



DIALOGUES *for the* **AMERICAN HISTORY** **CLASSROOM 1492-1865**

A How-To With Examples For Middle and Secondary American History Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

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Cover Graphics by Kyra Kolitsch

Editor - Craig Berg

Authors - Craig Berg, Ben Hubing, Matthew Wood and Joe Duellman

Dialogues for the American History Classroom 1492-1865 and 1865-2010: A How-To With Examples For Middle and Secondary Social Studies Teacher Preparation and Professional Development/ Craig Berg. - 1st Edition

ISBN 978-1-936601-14-1

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Target Audience

The strategies, activities and professional development materials in this book are consistent with state and national education standards for learning and teaching. This book was written for, and therefore targets, pre-service teachers, in-service teacher professional development, and for teachers pursuing an advanced certification or national board certification, or a Masters degree in teaching.

To Get This Free Book

Note that what you are currently viewing is a partial copy of the book. The full copy of the book has the complete section on how and why to use dialogues, and contains five example dialogues per volume. The *Table of Contents* and example pages provided here should be enough for you to determine if you want the complete 82 page book.

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Introduction

In my thirty plus years as a teacher and teacher educator, I find that great ideas for teaching stem from researchers studying teaching and learning, and from teachers who have persevered to find ways to reach more children in order to maximize learning in their classroom. Many of these creative and highly effective teaching ideas arise from teachers who are embedded in the most challenging situations, and, as such, are motivated to explore, find, or develop new strategies or materials to use with their students so as to have a greater impact on their learning.

Teachers who embrace these challenges of teaching and learning accumulate a substantial set of teaching tools, when combined with a clear framework and rationale for teaching, are able to utilize *the appropriate tool for the moment at hand*. Dialogues are another teaching tool; a teaching strategy that will help teachers reach children in ways that other strategies might not. Dialogues involve students in speaking and listening, acting and reacting, tapping into emotional and kinesthetic parts of the brain. *State and National Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in Subject Areas* are very clear in that “students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas.” The Standards are also very clear in that we must engage our students in learning using strategies that maximize engagement in all aspects of the process. In short, dialogues maximize student’s engagement in the learning process; all students are involved as active participants when dialogues are in play.

Dialogues have been tested from elementary to college levels and in urban, suburban and rural classrooms. You might decide to use them as is, or might modify them and add your own spin or local context to them. You might also craft some from scratch, or have students write dialogues; we have included some suggestions and tips for writing dialogues.

Dialogues engage learners at high levels, so try them! Your students will enjoy the activity, learn something about the content you are trying to teach them, and learn something about themselves. You will witness the power of using dialogues when students ask “When are we going to do another dialogue?”

Editor - Dr. Craig Berg

Using This Book

There are two major sections to this book:

Section I - Using Dialogues in the Classroom: This section details the key aspects of using dialogues in the classroom - the what, when, and how to, of using and writing dialogues. This section provides examples of how dialogues can target content goals, and used to start a debate or discussion, or used to help students grapple with current issues or ethical dilemmas, or used to show how one historical figure might have communicated with another historical figure. They can also be used for practicing communication skills such as speaking, acting and listening, or used as an assessment tool to determine what students learned about the topic or unit. In addition, there are numerous suggestions and tips for implementing dialogues in the classroom, and the benefits thereof, with guidelines on how to write your own dialogues, and how to have students create their own dialogues as a measure of what they learned.

Section II - Table of Contents, Abstracts and Sample Dialogues: This section provides the reader with a *Table of Contents* and the *Abstracts* from each of the dialogue volumes. The abstracts provides a quick overview of each dialogue and the social studies concepts or terms embedded within. Scanning the abstracts helps the reader determine which dialogue might be suitable for the upcoming lesson. In addition, there are six example dialogues from each volume for the reader to choose from, and try out with children in classrooms. In order, they include:

Dialogues for the American History Classroom 1492-1865: The section contains the *Table of Contents*, *Abstracts*, and six examples of the sixty-three dialogues that cover history of America from years 1492-1865.

Dialogues for the American History Classroom 1865-2010: This section contains the *Table of Contents*, *Abstracts*, and six examples of the sixty-three dialogues that cover history of America from years 1865-2010.

Section I - Using Dialogues in the Classroom

Introduction

Section I details the key aspects of using dialogues in the classroom - the what, when, and how to, of using and writing dialogues. This section provides examples of how dialogues can introduce students to topics and content, or be used to review what was learned. Dialogues can be used to start a debate or discussion, and in the process help students form their own opinion, or develop an argument regarding an issue. Dialogues, while most often composed to teach about historical aspects of the subject, can also help students grapple with current issues, or ethical dilemmas, as well as help relate current events to historical events. In addition, this section contains numerous suggestions and tips for implementing dialogues in the classroom and the benefits thereof, with guidelines on how to write your own dialogues, and how to have students create their own dialogues as a measure of what they learned.

What Are Dialogues?

Dialogues are conversations between two or more characters regarding a topic being studied in class. Built into the conversation is historical content, concepts, information and ideas that students should know, understand and think about. For example, in this short excerpt from dialogue 19. *Articles of Confederation (1780s)*, the characters are discussing the formation of the United States government.

Steve and Sandy are sitting at the dining room table, studying for their history final exam.

Steve: Hey Sandy. Thanks for helping me cram for my test tomorrow. I need all the help I can get.

Sandy: No problem. Let's get started. What was the first government of the United States?

Steve: That's easy, it is the United States Constitution.

Sandy: Nope!

Steve: What? Are you serious? George Washington, Constitutional Convention, Bill of Rights, what am I missing here?

Sandy: Before the Constitution, there was another government that didn't work out so well. It was called the Articles of Confederation.

Steve: Huh. I had no idea. Why did it not work out?

Sandy: Well there were a lot of problems. The first was that there was no president in this system, or a judicial branch for that matter. There was simply a one-house Congress.

Steve: Why would they not have a president? That is pretty dumb.

(continued on the next page)

Sandy: Remember, the US had just broken away from England, and they had seen the King of England as an abusive and corrupt leader. They were afraid that if they put too much power in one man's hand, he might become another tyrant.

Steve: Fair enough, but I feel like the president is a pretty important figure in American politics.

Sandy: Absolutely. Not having a president meant that all the power of the federal government was in the Congress. But Congress had its own issues.

Steve: Like what?

Sandy: Unlike today, Congress was unicameral, meaning it had just one house. Each state, no matter the size, had one single vote. This meant that huge states like Virginia had the same representation as tiny states like Delaware, which many thought was unfair. In addition, you needed 9 of the 13 states to pass a law, 13 of 13 to amend the Articles. As if this wasn't hard enough to do, many times Congressmen were absent and there wasn't enough of them there to debate issues.

Steve: That sounds really inefficient. Anything else I need to know?

Sandy: Not only was it impossible to pass laws, but the Congress in general was not very powerful. It had no ability to tax or raise an army. In fact, all of the power under the Articles of Confederation rested with each individual state. State governors and legislatures had the power to raise taxes and militias within their own borders. Again, the fear of a strong central government like the British convinced the leaders to make the national government weak.

Steve: I understand why they were nervous about a strong national government, but it seems like a disaster waiting to happen.

Sandy: It really was. The government under the Articles was too weak to respond to foreign threats, and the Spanish and English, whose colonies bordered the United States, knew that this made America vulnerable. Eventually a farmers' rebellion broke out called Shays' Rebellion. When the national government was unable to respond to this crisis effectively, it was the last straw for many Americans. Leaders finally decided to get together and write the Constitution.

Steve: Was there anything good that came out of the Articles of Confederation?

Sandy: Actually, yes. Two laws were passed that were crucial to establishing some order in the young republic. The first was the Land Ordinance of 1785. This law helped organize the land to the west of the states that was unorganized and being claimed randomly by the states. The Land Ordinance took the land and divided it up into 36 square mile townships that could be more easily settled. Another law that was important was the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which helped set up the process by which territories could apply to become states. Both of these laws were crucial in setting up the system that would encourage westward movement and expansion in the decades that followed.

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Note that Steve and Sandy are having a conversation based on information stemming from a topic covered (or about to be) in history class. This dialogue continues on until our two characters have a better understanding of how the *Articles of Confederation* were a stepping stone toward the *Constitution*. During the conversation, important and pertinent information is uncovered and discussed. Often in a dialogue, one character knows a bit more about the subject matter and helps the other character come to a better understanding through statements, questions and responses, and robust conversation.

One way to use dialogues in class is to have students in class pair up; each person takes on the role of one of the characters by reading that part of the conversation. Picture thirty students in class, with fifteen pairs of students who are reading/acting the Steve and Sandy parts of the dialogue. The goal of using dialogues is to engage all students in the class in an activity that uses multiple senses, such as seeing, speaking and listening, but at the same time taps into parts of the brain that connect to kinesthetic and emotion, in an interchange centered around learning the content or material designated as important for that particular lesson or unit. Students read and act out the dialogue, and in the process are engaged in a conversation that addresses key aspects of the concept and common stumbling points to understanding the concept. There is much more in later pages on how to use dialogues, but for now, read on.

Using Dialogues in the Classroom - What For?

Dialogues can introduce students to topics and content goals, or be used to review what was learned. Dialogues can be used to start a debate or discussion, and in the process help students form their own opinion, or develop an argument regarding a topic. Dialogues, while most often composed to teach about historical aspects of the subject, can also help students grapple with current issues and ethical dilemmas, as well as help relate current events to historical events. Dialogues can also be used as a writing exercise designed to find out what students know about the topic.

1. Dialogues can be used for learning content - Dialogues can introduce students to topics and content goals, or be used to review what was learned. During the dialogue the characters come to a better understanding of the concept through a conversation much like real students might have when attempting to understand a topic. Teachers, who wrote the dialogues, utilized years of past experiences with student's thinking to craft dialogues that represent difficulties students have with various concepts and topics. As such, many of the dialogues address common misconceptions (or preconceptions) targeting areas where students commonly have difficulties in learning the material. Well-written dialogues have terms or concepts embedded in the dialogue. For example, take this excerpt from dialogue 44. *Texan Revolution (1835-6)*, a discussion focused on learning about some factors and events that led up to Texas becoming a state.

