

The POINT!



E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators
Vol. 13 No. March 2020

In Defense of Modern Art & Architecture

Art and architecture express the beliefs, ideas, and thoughts of the era in which they are created. A look at how a few specific historic eras expressed their thoughts and beliefs illustrates this idea.

When Rome fell, wandering tribes roamed over much of Europe raiding camps and villages and causing much suffering and disorder. The Christian church was the only organized group that offered some safety. Church buildings were built in the Romanesque style which consisted of thick walls and small windows and served as places of safety. In this time of lawlessness, the fortress like building expressed a need for safety.

In the 12th century, Medieval towns were not pleasant places. Sewers ran down the center of the streets that were over-run with rats. Houses had dirt floors and thatch roofs. Chamber pots were emptied from second floor windows. Life itself was harsh and death was always present from violence as well as disease. Heaven was promised by the Christian church as a better place and Hell was worse than earth. New architecture arose. These buildings had tall thin walls with sky scraping towers and large stained glass windows. Upon entering, one's eyes were immediately pulled upwards toward heaven, and the difference from the homes and buildings of the town presented quite a contrast. This had to be close to heaven or as close as one could get on earth. The Gothic Cathedral became the central meeting place of the new town and markets arose around it. This period is often called the Age of Faith and the Gothic Cathedral expresses the thoughts of the time.

The 15th century ushered in the Renaissance. Art began to be more earth bound as perspective made paintings look more realistic. This was the age of exploration and discovery and architects began to reflect this idea. Look at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Entering the building, the eyes are not immediately drawn upward but enticed to look around, at symbols on the floor and statues lining the walls draw one toward the front and center and finally upward to the dome. The message seems to be look around and do something before you go to heaven.

Math and Science were important in the 17th century and the architecture of the time reflected this in buildings that had a balanced appearance. There were an even number of windows in the facade. (See Independence Hall in Philadelphia.)

In the 18th century, the classical revival retained the balanced idea reflecting a strong feeling of order. The Capital in DC follows the Renaissance idea of decorating the floor, walls and ceiling and suggesting one to do something before leaving the earth.

The twentieth century ushered in modern art and architecture which are confusing to some degree. At once it reflects the idea expressed in a 1934 musical, "Anything Goes!" There seem to be no rules. We are reminded somewhat of how little we as individuals really know. Collectively we have learned to conquer distances, to fly, to produce great amounts of food as well as other goods and services. We have gone to the moon and we aim at Mars and the Universe. But as individuals we seem to be lost. Buildings today reflect the idea that form follows function. Church buildings today lead many to remark "It doesn't look like a church to me!" And probably there was an early Roman Christian who when Constantine donated a law court called a basilica to be used as a church, made the same remark. After all he was accustomed to meeting in the catacombs and the new building did not resemble a dark cave like gravesite.

Kindness is always fashionable. Amelia Barr, writer, teacher

Soldiers & Sailors Hall!

Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum houses a vast collection of primary and secondary documents and military artifacts. It is their mission to promote the use of these educational items and create an understanding for all groups who visit the museum. They provide a rich learning experience for all people by exploring the deeds and sacrifices of ordinary citizens during extraordinary circumstances.

S&S is pleased to announce that we have once again received funding to support our **Bus Scholarship Program**.

Don't forget contact S&S about VIP Tours and Footlocker program.

For more information visit our web site:

<https://soldiersandsailorshall.org>

One-Day Seminar: "Captains of Industry or Robber Barons?" hosted by Heinz History Center (Pittsburgh, PA)

August 14 @ 8:30 am - 3:00 pm

Revisit the Gilded Age, or Age of Enterprise as some call it and read about the ideas, actions, and legacies of the leading political and industrial figures of the times, exploring the question of whether these people are properly portrayed as either 'Robber Barons' or Captains of Industry' – or perhaps, something of both. Lunch will be provided at this free program, as well as a certificate for continuing education. All registrants will receive a copy of the reader, on paper, in advance of the program; and **digital copies will be available here** after early July 2020. Click [here](#) to register.

