. Hancock

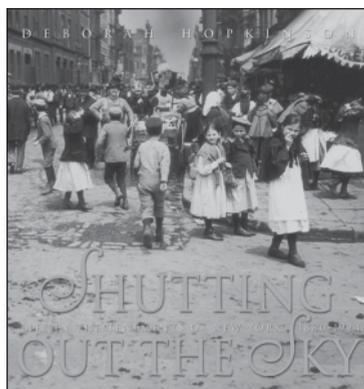
Upper elementary through high school

Current nonfiction, fiction, and information on the World Wide Web, used together, comprise a retrospective, three-way lens through which to view the people and events that have made history since 1900. The Wright brothers' first flight in 1903; the triumph of the Allies during the D-Day invasion in 1944; Martin Luther King Jr.'s inspiring "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963; Neil Armstrong's first step on the moon in 1969; the terrorist attacks in 2001—these events constitute a series of historical benchmarks and achievements.

realm of technology via Web sites carries the learner even deeper into the lifeblood of recent history. Technology, blended with literature, provides an innovative gateway through which historical resources can enhance understanding of the trends, issues, and milestones of the recent past.

The combination of nonfiction, fiction, and the World Wide Web invites a variety of presentation methods in the classroom. In the primary

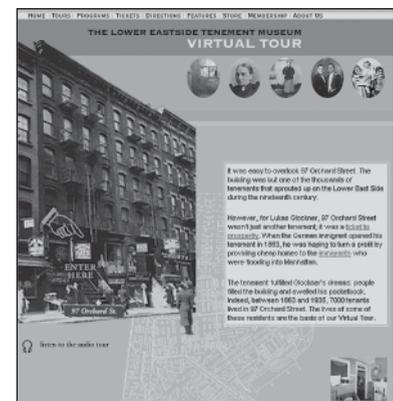
grades, teachers may share fiction and nonfiction through read-alouds or shared reading while utilizing a Web site beforehand to enhance the teacher's prior knowledge, or afterward to generate student response. In the intermediate grades, the teacher may read aloud the nonfiction title, while the students read the fictional title. The Web site may be incorporated before, during, or after reading to generate prior knowledge, provide a visual connection, or stimulate a response built on both fact and fiction. The middle-school setting may incorporate the Web site



An invitation to teach interdisciplinary lessons with a blend of historical fiction and informational books on the people and events in recent history can lead to a meaningful, interconnected understanding of our past century. Extending that invitation beyond printed text into the



Shutting Out the Sky by Deborah Hopkinson, *Ashes of Roses* by Mary Jane Auch, and the Web site of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum can be used together to introduce students to the immigrant experience.



as a pre-reading activity to acquire background knowledge, with independent reading of both fiction and nonfiction. The potential flexibility of these configurations provides fresh approaches and higher-level thinking to the typical textbook-driven social studies curriculum.

The following combinations of nonfiction, historical fiction, and Web sites represent a chronology of issues, events, and perspectives from 1900 to the present.

Immigration

The wave of immigrants into the United States at the turn of the twentieth century paved the way for a new era of growth and change accompanied by hardship and challenges.

Nonfiction

Hopkinson, Deborah. *Shutting Out the Sky: Life in the Tenements of New York, 1880–1924*. 2003. 144p. Orchard, \$17.95 (0-439-37590-8).

Gr. 5–12. Enhanced by archival photographs and well-documented quotes, this book portrays the immigration years through details of crowded Lower East Side tenement life, work in the garment industry, the promise of education, a new language, ethnic food, and challenges faced by immigrants. Told through the experiences of actual immigrants from Italy, Belarus, and Lithuania, among other countries, the book reveals their determination in pursuing the American dream against daunting odds.

Fiction

Auch, Mary Jane. *Ashes of Roses*. 2002. 256p. Holt, \$16.95 (0-8050-6686-1); Laurel-Leaf, paper, \$5.99 (0-440-23851-X).

Gr. 5–12. Arriving from Ireland at Ellis Island in 1911, Rose Nolan finds hardship and disappointment in New York, a city of seemingly endless numbers of immigrants. After her younger brother is denied entry into the United States due to illness, he and their father return to Ireland, leaving Rose, her sister, and her mother to make their way in the unfamiliar city. Rose's job at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and the resulting

loss of friends in the tragic fire that occurred there lead her to strive for fair, safe working conditions while she finds her place in her adopted country.