Austin and Sam are driving on the highway to a concert, when Sam spots something on the car in front of them.

Sam: *(pointing out car dashboard window)* Look at that bumper sticker! "Don't Mess With Texas!" I love that!

Austin: Yeah, that is cool. That attitude goes all the way back to when Texas was its own country back in the 1830s.

Sam: What? Texas was its own country? How did that work?

Austin: To understand the history of Texas, you have to go back all the way to the age of exploration. Texas was part of a huge territory colonized by the Spanish. New Spain, as it was called, was made up of what is now the Southern United States, Mexico, Latin, and South America. It was a huge region that was controlled, often brutally, by the Spanish conquistadors. But by the early 1800s, Spain's power in the Americas was not what it used to be.

Sam: Uh oh, not good. What happened?

Austin: Throughout the early years of the 19th century, a number of groups in America began breaking away from the Spanish, including Mexico, which gained its independence by 1820. Mexico was still a pretty massive area though, and had a hard time controlling its northern territory, including what is today, Texas. There was almost nobody living there, and a number of natives hostile to Mexico threatened the region. Oh yeah, and the new Mexican government was broke after fending off the Spanish.

Sam: So what did the Mexican government do?

Austin: They encouraged American settlers, who were moving westward in this time period, to come and settle in Texas. A land agent named Stephen F. Austin, encouraged thousands of Americans to settle in the territory. Soon there were more Americans living in the region than Mexicans. But this also brought tension between the two sides.

Sam: What led both sides to not get along?

Austin: The American settlers were generally English-speaking Protestants, many of which had slaves. Most Mexicans were Spanish-speaking Catholics, and slavery had been banned in Mexico. These differences created distrust between the different groups. Eventually the Mexican government passed laws that banned US immigration into Mexico.

Sam: The Mexicans didn't want the Americans crossing the border? That is ironic, considering immigration policy in the United States today! So what happened?

Austin: The policy couldn't stop the massive wave of American migration. These Americans were used to having a say in their government, and a constitution that represented the will of the people. They began to demand that the Mexican government do the same.

Sam: This sounds like trouble is brewing.

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2. Dialogues can be used to start a debate or discussion, and in the process help students form their own opinion, or develop an argument regarding a topic. For example, in dialogue 53. *Bleeding Kansas (1856)*, John tries to help clear up Steve's confusion about the conflict in Kansas about slavery.

Two friends, Steve and John meet in the park and catch up after not seeing each other in about a week.

John: Hey, Steve. How was your family reunion?

Steve: *(sarcastically)* Ugh, there's no place like home! Kansas is so boring! It is flat and there is nothing to do.

John: Sounds like a rough time. Well, its too bad you missed history class. We talked about Kansas back in the 1850s, and it was a lot more exciting back then from the sounds of it!

Steve: Really, what happened? A big twister?

John: Nope, a conflict that was even more deadly. Things got so bad and ugly that the territory was called "Bleeding Kansas."

Steve: Wow, how did things get so rough?

John: It all started with a bill in Congress called the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It was proposed by Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas. In this time period, there was a vicious debate going on nationwide about the future of slavery. Many Northerners saw slavery as a moral evil, and did not want to see it spread. Others in the South saw it as critical to their economy, and intensely defended their practice.

Steve: So what did the Kansas-Nebraska Act have to do with slavery?

John: Both territories weren't that far away from becoming states, and Northerners and Southerners were watching carefully to see if they would become slave states or free states. The bill proposed that the issue of slavery in both Kansas and Nebraska be determined by popular sovereignty.

Steve: What does that even mean?

John: Popular sovereignty is the idea that the people of the territories decide the fate of slavery for themselves. Basically, if most people want slavery, it is allowed; if most people do not like slavery, it is banned.

Steve: That makes sense. Majority rules.

John: Douglas would agree with you, but many abolitionists disagreed. They felt like slavery was simply wrong, no matter what most people in the territory think. Regardless, the idea was that since Nebraska was the more Northern of the two territories, they would most likely ban slavery, and Kansas to the south would probably allow it. But, things didn't work out as planned.

(continued on the next page)

Steve: Uh, oh. What happened?

John: Well, abolitionists from the North that wanted to eliminate slavery rushed into Kansas to mess up the plan. When the territory voted on a constitution that would either allow or ban slavery, there was probably 10 antislavery people for every 1 proslavery person. But, proslavery forces crossed over the border from Missouri and illegally voted in the election, and somehow the proslavery constitution was selected.

Steve: Dang. So what did the antislavery people do?

John: They set up their own government in Topeka. But this is where things got ugly. Proslavery and antislavery groups began to clash.

Steve: What happened?

John: Obviously there was resentment on both sides, and violence ensued. Pro-slavery groups attacked a group of free settlers at Lawrence. Then antislavery groups, led by a man named John Brown, invaded the town of Pottawatomie Creek and hacked a bunch of the settlers to death. Brown claimed that he had heard voices from God that told him to do it.

Steve: Wow, that John Brown guy sounds nuts. I mean, obviously slavery is a bad thing, but how does him killing a bunch of people make things any better. Two wrongs, don't make a right, you know?

John: Yeah, he was certainly a radical guy. But from his perspective, the government had done nothing to solve the problem of slavery, so it was up to him to take matters into his own hands. Both sides continued to clash, as Brown invaded the town of Osawatomie and the proslavery men killed five men at the Marais des Cygnes Massacre.

Steve: This is pretty intense. It's hard to believe that all of this happened before the Civil War even began.

John: Yeah, "Bleeding Kansas" really increased tension nationwide and helped push the nation closer to war.

Steve: The closest thing to a conflict at my reunion was when my uncle ate all of the potato salad!

John: *(rolling eyes)* Wow, good thing John Brown wasn't there.

(continued on page 157)

Following the dialogue, the teacher can post discussion questions, perhaps something such as: Does something that seems to be morally wrong deserved to be voted on? As such, dialogues can be used to start or stimulate classroom discussion.

For another example of a dialogue that can be used to start a debate or discussion in history class, see dialogue 17. *Patriots vs. Loyalists (1776)*. In this dialogue, set in the year 1775, 17-year-olds Hutch and Pauly are citizens of the New England region in the northeast. They are on the verge of joining the American protests against British rule in the colonies. Pauly has just arrived at Hutch's house and Hutch answers the door.

Hutch: *(somewhat tentative)* Hey, Pauly.

Pauly: *(excited)* Hey, Hutch! You ready to go to this American Whig meeting over at city hall?

Hutch: *(sort of disappointed)* Uh, sorry, Pauly. I really don't know if I should.

Pauly: *(kind of angry)* What?! Come on, man. What are you some kind of a Tory or King's Man or something?

Hutch: Well, you know I want to come with you, but yeah, my dad is a pretty hardcore royalist and I don't think he'd like it much if he found out I went to an American Whig meeting.

Pauly: Come on! My dad doesn't care. In fact, my dad supports the American Whigs. He's a proud patriot and one of the leaders of this meeting!

Hutch: Yeah, but your dad is so young. He was born and raised here. Plus, he has an education and he owns his own business. He has good reason not to want to be taxed by the British.

Pauly: So what? It's not like your dad doesn't have any money. You and I went to the same school for years. Your family was obviously able to pay for it. Your dad may not be overly wealthy but you've still got plenty of gold sunk into this house.

Hutch: Yeah, OK, my family is pretty well set, but look where our money comes from. My father is a distributor of British tea, and my uncle, who runs the company, still lives in London!

Pauly: *(getting frustrated)* But you're not your dad. You're an American, just like me! Born and raised here. We should be able to make American laws, not be run by some government across an ocean. You don't have to follow everything your dad and family say.

Hutch: *(upset at the family comment)* Let's keep my family out of this now and think a little bit about common sense.

Pauly: OK, deal. Let's hear your arguments.

(continued on page 72)

3. Dialogues can help students grapple with current issues and ethical dilemmas, as well as help relate current events to historical events. A prime example of this is in dialogue 61. *Immigration* where Angel and Ellis continue their discussion from a class where they had been talking about immigration laws, especially those relating to modern immigration in America.

- Angel: I can't believe this. Look at our country! Garbage piles everywhere, still persistent racism in many places, a government that can't agree on anything, and maybe worst of all, the assumption that all poor people are just lazy. Why would anybody want to come here?
- Ellis: Well, there are a lot of reasons. They are called push and pull factors.
- Angel: Yeah, I guess I get that. There are things that push people away from their country and things in our country that pull them here. I can get it in historical terms, but why would people still want to come here?
- Ellis: Well, let's look at why people used to come here. Let's start at the wayback, Christopher Columbus.
- Angel: OK, pull factor, new trade and economic opportunities.
- Ellis: Right, and you could probably say just wanting to explore new places, but I'm not sure if that would be a push or a pull.
- Angel: You could probably say either one, or both. How about moving a bit further along in history - the Pilgrims and colonial immigrants of the Northeast. The pull factor was obviously the religious freedom that they would get in the new world.
- Ellis: Then the push factor would have to be that the government in England did not want them there and was treating them badly, so that was their reason to leave. What about the colonial Americans in the Middle and Southern colonies?
- Angel: Many came for economic freedom and the chance to make their own fortunes.
- Ellis: So those were the pull factors, but the push was a practice called primogeniture. In England, all the inheritance usually went to the oldest son. If you weren't the oldest, you didn't get anything when the old man died.
- Angel: So, they were pushed from England because they wanted to get wealthy on their own. What about some other cultural groups that have immigrated to America? The Chinese, Irish, Germans, and Italians?