The Civil War and the Meaning of Liberty

Co-sponsored by The National Civil War Museum
and the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies.
Join us for a workshop at the National Civil War Museum!

Workshop participants will:

EXPLORE videos and readings and conduct hands-on lessons from the Choices Program's *The Civil War and the Meaning of Liberty* curriculum unit;

PERUSE the museum's collections, which include more than 4,400 three-dimensional artifacts and 21,000 archival pieces.

Our inquiry approach to controversial issues—both current and historical—will probe the history of the United States from 1830 to 1865 and consider the experiences of people in the United States in the 1800s as well as the issues driving the political confrontation over slavery and the meaning of liberty.

The Civil War and the Meaning of Liberty

Friday, April 3, 2020

9 am - 3:30 pm

Pre-registration is required.

Register



A patriot must always be ready to defend his country against its government. -Edward Abbey, naturalist and author (29 Jan 1927-1989)

The Point

For

Western Pennsylvania
Social Studies Educators

EDITORS

Leo R. West

John Larner

The Point is the
e-newsletter

of the former WPCSS
issued monthly via e-mail.

WPCSS was a non-profit 501c
organization dedicated to promoting
the teaching and learning of social
studies in Western Pennsylvania

Leo West

11533 Clematis Blvd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15235-3105



Taking it to the Streets: A Year of Global Protests

When historians look back at 2019, the story of the year will likely be the tsunami of protests that swept across six continents and engulfed both liberal democracies and ruthless autocracies.

In this free *Teaching with the News* lesson, students will examine photographs of protests from around the world and use the Question Formulation Technique to develop and refine research questions about the photographs. As they conduct research in multiple news and media outlets about global current events, students will analyze the origins and causes of protest movements and identify similarities, differences, and patterns.

Use This Free Lesson

Should early-childhood educators earn more?

Early-childhood educators should be earning more money, asserts Rhian Evans Allvin, CEO of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In this commentary, Allvin writes that a higher salary will help the field attract and retain the talent needed to improve outcomes for children. **Full Story:** [EdSurge](#) (2/14)

Are active shooter drills effective?

School drills that simulate active shooter or lockdown scenarios are ineffective and could be traumatizing for students, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association. In a white paper released Tuesday, the groups suggest that if schools conduct the drills, the event should be announced ahead of time and avoid being unnecessarily realistic.

Teacher of the Year wants students to know he's 'a real person'

North Hills Middle School teacher Joe Welch says he doesn't want to be "the teacher that comes in knowing I'm going to do the exact same lesson plan from last year." He tells Sarah Schneider that letting his guard down and tapping into his background in theater helped [make him Pennsylvania's 2019 Teacher of the Year](#). [National Public Radio](#) (2/11)

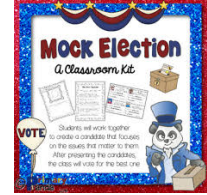
AI-based essay writers draw concern from educators

Some services are providing bot-generated essays that promise to be "plagiarism free." Tricia Bertram Gallant, director of the Academic Integrity Office at the University of California at San Diego, says programs like EssaySoft are generating poor work that wouldn't pass muster with many educators, but eventually the AI-based essay writers could upend educators' abilities to assess what students actually know. **Full Story:** [EdSurge](#) (2/12)

The useless men are those who never change with the years. J.M. Barrie, writer

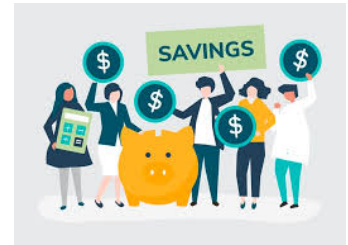
N.J. teaches civics through mock election

New Jersey students in grades four through 12 could vote online in a mock presidential primary this month for a hands-on civics lesson. NJ Vote 100 gave teachers an opportunity to get students thinking about the power of civic engagement, the history of voting rights, and what candidates and issues they want to support when they're old enough to vote. **Full Story:** [The Press of Atlantic City \(N.J.\) \(tiered subscription model\) \(2/19\)](#)