Web Site

The *Lower East Side Tenement Museum* Web site at <http://www.tenement.org> provides a virtual tour of a tenement at 97 Orchard Street in New York City. Enter a building that housed 7,000 tenants between 1863 and 1935 as visual and audio links bring the city and Lower East Side residents to life. A downloadable "encyclopedia" focuses on diseases, sweatshops, and other facts of tenement life.

The Age of Flight

The age of flight provided the technological impetus that would define the future, from the Wright brothers' first flight through the era of space exploration.

Nonfiction

Old, Wendie C. *To Fly: The Story of the Wright Brothers*. Illus. by Robert Andrew Parker. 2002. 48p. Clarion, \$16 (0-618-13347-X).

Gr. 3–5. A blend of historical and personal facts portrays Orville, the idea man, and Wilbur, the problem solver, as they experiment with kites and gliders on their journey toward their December 1903 success at Kitty Hawk. The ink-and-wash illustrations capture the airy feeling of flight, while the text delivers the facts and ignites readers' imaginations.

Fiction

Grimes, Nikki. *Talkin' about Bessie: The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman*. Illus. by E. B. Lewis. 2002. 48p. Orchard, \$16.95 (0-439-35243-6).

Gr. 3–5. Based on fact but full of

imagined details, this oral history consists of the voices of Bessie Coleman's friends, relatives, and associates and tells how she became the first licensed female aviator of African descent. Grimes' poetic and varied monologues relate the hardship and prejudice that Bessie overcame to realize her dream "to amount to something," and Lewis' rich watercolors bring her story to life.

Web Site

The *National Air and Space Museum*, a division of the Smithsonian Institution, offers information on the Wright brothers at <http://www.nasm.si.edu/wrightbrothers/>. "The Wright Brothers: The Invention of the Aerial Age" provides the viewer with biographical information, insights into the invention of the flying machine, and a gallery of artifacts that bring the impact of early flight to life. Interactive experiments on flight as well as classroom activities provide rich curricular connections to the events of 1903 in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

The Depression Era

The crash of the stock market and the ensuing poverty of a nation tested the spirit of determined Americans in troubled times.

Nonfiction

Blumenthal, Karen. *Six Days in October: The Stock Market Crash of 1929*. 2002. 160p. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum, \$17.95 (0-689-84276-7).

Gr. 6–12. The plunge of the stock market in 1929 resulted in the loss of \$25 billion in individual wealth. Enhanced by political cartoons, *New York Times* reprints, and powerful photographs, this title from the Wall Street Journal Books for Children series intersperses stock market fundamentals while guiding the reader through events leading up to and including the mammoth crash of October 29, 1929.

Listed below are articles from past issues of *Book Links* that relate to this topic. For information on how to obtain back issues, see p.3.

- "Living in America, 1900–1950," January 2000, p.33
- "Living in America, 1950–2000," April/May 2001, p.57
- "1950 to 2000 in Picture Books," September 2003, p.21

Fiction

Henderson, Aileen Kilgore. *Hard Times for Jake Smith: A Story of the Depression Era*. 2004. 216p. Milkweed, \$16.95 (1-57131-648-5).

Gr. 5–9. Disguising herself as a boy, Mary Jake is determined to make it on her own after she's abandoned by her sharecropper parents on the side of the road during the Great Depression. A cast of memorable characters inspires courage and resilience in this rags-to-riches story set amidst the historical realities of 1930s Alabama.

Web Site

The Learning Page in the American Memory section of the *Library of Congress* Web site at <http://learning.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/depwwii/depress/depress.html> blends informative, reader-friendly text about the Great Depression with links to photo archives and authentic documents. Lesson plans and student resources also link to related sites to further enrich teaching, researching, and learning about this time.

America's Pastime

When the times get tough, Americans turn to sports to recapture the thrill of victory, to give purpose to life, and to restore hope for both the underdog and the athlete as hero.

Nonfiction

Robinson, Sharon. *Promises to Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America*. 2004. 64p. Scholastic, \$16.95 (0-439-42592-1).

Gr. 4–6. In this account of one of our greatest national heroes, told from the perspective of his daughter, Robinson is hailed for his inspiring effort as the first black player in Major League Baseball. Photos and letters from the family archives enhance this story of commitment.