(continued on the next page)

Ellis:	In the case of the Chinese, as with other groups, there were several different times and reasons for immigrating to America. The first was the gold rush. The young Chinese men would come to America in search of gold, then send the profits back home to their families or villages. They were generally men that didn't have good jobs, so they were looking for economic opportunity.
Angel:	And the more recent Chinese immigrants?
Ellis:	More recently, Chinese have been coming to America to go to college. Some go back home to use their education in China, while others decide to stay here.
Angel:	And what about the Irish? I know that there was a huge famine in Ireland at one point, so that would definitely be a push factor.
Ellis:	Then the pull factor, once again, was economic opportunity. During one of the major Irish immigrations the American government was giving away a lot of land out West. This was land that the Irish would never have had the opportunity to gain if they stayed home in Ireland.
Angel:	I think those are the typical push and pull factors people usually think about with the Irish, but I've heard that they came here in the early days of colonization, too. It's just that back in the sixteen hundreds they were coming as indentured servants to work off debts or prison sentences. Then later Irish generations came over because manual labor was needed.
Ellis:	Really? The Irish came over as cheap laborers?
Angel:	Absolutely. In many cases, the Irish were seen as lower workers than slaves, because an Irish person would volunteer for terrible jobs to be paid, but slaves cost their owners money.
Ellis:	So if a slave died working he was a monetary loss, but if an Irishman died working it didn't matter and they just brought in another one?
Angel:	Sadly, yes, that's pretty much the way it worked in some cases. OK, what about the other major European groups in America, the Germans and Italians?
Ellis:	Well, one major push factor is always war. People don't want to be in the middle of a war in their country.
Angel:	So World War One and World War Two probably brought a lot of people to America then, hey?
<i>(continued on the next page)</i>	

Ellis:	Certainly. But by far there were more German immigrants to America in the 1800s. They came here because of upheaval and revolution in their government. That was the push factor. And another war that brought a nearly a million immigrants to America was the Vietnam War.
Ellis:	Really? I've never heard of that.
Angel:	Yep, when the American military left Southeast Asia, there were a lot people still there that supported American efforts. The authoritarian communist governments of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos didn't like these people too much and persecuted them. Millions went to America and elsewhere around the world.
Angel:	So then let's try to tie this all in to today. Obviously, the largest amount of immigrants to America today come from Mexico.
Ellis:	And the push factors we've gone over throughout history include poor chances to get a job, poor chances to get wealthy, famine, and war.
Angel:	And the pull factors are jobs and monetary opportunities, freedom of religion, freedom from corrupt or poor government, and to get an education. So why do Mexicans come here today?
Ellis:	I would have to say for almost all of those reasons. It's like Mexican immigration is really just another phase in America's history of immigration. Nothing to get upset over, no matter how big of a deal the government makes out of it.
Angel:	Yeah, cool, you're right. Well, nice chat, I've got to go see what Buffy is up to.

This particular dialogue lays the groundwork for students to understand that immigration is an ongoing issue, a controversy that has been around for a long time and not something with easy solutions. This dialogue is followed by a worksheet that asks students to list all of the push and pull factors that America has experienced throughout history, by country of origin, to reinforce what was learned in the dialogue and to connect it to other critical and related aspects of American history.

Students need to understand that our present day understanding of government, politics and other social studies concepts was often built over many hundreds or thousands of years. Dialogues can emphasize how a current or past issue is governed by many different players or factions, and also how historical events can be embedded into current issues or social dilemmas. Current social studies issues abound, and when incorporated, make a history class relevant and connect learning to issues that are immediate and important to learners. Dialogues can highlight the implications or consequences for one group of people versus another group with a different point of view. Students need to mentally wrestle with issues like these, not only to understand

the issues that face them now, but also to develop the skills necessary to improve how they deal with current issues, as well as their ability to resolve future issues. Dialogues can also be used to effectively model appropriate and professional discourse between people with conflicting views.

Such dialogues place the complex concept into the human context, demonstrating the importance of differing viewpoints and how strongly held convictions about existing ideas can impede the objective scrutiny of new ideas. Dialogues can highlight the various people, or groups, who have a stake in the decision and informs students of the historical aspects of the controversy, the politics, and the consequences of social studies-related decision-making. Imagine the exciting interactions among various groups of people when wrestling with conflicting notions of how the world works!

4. Dialogues can be used to show how one historical figure might have communicated with another historical figure. For example, dialogue 22. *Federalist and Anti-Federalist Debate (1787)*, two founding fathers, Patrick and Alexander, discuss the newly-proposed Constitution. Patrick is skeptical about the new ideas, but Alexander is confident that the new government will be effective. In dialouge 29. *Alien and Sedition Acts (1798)*, Adam is the President of the United States, and is meeting with his Vice President, Jeff. In this time, the President is the winner of the election, while the Vice President is the individual who takes second place. This means the two are not from the same party, but rivals. They debate a new law that has passed. And in dialogue 58. *Emancipation Proclamation (1863)*, set in the year 1862, President Abraham Lincoln is considering a new strategy to win the Civil War. He is joined in the Oval Office with the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton.

For other examples in Volume II such as dialogue 27. *Atomic Bomb (1945)* President Harry Truman is seated at his desk writing in his diary when two time traveling dudes suddenly appear before him and question him on the decision to drop the atomic bomb. In dialouge 51. *Foreign Policy: Nixon Vs. Carter (1970s)* two leaders, Jimmy and Richard, discuss their different perspectives on how the US should direct its foreign policy during the tumultuous 1970s.

The dialogues referred to above are hypothetical conversations based on known historical dispositions of the characters and events of the time. The hypothetical conversation is also dependent upon writer's knowledge of the topic, whereas another author such as a different history teacher, might craft a dialogue that emphasizes somewhat different factors, or takes a different view than presented by some other dialogue author. If the reader doesn't like how a particular dialogue was crafted, then the reader can easily modify it, or write their own. Or perhaps the dialogue can be used with students, but the goal of the instruction may be to have students to identify accuracies or inaccuracies within the dialogue. Apparently, at times, there is even controversy to historical "facts."

5. Dialogues can be used for practicing communication skills, such as speaking, acting and listening

- Teachers know that in an ever competitive job market, communication skills are as important as any aspect with regard to securing and retaining a job. Outside of a job, communication skills are integral to many aspects of daily life. Therefore, an important goal of education is to develop and refine students' communication skills. Integral to the very strategy of using dialogues is communication skill development. As many students in school are masters in adopting a passive role and avoid engagement in the lesson (other than as an observer), it is critical to use strategies such as dialogues that will place them in an active role, a role that gives them an opportunity to develop their communication skills, and lessen their fear of communicating with others. Dialogues place students into an active role and thus receive practice in speaking, listening, and acting. As all other students in class are in a similar position, taking part in the dialogue occurs in a low risk environment, so it is easier to join in, sheltered by the cacophony of voices in the room. Students who would never speak in front of the class will readily speak the character's lines in a dialogue.

6. Dialogues can be used as an assessment tool to determine what students learned about the topic or unit - students can develop and compose dialogues based on what they learned during a unit. Doing so exposes what they learned, and what they didn't learn, and misconceptions they may still embrace about the topic. For examples of student-written dialogues see 62. *Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X Discuss the Civil Rights Movement* and 63. *Captains of Industry or Robber Barrons?* There is much more information and tips on having students write dialogues in *Method 4* on pages 22-23.

How To Implement Dialogues in Your Classroom

As with most strategies, there are options for implementing dialogues, and they can be used in a variety of ways, depending on your goals for the lesson, including:

1. **Read and Act Out in Class** - students pair up, then each person takes on the role of one of the characters by reading that part of the conversation.
2. **Assign Reading As Homework** - the dialogue is assigned as homework reading so that students come to class with an introduction to the topic being studied in class.
3. **Assisting Language Learners or Poor Readers** - students listen to the audio version of the dialogue while reading along with the written copy.
4. **Assessing Learning** - students write their own dialogues to demonstrate what they know, don't know, or have learned from the lesson or unit of instruction.

Method 1 - Read and Act Out in Class

The teacher starts by asking the students to pair-up, and have each student take on the role of one of the characters by reading that part of the conversation. Let's imagine thirty students in class: picture fifteen pairs of students reading-acting the Rocky and Plato parts of the dialogue. The goal of dialogues is to engage all students in the class in an activity that uses multiple senses, such as seeing, speaking and listening. But, at the same time, this activity taps into parts of the brain that connect to kinesthetic and emotion, in an interchange centered around learning the content or material designated as important for that particular lesson or unit.

IMPORTANT! Modeling Expectations - When doing dialogues with students for the first time, the teacher should stress what to expect from students in terms of putting some energy into acting and reading the parts. As an example, the teacher might pair up with a student and read a few lines, using voice inflection, facial expressions, body motion, and gestures to bring life to the character. Students will then realize it is OK, and expected, to put some energy and fun into reading and acting out the character's role. Tell the students that they will get out of it what they put into it. Once they put some energy into being the character, they then realize it is so much more fun to portray the character and their actions, rather than simply reading the lines in a monotonous manner.

Using *dialogues* is actually quite simple. Here are the general steps:

1. Choose a dialogue that targets the content or process goals, and targets the objectives for learning. Does it meet the exact needs, or does it need to be modified to meet the needs and goals for the lesson?
2. Have students first read the dialogue silently. Note - If students are reading below their grade level, give them the dialogue the day before so they can practice reading the dialogue.
3. Put students in pairs, have them stand up, with space between groups.
4. Have students decide which character they will be first, and then act and speak their part of the dialogue.
5. [optional] Students should switch roles and act out the dialogue one more time. When it has been acted out twice, then students can return to their seats.
6. Students should then go through one more time on their own and underline or highlight all of the “facts” or key points about the chemistry topic.

Or

8. The teacher then might consider posing some questions that delve into the content embedded in the dialogue.

Or

9. The dialogue can then serve as a study or review sheet!

Summary of the above steps:

1. Students read the dialogue silently.
2. Students read the dialogue aloud with partner and act out the parts.
3. Then choose from options depending on the purpose of the lesson.

Method 2 - Assign Reading as Homework

The dialogue is assigned as homework reading so that students come to class with an introduction to the topic being studied. After students have read the dialogue, teachers have a number of options including: 1) pair up the students to help each other clarify the content within the dialogue, 2) have students underline key points in the dialogue to focus their attention on what was important content, or 3) have students respond to teacher questions related to the dialogue in order to determine what students learned from reading the dialogue.