Students to learn financial literacy via videos

Megan Phipus, who has a master's degree in finance and appeared on "America's Got Talent" as a ventriloquist, teamed up with the University of Cincinnati to create a series of videos that will introduce grade-school students to financial literacy concepts. The "\$martPath with Megan Phipus" videos, produced in partnership with UC's Alpaugh Family Economics Center, feature Phipus singing original songs and working with puppets while talking about how to be responsible with money. **Full Story:** [WVXU-FM \(Cincinnati\) \(2/12\)](#)



Virtual students help train teachers

Marian University in Indiana is using mixed reality to give teaching students virtual classroom experience. The program gives future teachers real-world experience in the safety of a virtual environment and provides real-time feedback. **Full Story:** [Chalkbeat/Indiana \(2/11\)](#)



Trump Budget Cuts Vital Programs

Democracy demands wisdom of the average man. Without the exercise of wisdom free institutions and personal liberty are inevitably imperiled. To know the best that has been thought and said in former times can make us wiser than we otherwise might be, and in this respect the humanities are not merely our, but the world's best hope.
Commission on the Humanities, 1964

In 1965, President Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, setting up the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Since 1965, both the NEH and the NEA have provided millions of dollars in grants directly to individuals and institutions to support a wide variety of humanities and arts programs, including grants to provide professional learning opportunities to thousands of social studies, history, English, art, music, and other humanities teachers each year. On February 10, 2020, the White House released its proposed budget which would eliminate both the NEH and NEA, as well as many other government agencies and programs that support the teaching and learning of social studies and the humanities.

In addition, President Trump's budget calls for the elimination of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the Fulbright-Hays Program, the American History and Civics Academies and Grants Programs, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Civil Rights Cold Case Initiative, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 400 Years of African-American History Commission, and at least two National Park Service programs dedicated to preservation ([National Coalition for History, 2020](#)). These non-partisan programs enrich the lives of all Americans. The humanities, fine arts, and the social studies distinctively contribute to the general welfare of all people and their posterity in this great Nation.





High-schoolers document, restore internment camp

High-school students in Colorado are working to restore and preserve the site of an internment camp where people of Japanese descent and Japanese Americans were held during World War II. Teacher John Hopper guides the students who have been interviewing residents who remembered the camp and survivors who were held at the site, where little remains of a square mile space that held as many as 7,300 internees at its peak. **Full Story:** [NBC News \(2/16\)](#)

Student's father tells class about black inventors

Fourth-graders at a Grayson, Ga., elementary school recently learned about inventions created by black Americans from author Michael Carson, the father of a peer. Author of "African-American Inventions That Changed The World," Carson shared the stories of five inventors including one pioneer of video games.



Avi Ben-Hur returning to Pittsburgh!

Classrooms Without Borders is excited to bring Avi Ben-Hur back to Pittsburgh this March as our Scholar in Residence. A Brooklyn native, Avi Ben-Hur moved to Israel in 1983. From 2003-2008, Avi was Director of the Archaeological Seminars School for Israeli Tour Guides. In 2008, Avi participated in re-writing the curriculum of the National Guiding courses for the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. During 2002-2003, Avi led the curriculum development team for MELITZ, America's unique Israel centered curriculum. As a Scholar in Residence, Avi has lectured, taught and facilitated workshops in Pittsburgh, New Jersey, New York and Baltimore.



Currently, Avi is on the faculty of the University of Haifa Tourism School, an examiner for the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, and the Director of Education of Classrooms Without Borders.

An eclectic Israeli educator specializing in Land of Israel studies, the history of Jerusalem, the Arab-Israeli conflict and Holocaust studies, Avi's expertise is in integrating ideas and knowledge from various disciplines into a comprehensive and coherent narrative.

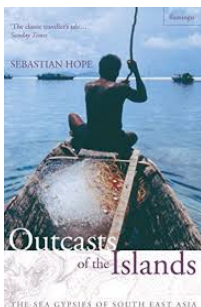
TEA-NCTA 2020 Summer Institute Applications now available

Applications now available for the TEA-NCTA 2020 Summer Institute, Considering Early Modern East Asia through Maritime History. July 5-9, 2020. University of Colorado Boulder.