Fiction

Giff, Patricia Reilly. *All the Way Home*. 2001. 176p. Delacorte, \$15.95 (0-385-32209-7); Yearling, paper, \$5.99 (0-440-41182-3).

Gr. 4–6. Mariel, stricken with polio when she was four, walks awkwardly on misshapen legs. She's taken in by Loretta, who also adopts young Brick after his home is destroyed in a fire. The preteens become friends in this memorable picture of 1940s America, told against the backdrop of Loretta's hope that her beloved Dodgers will win the pennant.

Web Site

The *Baseball Hall of Fame* Web site at <http://www.baseballhalloffame.org> offers seemingly endless biographical information, baseball statistics, and historical connections for the avid baseball fan and history buff alike. Searching the site reveals player names and memorable events that served as national milestones during the twentieth century.

D-Day

The biggest invasion in the history of warfare on June 6, 1944, served as a turning point on the European front in World War II and expedited the Allies' united effort to halt Hitler.

Nonfiction

Tanaka, Shelley. *D-Day: They Fought to Free Europe from Hitler's Tyranny*. Illus. by David Craig. 2004. 48p. Hyperion, \$16.99 (0-7868-1881-6).

Gr. 5–8. In this title in the *A Day That Changed America* series, paraphrased reminiscences provide close-ups of the D-Day invasion from the points of view of a paratrooper, a P-47 pilot, a landing craft crew-member, and a combat medic. Craig's full-page paintings of GIs in battle are interspersed with war photographs and artifacts that visually transport the reader to Normandy.

Fiction

Myers, Walter Dean. *The Journal of Scott Pendleton Collins, a World War II Soldier; Normandy, France, 1944*. 1999. 144p. Scholastic, \$10.95 (0-439-05013-8).

Gr. 5–8. The events leading up to and including the losses of D-Day provide the essence of this journal of a fictional United States soldier in this entry in the *My Name Is America* series. The dreams, beliefs, and aspirations revealed in one soldier's journal personalize the sacrifices endured during World War II.

Web Site

The *PBS American Experience* Web site at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/dday> invites viewers to link to a time line, maps, and a teacher's guide about D-Day. Additional links to letters GIs sent home, the contents of paratroopers' 70-pound packs, and additional D-Day facts provide a realistic dimension to the gripping saga of the Normandy invasion.

The Holocaust

The horror of the deaths of six million Jews in more than 100 death

camp stands as a reminder of the danger inherent in unchecked intolerance.

Nonfiction

Warren, Andrea. *Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps*. 2001. 160p. HarperCollins, \$16.99 (0-688-17497-3); HarperTrophy, paper, \$6.99 (0-06-000767-2).

Gr. 7–12. As a result of Hitler's plan to annihilate Europe's Jews, 15-year-old Jack Mandelbaum is torn from his family and thrown into a concentration camp. Jack's will to survive helps him forge friendships with other prisoners and fuels a day-by-day mental game in which he engages with his captors. The combination of Mandelbaum's experience and Warren's reporting of the whole picture makes this an excellent introduction for readers who don't know much about the history.

Fiction

Spinelli, Jerry. *Milkweed*. 2003. 224p. Knopf, \$15.95 (0-375-81374-8).

Gr. 7–12. Living in the streets of Nazi-occupied Warsaw, a young orphan struggles to identify with his Jewish/Gypsy heritage. Yet "Stop-thief" soon realizes it is safest to be nobody, in this World War II story. Blending survival adventure with Holocaust history, the author manages to distance the brutality of the time without sparing the reader the truth of the dreadful conditions.

Web Site

The Web site of the *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* at <http://www.ushmm.com/museum/exhibit> presents special online exhibitions. Of special note for fifth- through eighth-grade students are "Life in Shadows: Hidden Children and the Holocaust" and "Anne Frank, the Writer." Scripts,

study guides, and artifact galleries are available for these special exhibits. The home page also contains exemplary lessons for classroom use.

The Civil Rights Movement

The struggle of African Americans to be treated equally is exemplified in the nonviolent message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Nonfiction

Myers, Walter Dean. *I've Seen the Promised Land: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* Illus. by Leonard Jenkins. 2004. 40p. HarperCollins, \$15.99 (0-06-027703-3).