Method 3 - Assisting Language Learners or Poor Readers - Reading & Listening Along With mp3's

For students who are reading below their grade level, or for students who may be in bilingual or ESL classrooms, give students a copy of the dialogue, then play the audio version of the dialogue so the students can listen to the dialogue while reading along. Now teachers have a number of options that include: 1) pairing up the students and having them read the dialogue with a partner, without benefit of the audio support - doing so gives students more practice reading, 2) pair up the students to help each other clarify the content within the dialogue, 3) have students underline key points in the dialogue to focus their attention on what is important content, or 4) have students respond to teacher questions related to the dialogue in order to determine what students learned from reading the dialogue.

Method 4 - Assessing Learning By Having Students Write Dialogues

Having students write their own dialogues allows them to demonstrate their understanding of the topic, and is an indicator of what they know, don't know, or learned from the lesson or unit of instruction. Student-written dialogues can be one of the options for demonstrating what was learned. Writing a dialogue can be an assignment for all students, or it can be an opportunity to provide further evidence of learning for a portfolio, an extra credit project, a challenge assignment for students who enjoy writing, or for students who need more practice writing. See dialogues 62 and 63 for examples of dialogues written by students in a history class.

Why?

- When students are writing a dialogue, they have to build the conversation using accurate notions of the social studies/history concepts and ideas; student-written dialogue reveals misconceptions and what the learner knows, or doesn't know.
- Creating dialogues promotes writing skills, as drafting a story line is something students rarely get an opportunity to do.
- Crafting a dialogue promotes creativity and fosters the use of imagination to develop a narrative between two characters.
- Students must learn something about the content in order to write an accurate dialogue. Their writing has to make sense and be an accurate reflection of the topic.
- Writing dialogues requires crafting a conversation and attempting to create a logical interchange using two different perspectives - a difficult, but valuable thing for students to attempt. Many students function from an egocentric viewpoint. Therefore, writing a dialogue from two perspectives helps them break away from one viewpoint.



How?

- Assign specific topics and content to embed into the dialogue. For example, in history class, assign a dialogue based on how the origin of social programs, and the pros and cons, and impact of social programs of how people might vote in elections. This could be written from the viewpoint of two politicians, or from the viewpoint of someone who heavily uses social programs versus someone who does not.
- Give students parameters for length, number of characters, and a tips sheet for writing a good dialogue.
- Provide students with a scoring matrix that is going to be used to score the dialogues. (see the following page for an example)
- Ask students to create a video of their dialogue exchange and submit it to the teacher.

For Students Writing Dialogues – Have You Included?

Desired Qualities	Point Value	Score
Is clearly written		
Addresses the targeted goals and intended outcomes		
Clearly identifies the setting		
Identifies the intended audience		
Targets desired content		
Written level appropriate for the intended audience		
The content knowledge is accurate		
Length of dialogue – not too long, not too short		
Uses humor (appropriate humor)		
Incorporates local, regional or state settings, issues or people		
Incorporates national or international settings, issues or people		
Deals with a significant issue or important topic		
Includes prompts for gestures or voice inflection		
Includes suggestions for props (when appropriate)		
Creatively written, interesting to read		
Other -		
Total Points		

Teacher Tips for Using Dialogues

Like every teaching strategy, there are things to do that will make the activity more effective and useful. For example:

- Be selective about which dialogues to do and how often to use them. Anything gets dull if overused.
- Encourage students to follow the prompts and act out the motions.
- Stress to students that this activity is entirely what they make of it – they can make it fun or boring – it’s up to them.
- Provide props when appropriate; wearing a historically relevant hat helps the student assume the role of the character. Physical props that help to explain position or to give concreteness to ideas can be useful and often necessary in terms of the learner being able to understand the positioning or context of the situation.
- Expand the dialogue to be more than verbal: 1) Have characters conduct mini-experiments that provide data, 2) Give a picture or photo for making the words in the dialogue more concrete, 3) Use motion to provide a concrete link to the conversation, phrase or word in the dialogue.
- Perform a dialogue with younger students. A teacher and parent-helper, or older students can perform a dialogue for another class.

The Benefits of Using Dialogues in Your Classroom

Along with maximizing student engagement, there are a multitude of positive reasons for using dialogues. For example, dialogues:

- can be used at all levels of instruction, and in most subject areas.
- actively involve all of the students in the class.
- connect learning with social-emotional parts of the brain, therefore increasing the chances that the material will be retained by the learner.
- are a productive and energetic break from the normal routine of class.
- give each student an opportunity to shine.
- connect oral and written language to the use of objects, action and activities; students do something along with the dialogue, thereby magnifying the learning effect.
- encourage students to read material they might otherwise just skim.
- engage students in a fun and enjoyable way.
- provide an outlet for energy release by getting students up and moving.
- reduce the risk of participating because there is no whole-class audience.
- promote social interaction between reluctant students.
- put the material into the context of a story - it is often easier for students to remember material in the context of a story.
- can be used as an introduction to new material, or as a review of previously covered material.
- provide students with another source of information for studying and review.
- reach students via auditory, kinesthetic and visual learning modes.

Guidelines and Suggestions for Writing Your Own Dialogues

After experience with using dialogues in the classroom, you may find that you have a need for a particular dialogue that is tailored to your specific topic or students. Here are some suggestions for writing a dialogue on your own.

1. Clearly define the purpose of the dialogue. What is it that will be accomplished by using the dialogue? It might be a content goal, a process goal, a social skill development goal, or any other potentially desirable outcome found in typical lessons. The goal might be simple, but valuable, such as giving students an opportunity to develop better listening skills or oral communication skills.
2. Set the context of the interaction – where and why is it taking place? Notice how some of the dialogues in this book begin with a narrative that sets the context for the conversation.
3. Consider putting a local or regional context to the dialogue. Developing a story line that takes place in the bayous of Louisiana may be more discrepant to students who live in Montana than a setting in which they already have some familiarity. On the other hand, one may have written the dialogue in that manner because it is the goal to develop an awareness of the geography, people, flora or fauna of the southern coastal wetlands.
4. Consider making it personal to the school or the town where the students live. Include local parks, stores, and names of people, such as the teacher. In the original form, the dialogues included in this book contained names of teachers or local places that made the dialogues more relevant to the classroom or local area. For example, instead of just “the river,” the original dialogue had the name of the local river that all of the students knew of, and instead of just “the teacher,” dialogues referred to Mr. Zimmer or Ms. Cattey. Instead of “the local ice cream shop,” the original dialogue spoke of the local “Scoops Ice Cream Shop.” It is worth the time to modify dialogues to personalize them to the local area or local personnel. In some dialogues there has been a space left to insert the teacher’s name.



Perhaps poke light-hearted fun at the teacher (but not at students) and before inserting another person’s name, obtain their permission and blessing. When using their name, let them read the dialogue and get their stamp of approval prior to using the dialogue.

5. Use fictional characters, historical figures, real or imaginary people, animals or plants.

6. Use appropriate word choices for the targeted grade level.
7. Tailor the dialogue to fit the needs of the students. (vocabulary, use of props, use of objects and animated gestures and motions)
8. Pick one topic and stick to it – an entire chapter will not fit into one dialogue.
9. Write the dialogue so that what one person says impacts what the other person says.
10. Consider from whose point of view the conversation takes place. (might use a giraffe, human, plant, fish, etc.)
11. Total length is important – don't make it too long. Consider one to two pages of dialogue maximum.
12. Limit the length of one particular interchange, or one person's statement. One character's turn to speak should not be too long.
13. Use shorter sentences for young children.
14. Some teachers write these at a level slightly higher than the verbal levels of their students, and pair up with another teacher to act these out in front of their class.
15. Incorporate pictures as deemed useful or necessary.
16. Use clues and prompts for acting to help the interchange proceed, and for the characters to develop a colorful demeanor.
17. Double-check the content knowledge embedded into the dialogue – is it correct?
18. Incorporate a sense of humor, or a sense of seriousness, when appropriate.
19. Dialogues often work best when involving two people, but for some scenarios one might choose to use three or four people.

For Teachers Writing Dialogues – Have You Included?

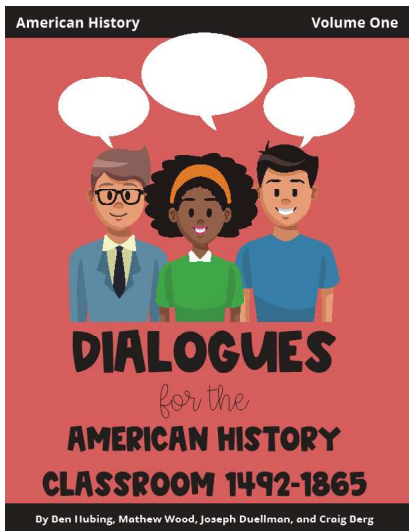
Choose and use the criteria pertaining to the desired outcomes for the students.

- Clearly identifies the setting
- Targets desired content
- Targets desired social skill
- The content knowledge is accurate
- Uses humor (appropriate humor)
- Length of dialogue – not too long, not too short
- Describes the intended audience and contains a suggestion for grade level use
- Is clearly written to address the targeted goals and intended outcomes
- Written at an age-appropriate level for the intended audience
- Incorporates local, regional or state settings, issues or people
- Incorporates national or international settings, issues or people
- Deals with a significant issue or important topic
- Includes prompts for gestures or voice inflection
- Includes suggestions for props (when appropriate)
- Creatively written, interesting to read

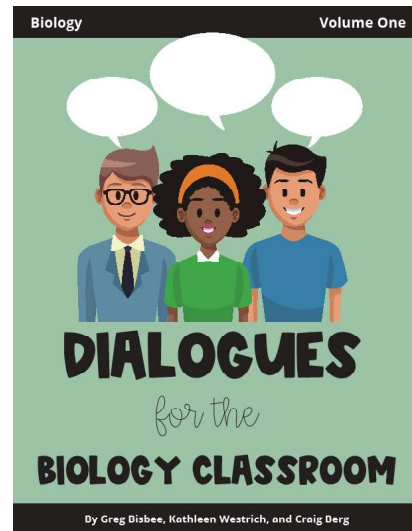
Section II - Book Contents & Example Dialogues

This section contains the *Table of Contents*, *Abstracts* and sample dialogues for the two volumes of American History dialogues. Looking through the *Table of Contents* and the *Abstracts* will help to uncover the multitude of dialogues that can be incorporated into your social studies instruction. The samples provided will make it easy to test out and witness the effectiveness of dialogues, and see first-hand the student enthusiasm for wanting to do more of them.