From the 14th to 19th centuries, the sea closely linked countries of East Asia as they engaged in rich economic, diplomatic, and cultural exchange and war. Using the lens of maritime history, this institute offers secondary social studies teachers an opportunity to work with scholars and specialists to re-center historical studies of early modern East Asia from national histories of China, Japan, and Korea to narratives focusing on the sea-based, transborder people, institutions, and practices that connected the region. In this four-day institute, teachers will gain an understanding of the political, economic, and cultural systems of the early modern East Asian world and reconsider narratives of encounters and conflicts with European imperialist powers.

The institute will be held on the CU Boulder campus and application is open to secondary social studies teachers nationwide. Teachers selected for the programs will receive a travel stipend, room and board, and resource materials. **Application deadline is March 16, 2020.**

<https://www.colorado.edu/ptea/ncta/ncta-summer-institutes-and-programs-asia>



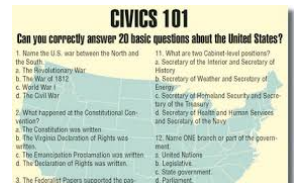
Students act in sketch to teach peers about census

Students at a Georgia middle school recently watched a sketch performed by the student council to learn how the census is used by local and federal government. The sketch features a tired census worker and a couple of misinformed individuals -- named Elvis and Dolly -- who are upset by the census worker's personal questions. **Full Story:** Gwinnett Daily Post (Lawrenceville, Ga.) (2/23)



Utah bill fails to drop civics testing requirement

A bill that would have eliminated a high-school civics test as a requirement for graduation has failed in the Utah House of Representatives. The failed bill's sponsor, Rep. Elizabeth Weight, D-West Valley City, said she had tried to get the stand-alone multiple-choice test incorporated into eighth-grade US History while also creating a task force to oversee history and civics education. **Full Story:** The Salt Lake Tribune (Salt Lake City) (2/22)



Colo. considers eliminating social studies assessment

Chalkbeat/Colorado (2/21)

Closing a chapter in the state's testing wars, Colorado lawmakers are quietly preparing to do away with the statewide high school social studies exam. It won't be missed much by students or teachers — because it hasn't been given since 2014.

A bill to do away with the high school social studies exam, which covers topics like history, geography, and civics, unanimously passed the state House on Friday with hardly any discussion. The bill was originally written to replace the exam with the U.S. citizenship test, but that provision was stripped out, leaving no test at all. The bill goes now to the Senate.



National Museum of the American Indian Teacher-in-Residence Program

The Native Knowledge 360° national education initiative promotes improved teaching and learning about American Indians. Teachers work to strengthen the pedagogical and practical goals of NK360° in a paid, eight-week residency this summer in Washington, D.C. Open to teachers, department heads, and curriculum coaches who have five or more years of classroom experience, or two years and a master's degree. Application deadline is Monday, March 23.

Learn more.

Professional Development

Living Earth 2020 Teach-In: Sustaining Our Future through Indigenous Knowledge

Learn about Indigenous knowledge, sustainability practices, and the importance of water. Attend poster or workshop sessions and explore online classroom resources from Native Knowledge 360°. Open to K–12 teachers. Held March 21 at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., and at NMAI in New York on April 4. Times for both are 9 am–1 pm.

Registration open for Washington session.



Villainy wears many masks, and none so dangerous as the mask of virtue.

Washington Irving, writer

The Bradford House Museum and Washington & Jefferson College

present

The Symposium on Life and Customs in Western Pennsylvania

An Evening with the Marquis de Lafayette



Marquis De Lafayette
Ben Goldman

Friday, April 3, 2020

The Chapel at Old Main, Washington & Jefferson College, Washington PA

6:30 p.m. Doors and displays open

7:00 p.m. Speakers

9:00 p.m. Reception and displays

Advance ticket purchase \$18 per person until noon, March 30.

<https://www.bradfordhouse.org/symposium>

\$20 per person at the door