

the MEL GABLERS'  
*Educational Research Analysts*  
Newsletter

Inside:  
*You can't say that!*

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*No home run, but a definite hit*

## A MUCH BETTER HIGH SCHOOL U.S. HISTORY TEXTBOOK

Texas just adopted new high school U.S. History books. Four major publishers offered texts. Three had more or less the same old pro-big government, anti-free market, political correctness problems. But one, ***THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC SINCE 1877 (Glencoe, 2003)***, broke ranks to become a benchmark. Its overall scholarship is superior to other high school U.S. History books seen in Texas in the last 40 years, in that it features:

**inclusion of  
pro-free enterprise perspectives**

It moves beyond 1930s quasi-Marxist "Robber Baron" interpretations on industrialization and big business.

**accurate treatment of  
strict and loose construction**

It rightly defines strict and loose construction of the Constitution, and properly discriminates between them.

**clear grasp of  
concepts of divided sovereignty**

It always distinguishes states' rights from state sovereignty, and Constitutional supremacy from federal supremacy.

**some due diligence on  
original intent**

It occasionally notes Jeffersonian-Jacksonian views of original intent on major Constitutional issues.

**divergent views on  
the Depression and New Deal**

It generally avoids partisanship on controversial topics in economic history from 1929 to 1939.

This text also affirms the conservative nature of the American Revolution by closely relating it to its British constitutional historical context. On resource economics it correctly distinguishes "scarcity" from "shortages," noting that the latter result from government price ceilings. It equally presents pros and cons on whether global warming exists, and on economic policy measures to deal with it. It avoids most excesses of political correctness.

A chief flaw in the book is that student activities in its Teacher's Edition, and end-of-chapter exercises, do not reinforce the exceptional portions of the text narrative. It ignores many Constitutional issues of Radical Reconstruction that would have engendered strife even without a race factor. Its pro-women's lib slant on the 1960s - 70s echoes adversarial views of gender relations with inadequate counterpoint. Our critique documents these defects.

Yet this Glencoe book reviews the pre-1877 period in greater depth than the other high school U.S. History texts. This is vital because high schoolers can absorb more than 8<sup>th</sup> graders; because recent immigrants may have missed the first half of U.S. History in 8<sup>th</sup> grade; and because many colleges do not require students to take U.S. History. If not in high school, some Americans will never learn pre-1877 U.S. History. That would be tragic.

**8<sup>th</sup> grade companion volume**

The same four publishers submitted 8<sup>th</sup> grade as well as high school U.S. History books in Texas. We found 249 remaining uncorrected factual errors in the four high school books. But we had time to identify only the 59 factual errors in Glencoe's 8<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History book — *The American Republic to 1877* — for correction in the final Texas edition. The other three publishers' 8<sup>th</sup> grade books doubtless still have uncorrected factual errors.