American History 1492-1865



American History 1865-2010





DIALOGUES

for the

AMERICAN HISTORY

CLASSROOM 1492-1865

By Ben Hubing, Mathew Wood, Joseph Duellman, and Craig Berg

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1492-1865 Dialogue Abstracts

1. **Cahokia Mound Builders (pre-1492):** Thorpe and Curtis are driving into a large city. As they approach, they can see a dense layer of smog surrounding the city and they get a whiff of some kind of industrial stench. Thorpe manages to steer the conversation towards the Cahokia Mound Builders.
2. **Native American Regions (pre-1492):** Becky is in front of her mirror getting ready for a Halloween party, dressed up as the latest teen sensation. George bursts in dressed in what he thinks is a traditional Native American outfit consisting of a huge feather headdress, a turtle necklace, and a handheld totem pole. Becky lets him know that his costume is offensive because he is wearing pieces from multiple Native American tribes and cultural groups.
3. **Christopher Columbus (1492):** Isabel is heading to the park to hang out on her day off of school, when she runs into Monty. They debate whether they should celebrate Christopher Columbus Day and if he was actually the first person to discover America.
4. **Cortés and Conquistadors (1519):** Richard and Lisa are studying for chemistry in study hall. Lisa's frustration is about to boil over so Richard changes the subject to Cortés and conquistadors.
5. **Reasons for Exploration of North American (1580):** The year is 1550 and Francisco (Spanish conquistador) and Jacques (French trader) are approaching each other on a beach somewhere along the coast of what will become North America. A small English boat with a man aboard (John) also approaches the beach from sea. Each man shares his plan for the new world.
6. **The Jamestown Settlement (1607):** John and Wahun are walking home from school while they discuss how difficult it must have been for the people who lived in the first permanent European settlement in the new world.
7. **Pueblo Revolt (1680):** Jay and Matt are on their way out of the school cafeteria after a controversial new rule is put into place. They relate the incident to the Pueblo Revolt.
8. **William Penn (1680):** Charles and Jennie are sitting in the cafeteria doing some history reading in their textbook and eating breakfast. One of the breakfast items on their tray is a bowl of instant oatmeal. Charles wants to know why the guy on the oatmeal bowl is the same guy whose picture is in his textbook.
9. **Middle Passage and Triangular Slave Trade (1400s-1800s):** Lisa and Evelyn are walking home from school on Friday and talking about their weekend plans. Evelyn has to write a history paper and has chosen the Middle Passage as her topic.
10. **Salem Witch Trials (1692-3):** Alice and Marilyn are decorating the gym in preparation for their school's Halloween Costume Ball. As they place some Jack O' Lanterns near the entrance, Alice notices the assistant principal dressed up as a witch. Marilyn schools Alice on the history of the Salem Witch Trials.

11. **Zenger Case (1735):** JP and Cosby are walking through a convenience store after school. Jp picks out a tabloid magazine that reminds Cosby of the John Peter Zenger case.
12. **Great Awakening (1740s):** Ed and George are sitting in history class when the bell rings and Ed has to wake George up to get to their next period. Ed fills him in on the lesson he missed, which ironically was about the Great Awakening.
13. **Pontiac's Rebellion (1763):** Fiero and Tempest are at a car show in Detroit looking at classic cars. As they drool over a vintage Pontiac, Tempest gives Fiero an unexpected history lesson.
14. **French and Indian War Consequences (1765):** Marquis and Brad are sitting in a study hall in the library. With nothing to do Brad grabs a book at random and they refresh their knowledge of the French and Indian War.
15. **Roots of Declaration of Independence (1776):** George and John are making their way through the National Archives in Washington, D.C. during a class trip. As they gaze upon the Declaration of Independence, George asks an important question . . .
16. **Sons of Liberty: Terrorists/Freedom Fighters (1776):** Aly is sitting at a computer during the beginning of study hall. Tim comes in, sits down next to her and asks if she has heard of the latest act of terrorism in the news.
17. **Patriots vs. Loyalists (1776):** The year is 1775 and 17-year-olds Hutch and Pauly are citizens of the New England region in the northeast. They are on the verge of joining the American protests against British rule in the colonies. Pauly has just arrived at Hutch's house and Hutch answers the door.
18. **Valley Forge (1777-8):** Russell and Jerome are on their team's sideline during a high school football game on a Friday night in late October. Jerome relates their football team to an army and coaches Russell on Valley Forge.
19. **Articles of Confederation (1780s):** Steve and Sandy are sitting at the dining room table, studying for their history final exam. Sandy reminds Sam that there was another form of government before the United States Constitution.
20. **Deborah Sampson (1782):** The year is 1782 and Robert Shurtliff (real name = Deborah Sampson) and Paul are fighting alongside each other against the British army during the American Revolutionary War. They are entrenched behind an earthen mound under heavy fire from the British. When Robert gets shot, her secret is out.
21. **3/5 Compromise (1787):** Wilson and Sherman are both candidates at the Constitutional Convention. They are members of the 55 representatives who were selected to create and write America's new government in 1787. As the rest of the members of the convention are heard arguing in a room next door, Wilson and Sherman exit to a small side room and close the door.

22. **Federalist and Anti-Federalist Debate (1787):** Two founding fathers, Patrick and Alexander, discuss the newly-proposed Constitution. Patrick is skeptical about the new ideas, but Alexander is confident that the new government will be effective.
23. **Power of the President (1789):** Marcus is at home watching the news and is starting to get really frustrated. It seems like nothing is going right and he starts looking for someone to blame.
24. **Bill of Rights (1789):** Bryan and Julio are working on a project for history class. They need to create a display for each amendment in the Bill of Rights, but Bryan is starting to get frustrated.
25. **Checks and Balances (1789):** Robin has just been elected student council president at her high school. With victory in hand, she begins to make plans with Victoria, her best friend and “political advisor.” Victoria explains that just because Robin is president, doesn’t mean she gets the final say. (she has ultimate power)
26. **Two Party System (1790s):** Tommy and Al are watching TV, when a nasty campaign ad flashes on the screen. They talk about the origin of political parties forming.
27. **The Cotton Gin (1793):** Mark and Tyrone are waiting outside a movie theatre when a girl at the front of the line pulls out her smart phone. Tyrone explains some of the unintended consequences of technology.
28. **American Neutrality (1790s):** Mark is sitting on the couch reading the paper as his brother Tom walks into the house. Mark is upset about the amount of American deaths in the war overseas and they discuss America’s part in outside conflicts.
29. **Alien and Sedition Acts (1798):** Adam is the President of the United States, and is meeting with his Vice President, Jeff. In this time, the President is the winner of the election, while the Vice President is the individual who takes second place. This means the two are not from the same party, but rivals. They debate a new law that has passed.
30. **Marbury vs. Madison (1803):** James and John are chatting online late at night as news breaks about a controversial court decision.
31. **Louisiana Purchase (1803):** Regina and Connie are sitting down at a chain restaurant, trying to figure out what to eat for lunch. Amazingly, Regina manages to relate her lunch order to the Louisiana Purchase.
32. **Lewis and Clark (1804):** Bill and Meri are on a field trip with a biology class. On the field trip, the teacher rents canoes for the entire class and they take a day trip down a river to explore the ecology. Bill and Meri feel like their experience is similar to what the first explorers must have felt. /they are experiencing things as the first explorers must have.
33. **War of 1812:** Maddie and George are sitting in the auditorium before the school play starts, telling jokes and laughing. George doesn’t get the one about the War of 1812, and Maddie ends up having to explain the whole war to him.

34. **Missouri Compromise (1820):** Rachel and Nicole are shooting hoops at the park and catching up. Nicole is back from her family reunion in Missouri and has ironically missed her history class where they learned about the Missouri Compromise. Rachel fills her in.
35. **The American System (1820s):** Maddy is walking into the cafeteria at school, where she runs into her friend Henrietta. In an attempt to help each other out with some schoolwork, they find themselves discussing an economic plan from the 1800's.
36. **Monroe Doctrine (1823):** Jim is about to pull out of the school parking lot, when his friend Quinn hops in the back seat. Quinn is so excited to share what he has learned in history class that he won't let Jim leave until he has said every last bit.
37. **Corrupt Bargain (1824):** Quincy and Andy are hanging out after school, when Quincy finds some disturbing news about some politicians while surfing the web. Andy lets him know that political scandals have been around for a long time and gives an example.
38. **Transcendentalists (1830s):** Max and Juan are getting off the city bus at a stop near their neighborhood. Juan is sick of living in the crowded, smelly city and wants to leave it all behind. Max teaches him about a group of people who felt the same way.
39. **Nullification Crisis (1832):** John is over at Clay's house. Both are studying for different tests coming up. John is having trouble understanding his subject and asks Clay to help him get a better grasp.
40. **Whig Party (1833):** Dan and Rob are watching TV on election night and discussing the results. Rob thinks it would be more interesting if more than two parties were involved. Dan reminds him that there are already a lot of minor political parties and talks about one from the past.
41. **Lowell Factory Girls (1834):** Marta and Ellie are heading for the bus stop after the last day of school and begin to discuss their summer plans. Little do they know that they will be visited by a figure from the past . . .
42. **Oregon Trail (1836):** Paula and Maria are in charge of organizing a spring break road trip to take with their friends from their hometown of St. Louis, but they are having a little bit of trouble agreeing on a destination.
43. **Horace Mann and the Public School Reform Movement (1837):** Jenna is sitting at her desk in her room when her cell phone rings. When she picks it up, she tells her friend Tracy that she is skipping school the next day to play a video game. Tracy explains why Jenna is being unpatriotic.
44. **Texan Revolution (1835-6):** Austin and Sam are driving on the highway to a concert, when Sam spots something on the car in front of them. Austin explains the history around the saying "Don't Mess with Texas."