Gr. 3–6. Set against key moments in the civil rights movement, this chronology shares the spiritual power

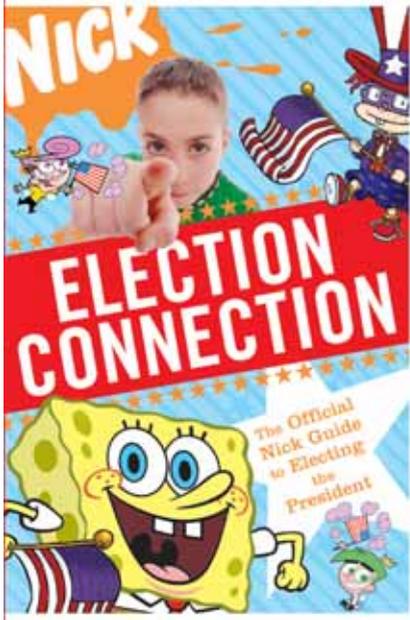
of this eloquent leader and his belief that nonviolence could overcome racial discrimination. The emotional narrative blended with compelling paintings effectively portrays efforts to achieve freedom and fairness for all people. The endpapers feature a time line of the civil rights movement.

Fiction

Robinet, Harriette Gillem. *Walking to the Bus-Rider Blues*. 2000. 160p. Simon & Schuster, \$16 (0-689-83191-9).

Gr. 3–6. The Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott in the summer of 1956 provides the backdrop for the story of how Alfa Merryfield and his family survive when their money is stolen. The bus boycott provides a backdrop for their struggle for food, rent, and personal dignity.

Make the Election Connection!



Educators, here's a chance to make the election process come to life in the classroom!

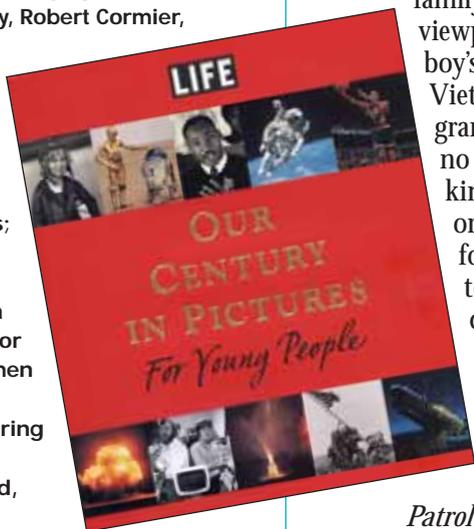
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Additional Resources

- The *Eyewitness to History* Web site at www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/20frm.htm provides insightful links to articles about events of the twentieth century. Events include the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912, and Lindbergh's transatlantic flight in 1927, among others. These rich first-hand accounts of recent history showcase events through the eyes of those who lived through them. The articles are set in printer-friendly versions for classroom use and include references for further research.
- *Life: Our Century in Pictures for Young People*. Edited by Richard B. Stolley. 2000. 225p. Little, Brown, \$25.95 (0-316-81589-6). Gr. 5–12. Combining essays with large-scale, well-captioned photos, this adaptation of an adult coffee-table book wraps up the events and themes of the twentieth century. The book is divided into nine chronological chapters, each with an introductory essay by such authors as Lois Lowry, Robert Cormier, and Patricia and Fredrick McKissack; several pages of photographs; a "Turning Point" event; and a "Requiem" for prominent men and women who died during the period. Well-selected, beautifully designed, and presented with the context that young readers need, the images here convey both the misery and jubilation of the century.



Web Site

The *Civil Rights Documentation Project* Web site at <http://www.usm.edu/crdp> offers oral history audio clips and transcripts of interviews with civil rights movement participants, as well as a civil rights time line.

Vietnam War

An undeclared war, a war without clear objectives, a noble cause, or a shameful venture? The Vietnam War resulted in the loss of 58,000 American lives and was the first combat viewed on television, as well as the first war to which many Americans voiced opposition.

Nonfiction

Warren, Andrea. *Escape from Saigon: How a Vietnam War Orphan Became an American Boy*. 2004. 128p. Farrar/Melanie Kroupa, \$17 (0-374-32224-4).