45. **Trail of Tears (1830s):** Marshall is working behind the counter at the school store, when Jack walks in looking depressed. He is feeling down after his history class discussed a particularly sad event today.
46. **Hudson River School (mid 1800s):** Bert has invited his friend Tommie over to his house to see the new television that Bert's parents have just purchased for their home. Tommie has managed to ruin the moment for him by saying he prefers paintings over TV.
47. **Sojourner Truth (1843):** Hannah and Sue are walking out of the door after history class when Sue starts to vent some of her frustrations with the curriculum. Hannah inspires Sue to take charge and do something about her problem.
48. **Manifest Destiny (1845):** It is the end of class and the teacher is assigning homework. Friends John and Sullivan meet together to walk down the hallway after class and discuss the question given as homework.
49. **Mexican-American War (1846):** Mariano and Antonio are sitting in the library during study hall, chatting. Antonio grabs the daily newspaper from the counter and begins to page through it, when one of the headlines catches his eye. He finds the new immigration laws to be pretty funny considering that a quarter of America was once owned by Mexico.
50. **Seneca Falls (1848):** Cady and Lizzie come storming out of a classroom into the hallway. They can't believe that after all the women's rights advancements in the past, that they could still be treated unfairly based on their gender.
51. **Underground Railroad (1800-1860):** Molly finds Mitch in trouble again waiting outside the principal's office. Mitch's misunderstanding in history got him kicked out of class and Molly tries to get him up to speed.
52. **Compromise of 1850:** Doug and Henry are walking down the street, when Doug's stomach starts rumbling. They compromise on what they want to eat and talk about a famous historical compromise.
53. **Bleeding Kansas (1856):** Two friends, Steve and John meet in the park and catch up after not seeing each other in about a week. Steve is back from a family reunion in Kansas and John wants to tell him what he missed in class.
54. **Preston Brooks Beating Charles Sumner in the Senate (1856):** Austin and Victoria are sitting on computers in the library during study hall. Both are working, until Victoria stumbles onto an amusing video on YouTube.
55. **Dred Scott Decision (1857):** Heather calls up her friend Doug, who just got back from a long vacation. They have been assigned an essay to write and Doug has no idea what the subject is. Heather shares what she knows.
56. **John Brown and Harper's Ferry (1859):** Jay and Bill are hanging out in Bill's basement when Jay's conscience speaks up and he sparks a debate. Who is right: Jay or Bill?

57. **Carolinas and Secession (1861):** Brooks and Cal have just finished watching a video in their history class that explained the beginning of the Civil War. They discuss why the Carolinas wanted their independence so badly.
58. **Emancipation Proclamation (1863):** The year is 1862 and President Abraham Lincoln is considering a new strategy to win the Civil War. He is joined in the Oval Office with the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton.
59. **Sherman's March to the Sea (1864-5):** Pat and Mark are visiting their grandparents in Atlanta and are headed to the stadium for a football game. The winner of the game wins the division and the loser misses the playoffs. Marks smack talk gets him an unexpected history lesson.
60. **Sand Creek Massacre (1864):** It's a Friday evening and Justin arrives at Taylor's house to pick her up for a date. He carries a small, wrapped box with him. After Taylor opens her gift, they both end up getting a surprise.
61. **Reasons for Immigration (past to present):** The bell rings to end class and Angel and Ellis walk out of the classroom together. The class had been talking about immigration laws, especially those relating to modern immigration in America.
62. **Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X Discuss the Civil Rights Movement:** In this first example of a student-written dialogue, Malcolm X is arguing for separation while Martin Luther King Jr. is arguing for integration.
63. **Captains of Industry or Robber Barons?:** In this second example of a student-written dialogue, one historian is suggesting that Carnegie is a leader of industry and a positive factor for American, while historian two believes that Carnegie was a "robber baron" who made his wealth on the backs of poor workers.

6. Jamestown (1607)

John and Wahun are walking home from school.

Wahun: *(dismayed)* Man, can you believe all of this homework we have tonight? I am going to be absolutely miserable all night!

John: Homework is rough, but it's nothing compared to what the first settlers went through at the Jamestown settlement!

Wahun: *(laughing)* Well someone got their homework done early. What happened at Jamestown? Wasn't that the first permanent European settlement in the new world?

John: Yes it was. You name it, and it probably went wrong. The colonists decided to settle in a marshy swamp along the James River in the Chesapeake Bay. While this gave them great access to water, it also was a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes, which rapidly spread malaria among the settlers. Speaking of the settlers, they made some horrible decisions right off the bat.

Wahun: Like what?

John: First of all, the gentlemen refused to work. They never had to perform manual labor back in England, and they felt like this type of work was beneath them.

Wahun: That's not very fair. I bet they had a hard time getting the colony ready to go.



John: Yeah they did. To make matters even worse, the Jamestown colonists spent all of their time searching for gold, which was rumored to be abundant in North America. This meant that when winter rolled around, they were not even close to prepared.

Wahun: This sounds bad. What happened?

John: To give you an idea, they called it the "starving time." It is estimated that only around 60 of the original 215 colonists survived this horrible time.

Wahun: *(amazed)* Wow, that is really horrible. At least it couldn't get much worse!

John: Things would have, but one colonist, John Smith stepped up and took charge. He basically said, "he who shall not work, shall not eat." Without Smith's help and training, the settlement would have totally crumbled.

Wahun: I get the feeling they were not out of the clear yet...

John: You are correct. A series of wars broke out between the English settlers and the Powhatan Confederacy, a large collection of Native American groups in Virginia. The wars were caused by tension between the two sides over plundering and stealing during times of famine and disputes over land. Raids on communities, violence and massacres occurred on both sides. While there were some periods of peace between 1610 and 1646, one being ushered in by the marriage of Pocahontas and John Rolfe, the period of off and on warfare took a toll on the colony. Eventually though, Jamestown became more stable.

Wahun: How did this happen? Did they finally find gold?

John: Not exactly, but you could say that they hit the jackpot with something else: tobacco.

Wahun: Wait . . . I thought tobacco was addictive and harmful.

John: Definitely. But it was in high demand back in Europe, and the Virginia soil was ideal for growing this cash crop. When John Rolfe introduced it in the colonies, profits began to skyrocket and the economy was on firmer economic footing.

Wahun: It seems like striking it rich was a major part of the Jamestown colony.

John: For sure. Jamestown was a proprietary colony, meaning that it was funded by a group of investors looking to make a profit. Later colonies in New England were founded by Pilgrims looking for religious freedom. The joint stock company that set up the Jamestown colony was all about making money for these investors. It also meant the introduction of slave labor to the colonies from an early stage.

Wahun: Interesting. Anything else significant about the colony?

John: The first colonial assembly was established in 1619, called the House of Burgesses.

Wahun: Why was that a big deal?

John: It was the first example in North America of people electing leaders to represent themselves. The colonial governors had always been appointed by either the king or the joint stock companies, but in this case the people had a say in their leaders and the policies that they established.

Wahun: Man, I wish that homework required majority rule!

John: I wouldn't hold your breath. All right, let's get started on some of this work.

11. Zenger Case (1735)

JP and Cosby are walking through a convenience store after school.

JP: *(picking up a tabloid magazine)* Did you see the latest gossip about the band's lead singer? I can't believe it!

Cosby: How can you read that garbage? Who cares about the personal lives of the rich and famous? They should shut all those magazines down!

JP: Well, you may not like them, but thanks to the case of John Peter Zenger, these magazines aren't going anywhere.

Cosby: Who is John Peter Zenger? Is he dating that actress in ... *(interrupted)*

JP: Nope, he was a New York City newspaper editor back in the 1730s, in the colonial time period.

Cosby: What the heck does some dead guy have to do with tabloids?

JP: Well, his trial back in 1735 was a landmark case that established the American principle of freedom of press.

Cosby: Are you speaking in Old English? You are going to have to explain.

JP: Well, back in 1735 many of the thirteen colonies were ruled by colonial governors that were given their jobs directly from the king. As a result, many colonists disliked their leaders and their policies, since the governors didn't always represent their view.

Cosby: Yeah that sounds like it would be annoying. So where does Zenger come into this story?

JP: Zenger was an editor in New York, and he really didn't like the colonial governor, a guy named William Cosby.

Cosby: Wait, the pudding guy?

JP: *(rolling eyes)* No, a different Bill Cosby. Cosby fired a judge in the colony and replaced him with one of his supporters so that he could obtain a raise. This really made Zenger upset, and he began publishing a series of articles in his newspaper under a pen name that were critical of the governor and his policies.

Cosby: So what's the big deal? People write mean stuff about political leaders all the time?



JP: Well, the Governor Cosby did not like this trash talking about him and had Zenger arrested for seditious libel.

Cosby: Huh?

JP: Libel is when you try to defame or hurt someone's reputation by writing or saying bad things about them. Cosby was angry because he believed these attacks were meant to undermine his leadership and hurt his ability to govern the colony. So he had Zenger thrown in jail, awaiting a trial for his crime.

Cosby: Wow, that is harsh. I guess I understand where Cosby is coming from though. If people don't trust or respect him, he can't lead effectively. That makes the entire colony weaker if the governor can't do his job.

JP: That was exactly what the government argued in the trial. However, Zenger's lawyer, Andrew Hamilton, had a different argument. He admitted the words were insulting to the governor, and hurt his reputation. But, Hamilton said that since what was written was true, that it could not be considered libel.

Cosby: So in other words, as long as the article can be proven, and is based on facts, Zenger had every right to publish it.

JP: Exactly. The result of this case was a crucial moment in American history, because it established the idea of freedom of press. Zenger and everyone else that followed him had the right to publish their opinions and news, even if it is unpopular or controversial.

Cosby: And that includes the tabloids?

JP: Including the tabloids.

Cosby: I thought freedom of press was from the Bill of Rights in the Constitution.

JP: Yeah, it is definitely in the First Amendment, but it is this case over fifty years before the Constitution was drafted that led to this idea being so widely accepted in America. Crazy stuff. Speaking of crazy stuff, did you hear that our favorite actor just got placed into rehab?

Cosby: (*shaking head*) I don't think this is what Zenger had in mind . . .

23. Power of the President (1789)

Marcus is at home watching the news and is starting to get really frustrated. It seems like nothing is going right and he starts looking for someone to blame.

Marcus: *(aloud to himself)* This country is a mess! The President is a failure. Throw him out!

All of a sudden, James Madison appears in front of the television.

James Madison: Hey, easy there young man. Let's talk this out. What's wrong?

Marcus: Everything! Taxes are too high! All of these other countries are building nuclear weapons! The guy on the news just said that the federal courts don't have enough judges! I could go on and on! *[pauses]* Wait, who are you? Where did you come from? Why are you wearing a powdered wig?

James Madison: I'm James Madison! I was the fourth President of the United States. I'm part of the President's Time Traveling Brigade. We bounce around through time and help out citizens in need.



Marcus: Wow, that's kind of cool. So the cool ones are too busy right now? Lincoln? Teddy Roosevelt?

James Madison: *(hurt)* Hey, I'm cool! I'm the Father of the Constitution!

Marcus: Umm . . .

James Madison: *(puts on sunglasses)* And I have sunglasses on . . . indoors!!

Marcus: OK, that's pretty cool. So why are you here? I mean, I'm mad, but this isn't an emergency.

James Madison: Actually, it is. You are displaying an acute case of Ignorantitus Constitutionus.

Marcus: And that is . . . ?

James Madison: You don't understand the Constitution. Specifically, you fail to understand the limits the Framers and I placed on the President when we designed our government.

Marcus: But I thought the President was the "Leader of the Free World" and stuff? How can I not hold him accountable when times are tough?

James Madison: I'm not saying you can't. You just have to make sure you're angry about things the President is actually in charge of. Let's start with your issue with taxes. Declare your grievance! Sorry, I couldn't resist a little homage to my homeboy, Thomas Jefferson.

Marcus: My mom is constantly complaining about how high income taxes are! Why doesn't the President lower them so she can buy me more stuff!

James Madison: Ahh, here's a chance to fix up some of your affliction. Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 of the Constitution: "The Congress shall have Power to lay and collect Taxes . . ." If you have a beef with your Mom's tax rate, take it up with your local congressional representative. They iron that stuff out in the Legislative Branch.

Marcus: Yeah, but . . .

James Madison: (*interrupts*) Bonus fact! The federal government couldn't even collect an income tax until the Sixteenth Amendment was ratified in 1913. BAM! Info in yo face!!

Marcus: Presidential Interruptus! But the President talks about taxes all the time! You're telling me he can't actually change them?

James Madison: Oh, the President can say whatever he wants, but he can't actually do anything without Congress. His only option is to use the bully pulpit to put pressure on them and, if a tax bill comes along that he doesn't like, use the veto power.

Marcus: Bully pulpit . . .?

James Madison: Teddy Roosevelt came up with that one. He used it to describe the power of the President to use his fame and influence to shape the kind of legislation that Congress passes. Nobody has more of a voice than the President and they can use that voice as a tool to put pressure on Congress to do what they want. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. It's an indirect power.

Marcus: Well, what about all of these scary dictators trying to build nuclear weapons? Why doesn't the President just invade their countries and stop them?

James Madison: Article I, Section 8, Clause 11. Only Congress can declare war on another country.

Marcus: But the President is the Commander in Chief! He's in charge of the military!

James Madison: Yes, as laid out in Article II, Section 2, Clause 1. The President may be in charge of the military, but he still cannot declare war on another country or, technically, send them into combat without Congressional approval. That doesn't usually stop them from doing the second part, though.

Marcus: What about the shortage of judges I keep hearing about? I know that Article II, Section 2, Clause 2 gives the President the power to appoint federal judges. See, I'm not totally ignorant!

James Madison: Nice job, but you're forgetting about an important part of that clause. The Senate must approve those appointments. Sometimes the Senate and the President disagree on the quality of the judges he appoints, or the Senate doesn't do a good job of getting around to approving his appointments. The Senate loves taking its time on things. This can create a backlog.

Marcus: I guess I need to start taking a broader view when it comes to complaining. Now I see what my teacher was talking about during the lesson on "Checks and Balances."

James Madison: I'm glad they're teaching about my greatest creation! Let me make one last suggestion, though. Instead of complaining to an empty room, how about you identify a problem you have, figure out who can do something about it, and give them a call or write them an email? We actually listen to voters, you know.

Marcus: Will do. Thanks James Madison! Sorry about complaining before. You were nice. Teddy Roosevelt probably would have tried to box me.

James Madison: Trust me, he has a mean left hook.

25. Checks and Balances (1789)

Robin has just been elected student council president at her high school. With victory in hand, she begins to make plans with Victoria, her best friend and “political advisor.”

Robin: Can you believe it?! I actually won!

Victoria: Congratulations! Now you need to start thinking about how you can work with the Student Council on getting your idea for our new school mascot design.

Robin: Work with the Council?! I'm not talking to them! If I want to change our mascot from the Wolves to the Robins all I need to do is say so! I'm the president!

Victoria: Wait, I thought you just campaigned to change the wolf costume so it would look meaner!

Robin: We need a new mascot that reflects the glory of our new president. The generations to follow will forever remember my reign!

Victoria: OK, you're starting to sound like a king, not a president.

Robin: What's the difference? Where's my crown?!
And why aren't you kneeling? How dare ye
refuse to genuflect before me?!

Victoria: Robin . . .

Robin: Ms. President!!!

Victoria: (*sighs*) Ms. President, I think we need to
have a chat about checks and balances.

Robin: I don't have to listen to this.

Victoria: Quite the contrary. Because of checks and balances, you have to listen to other people. That's why we based our student government charter on the United States Constitution. The Framers worked in a system of checks and balances that would keep the three branches of government on equal footing. The executive, legislative and judicial branches each have power over one another to keep things balanced. The same goes for the Student Council, Student Council President and the Teacher's Advisory Board, which is kind of like the US Supreme Court.

Robin: I'm sorry – are you telling me that I have rules to follow?

Victoria: I'm afraid so. Your power is “checked” by two other groups, just like our federal government.



Robin: Just tell me what I have to do to get our mascot changed.

Victoria: Well, that would be an example of passing new legislation, which is the job of the Student Council at our school and the Congress in the US Government.

Robin: I can't pass laws? What is the point of even having a president then?

Victoria: Nothing becomes law unless you sign it! You can reject a piece of legislation with the "veto" power.

Robin: Ah-ha! I'll just veto everything until they bend to my will!

Victoria: Nope! You'd get checked again! Just like Congress, Student Council can override your veto by voting again and passing something with a two-thirds majority.

Robin: How am I supposed to come through with all of my campaign promises? I mean the ones I wasn't lying about?

Victoria: You'll have to use your position to put pressure on Student Council by proposing legislation and convincing the public to lobby them to pass it. They have some power over you, but you have power over them, too! That's the beauty of checks and balances!

Robin: OK, so I see how the President and Congress check each other, but what about the courts? Does our Student Council charter model how I work with the Teacher Advisory Board like how the President works with the Supreme Court?

Victoria: Yep! If any of the teachers step down from the board, you get to nominate a new one, just like the U.S. President does with Supreme Court Justices.

Robin: I can pack the board with all of my favorite teachers!

Victoria: Not so fast, a President's nominees must be confirmed by the Senate. Same with your nominees and the Council I'm afraid.

Robin: How does anything get done if every single branch of our government is checked and balanced by the other two?!

Victoria: Checks and balances forces the three branches to cooperate and keeps any single branch from becoming more powerful than the other two. The last thing the framers wanted was a tyrant like you after fighting a war to get rid of a king.

Robin: So (*pauses*). . . no King Robin?

Victoria: Sorry. You have a lot of power, but no more than the other two branches of our school government. Now you know why Presidents seem to age so quickly. There's a lot of stress in handling all of that responsibility and advancing your agenda in our style of government.

Robin: I can't have grey hair before I graduate from high school!

Victoria: Well, you should have thought about that before you ran for office. Maybe having a basic understanding of the Constitution would have been a good idea, too . . .

Robin: Ugh! This presidential stuff is actually going to be work.

Victoria: What a tragedy . . .

41. Lowell Factory Girls (1834)

Marta and Ellie are heading for the bus stop after the last day of school and begin to discuss their summer plans. Little do they know that they will be visited by a figure from the past . . .

Marta: Finally! I thought junior year would never end!

Ellie: *(takes a deep breath)* Freedom!

Marta: So now what do we do?

Ellie: I'm getting a job. My incredible video game collection and amazing outfits don't pay for themselves. Oh, plus college. I should probably save up for that since it will cost a million dollars a year by the time I graduate.

Marta: Where are you going to work?

Ellie: I'll cook burgers over at Pete's Grille.

Marta: *(gasps)* How could you work there?! Do you know how many times that place has gotten in trouble for having faulty equipment in the kitchen? They've had four health violations this year alone and I hear they make kids work illegal hours! Plus, they barely pay anything!!

Ellie: Hey, a job is a job. We should just take what we can get and live with it.

Suddenly, the ghost of a strange, old woman appears.

Marta and Ellie: *(together)* Who are you?!

Harriet: My name is Harriet Hanson Robinson! *(points at Ellie)* And who might you be?!

Ellie: *(frightened)* Ellie . . .

Harriet: Have you no idea who I am? Where I came from?

Marta: Lady, we run into angry old people like you on the bus every single day . . .

Harriet: *(interrupting)* Show some respect! I've traveled here from the past to talk some sense into your friend here. Did I just hear you say that you'll take a job even though you know you'll be mistreated?

Ellie: Hey, I need the money!

Harriet: I'm sure you do, but I didn't join my first labor strike as a child just so I could watch girls accept sub-standard working conditions almost 200 years later!

Marta: What are you talking about? Quit yelling at us and just tell us your story.