Gr. 7–12. This stirring photo-essay tells the story of Matt Steiner, an Amerasian orphan from Vietnam who was adopted by an American family. Written from a child's viewpoint, it describes the boy's struggle to survive in Vietnam, the anguish of his grandmother who could no longer care for him, the kindness of rescuers at the orphanage as they arrange for his adoption, and the terrifying evacuation under Operation Babylift before the fall of Saigon.

Fiction

Myers, Walter Dean. *Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam*. Illus. by Ann Grifalconi. 2002. 40p. HarperCollins, \$16.95 (0-06-028363-7); HarperTrophy, paper, \$6.99 (0-06-073159-1).

Gr. 7–12. This emotional, poetic picture book for older readers shares

the voice of one soldier in the thick jungle of Vietnam. The first-person narration and Grifalconi's collages combine to depict the physical nature of combat and the ongoing fear and awareness of war's violence. For this soldier, there is no heroism—only weariness and longing for the war to be over.

Web Site

The *PBS American Experience* Web site at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/vietnam>, provides a powerful visual and textual overview of this undeclared war with a time line, video clips, and a "who's who" of names from the U.S., North and South Vietnam, and Cambodia, as well as personal reflections from veterans and others.

Migrant Workers

The migration of laborers from Mexico to the fields of California created a hero as Cesar Chavez led the fight to unionize farmworkers.

Nonfiction

Krull, Kathleen. *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez*. Illus. by Yuyi Morales. 2003. 48p. Harcourt, \$17 (0-15-201437-3).

Gr. 4–8. This biographical tribute showcases the atrocious conditions and minimal pay of early migrant workers in California. Krull's empathetic text blends with Morales' mixed-media acrylic paintings to reveal worker emotions, the farm landscape, and Chavez's struggle against governmental power.

Fiction

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. 1999. 272p. Scholastic, \$16.95 (0-439-12041-1); paper, \$4.99 (0-439-12042-X).

Gr. 4–8. Wealthy Esperanza and her mama are forced to flee Mexico

to a farm labor camp in California. Adjusting to life without fancy dresses and servants is a struggle for Esperanza, who must confront the challenge of hard work. When Mama falls ill and a strike for better working conditions threatens to uproot their family, Esperanza embraces her future with both her family and the working community.

Web Site

The *United Farm Workers'* Web site at <http://www.ufw.org/history.htm> showcases the story of Cesar Chavez, founder of the organization in 1962, and his ongoing advocacy for migrant workers. The site contains the voice, images, speeches, and writing of Chavez, highlighting his heroic efforts on behalf of Mexican migrants and his vision for farmworkers and Latinos.

September 11, 2001

The unforgettable events of 9/11 provide an introduction to a new century—one marked by continuing challenges and unknown enemies but also by the ongoing hope and vision that propelled Americans through the twentieth century.

Nonfiction

Hampton, Wilborn. *September 11, 2001: Attack on New York City*. 2003. 144p. Candlewick, \$17.99 (0-7636-1949-3).

Gr. 6–9. The events of 9/11 resound through the voices of ordinary New Yorkers as they face this extraordinary disaster. Spouses, survivors, and Ground Zero volunteers share their thoughts from that day while the author fills in parallel events through poignant text and dramatic photographs. A somber epilogue reminds readers of this fateful

event that ushered in a century filled with new challenges for all humanity.

Fiction

Kalman, Maira. *Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey*. 2002. 40p. Putnam, \$16.99 (0-399-23953-7).

Gr. 3–9. Originally launched in 1931, the *John J. Harvey* was the most powerful fireboat of its times. Kalman's fast-forward to 1995 chronicles changes in New York, including the appearance of the Twin Towers and the retirement of the famed fireboat. The September 11 attacks bring the restored *John J. Harvey* back in action as it pumps water to the disaster site. The energy, vitality, and hope of a city and its people are captured in Kalman's expressive artwork in this story based on fact.

Web Site

The News Archive of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington at <http://www.september11news.com> contains photos, graphics, images, Web links, and newspaper articles, as well as live news for all 9/11-related events. Of particular note are links to U.S. and international newspapers and magazine covers that forever commemorate this unforgettable day.

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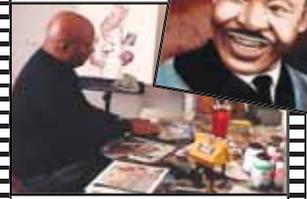
The Web sites listed in this article can be accessed through the *Book Links* Web site at <http://www.ala.org/BookLinks>.

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