Harriet: It all happened in Lowell, Massachusetts, where one of the first factories in America was located. I started working at the Lowell Mill, which made thread for clothing, when I was ten years old. I guess about ten years earlier it was a decent place for girls to live and work, since it had a boarding house, too, but by the time I got there it was terrible.

Ellie: What was so bad about it?

Harriet: I shared a bedroom with five other women and we slept three to a bed! I started work at 5am and most of the time I wouldn't get done until 7:30pm, with only two short breaks for lunch and dinner!

Marta: That's an eternity! What was the work like?

Harriet: It was excruciating. I spent the whole day rushing around from spindle to spindle trying to keep up. The managers kept adding more equipment, but would barely hire any more girls to help keep up. Plus, they had this idea that humidity kept the cotton threads from breaking so they would nail all of the windows shut to trap the heat in.

Ellie: I can't believe they could do that. Did they at least pay you a decent wage?

Harriet: They hired girls like me precisely so they didn't have to! The owners could get away with paying women less than men for the same work.

Marta: I would never put up with that! Why did you stay?

Harriet: Well, we didn't have a lot of options, but we did have one weapon: organizing! When the owners announced they were going to cut our pay by 15% in 1834, the Lowell Factory Girls went on strike and demanded that we get to keep our usual pay!

Ellie: Did the owners give in?

Harriet: Sadly, no. The newspapers and the clergymen criticized us relentlessly until we gave up. We went back to work for less pay and the leaders were fired. But we tried again in 1836 when they announced they were going to increase our rates to stay at the boarding house! We had twice as many workers join us that time!

Marta: That must have showed them!

Harriet: *(sighs)* No, we failed again. Our next move was to try to get the state government to pass a law for a ten-hour workday. That didn't work, either.

Ellie: Jeez. If nothing you girls tried actually worked, then why are you here yelling at me?

Harriet: Because we were part of a movement! Workers would no longer just sit and take whatever the owners would give us. We were subjected to horrible working conditions, long hours, little pay, and they were always watching everything we did in that boarding house! Not to mention the fact that I started working full-time when I was 11 years old!! It may have taken awhile, but things changed. You benefit from our lifetimes of fighting.

Marta: Yeah, I guess you're right. Most of us don't have to worry about things like that these days.

Harriet: I know, but your friend here seems content to screw all of that up by working for a miser in that disgusting hamburger place!

Ellie: Alright! Alright! I'll keep looking!

Harriet: Self-respect girl. That's what it's all about. OK then, off I go! A girl in Reno just said that voting is stupid and someone needs to give her a good tongue-lashing.

Harriet vanishes, leaving Ellie and Marta to ponder what they just heard.

Marta: I suggest we remember everything we just heard.

Ellie: And I suggest we never tell anyone that we got a history lesson from a time-traveling old woman at a city bus stop.

Marta: Agreed.

45. Trail of Tears (1830s)

Marshall is working behind the counter at the school store, when Jack walks in looking depressed.

Marshall: Hey Jack. What's going on?

Jack: *(moping)* I just left history class. It was kind of a downer today. We talked about the Trail of Tears back in the 1830s.

Marshall: What was the Trail of Tears? It sounds pretty depressing . . .

Jack: Yeah it really was. It was centered around Native American groups living in the Deep South: the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Seminoles, and Creek Indians. These tribes, called the Five Civilized Tribes by the Americans, were the topic of a heated debate. Some people thought that the natives should be assimilated into American culture, while others believed that the only way to deal with them was to remove them from the South.

Marshall: Huh. From the Native American perspective, neither of those are great solutions. Either give up your way of life and become "American" or move out. Both seem unfair.

Jack: Yeah, you're right. Anyway, the government, led by President Andrew Jackson, proposed a law called the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The bill required all of these native groups to relocate from their ancestral homes to a new Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma.

Marshall: That is pretty horrible. What happened?

Jack: Well, some tribes like the Choctaw decided that resisting the American orders was futile and voluntarily signed agreements that led to almost all of their people being removed. Others, like the Seminoles, violently resisted and entered a series of bloody conflicts with the Americans to avoid removal. The Cherokees, seeing both of those options as undesirable, tried to go a different route.

Marshall: What did they do?

Jack: The Cherokee actually had a pretty creative idea. They tried to use the US legal system to remain in their homelands. The tribe sued and the Supreme Court ruled in the case *Worcester v. Georgia* that the state of Georgia had no authority to impose laws on the Cherokee nation.

Marshall: Wow, so the Cherokee won? That is pretty awesome!

Jack: Yeah, it seemed like good news, but Jackson famously said, "Chief Justice Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it."

Marshall: Meaning?

Jack: Meaning that Jackson was not going to enforce what the court came up with. Ultimately his policy of Indian Removal continued, and the Cherokee were rounded up and moved to the new territory.

Marshall: Oh man, that's not cool. So I am guessing by the name that the Trail of Tears was a pretty unpleasant experience.

Jack: Yeah, that is an understatement. A militia rounded up the Cherokee tribe and sent them to a concentration camp in Tennessee. Their property and homes were destroyed and the land that they had lived on for generations was given away to white settlers.

Marshall: That is so messed up. What happened next?

Jack: The Cherokee traveled about one thousand miles, mostly by foot, from the camp to the new Indian Territory. The conditions were absolutely horrible, as they were exposed to extremely cold conditions in the winter of 1838. The people lacked supplies, and were given blankets that were contaminated from a smallpox outbreak.

Marshall: How horrible!

Jack: And if disease and starvation weren't horrible enough, a handful of Cherokee were murdered by white settlers on the journey. In the end, out of fifteen thousand Cherokee on the Trail of Tears, over four thousand died along the way.

Marshall: (*shaking his head*) What a disgrace. The American government should be ashamed of itself!

Jack: Yeah, it was certainly a low moment in American history. In the end, over forty thousand natives were forcibly moved to the Indian Territory. The final insult was that the land they ultimately settled on was not the same quality as what they were promised.

Marshall: Man, unbelievable. I really don't want to hear anymore about this. What a downer.

Jack: Yeah, it is definitely tough to hear, but it's important. When we learn about American history, it is important to not just celebrate the good things, but to understand and discuss the darker moments, too. Hopefully, we can learn from our mistakes and do better in the future.

Marshall: Good point. Thanks for sharing, man.



DIALOGUES

for the

AMERICAN HISTORY

CLASSROOM 1865-2010

By Ben Hubing, Mathew Wood, Joseph Duellman, and Craig Berg

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Section I - Dialogue Abstracts

1. **Reconstruction Plans (1865-1877):** Andy, the president of the United States, is meeting with Congressman Thaddeus. They are discussing how to repair the broken nation following the bloody and bitter Civil War.
2. **Transcontinental Railroad (1869):** Jane stops by her friend Jim's house and sees clothes and suitcases scattered everywhere. He is packing for another one of his father's "U.S. History trips, and is having trouble getting excited about it.
3. **Robber Barons (1800's):** Andrew and John are talking after a Student Council meeting about fundraising ideas for a big end-of-the-year dance that their organization is trying to put on. John suggests some unconventional ways of making money and getting rid of the competition.
4. **Political Machines (late 1800's):** John returns to a student council meeting with yet another dastardly plan to share with his friend Andrew. Andrew is shocked to learn John will not be running for reelection on the student council, until he realizes he has found a way to harness even more power.
5. **Ku Klux Klan (1860's):** Mina is on her way downtown to visit her friend Chong. She is making her way through a maze of shouting protesters and seemingly hundreds of police officers. When she finally arrives, she has a few questions for her friend.
6. **Protest Music (1800's):** Marcy strolls outside after a long day at school and sees her friend Sid strumming on a guitar in the park across the street. She decides to head over and see what he's working on.
7. **Interventionism vs. Isolationism (1898+):** Randolph and Henry David are at an electronics store watching the thirty televisions that are on display. A news channel is playing on one of the TVs and it begins to discuss a violent revolt on the verge of becoming an all out civil war in a foreign country.
8. **Eugene Debs (1900):** Angie inspires Marta with tales of a great American rebel.
9. **The Jungle (1906):** Frankie and Nathan are sitting at a lunch table with their lunch trays in front of them. Today's main course was a hot dog. This prompts a discussion on the unsightly history of hot dogs and health safety.
10. **1912 Presidential Election (1912):** Debbie is walking down the hallway at school, and runs into her friend Rosie. Still absorbed in her history class, Rosie discusses the significance of having more than two parties in presidential election and its possible outcomes.
11. **Ludlow Massacre (1914):** Rocky and Debby are sitting in a car outside of a fast food restaurant, waiting for their friend, Louis, to get out of work. Louis comes out to the car, slamming the door as he gets in. He is frustrated due to the lack of respect he gets at his job and contemplates starting a union.

12. **US Entry in WW1 (1917):** Willy and Johnny are eating lunch in the school cafeteria, talking about their day so far. Willy has his world war history mixed up and needs some clarification.
13. **Espionage & Sedition Acts (1917):** The president, Wil, is meeting with one of his opponents, Gene. Both disagree with how the government will deal with the homefront during the US involvement in World War I.
14. **Failure of the Treaty of Versailles (1919):** Woody and Henry are sitting in study hall, catching up after not speaking in a while. Woody had been in Paris for a whole month but seems to have missed out on all of the fascinating history there was to take in. Henry tells him what they have been learning in class.
15. **Prohibition (1919):** Adrian and Hans are lounging on the couch watching the big football game on Sunday when Adrian makes an observation during a commercial break . . .
16. **Harlem Renaissance (1920s):** Jay is working on his English homework under a tree in the school courtyard when Aaron strolls up looking for somebody to hang out with. Jay doesn't have time to play, but takes a moment to explain a very important cultural movement.
17. **Progressive Era (1920):** Teddy runs into his friend Bob in the locker room before football practice. Bob looks stressed out because of the amount of homework he has, so Teddy decides to share something he learned last year to give him a head start.
18. **Scopes Trial (1925):** John has a history paper due tomorrow and he just can't seem to come up with a good topic to write about. He went to the zoo to help him relax and think, and he stumbled across the primate house, which has potentially inspired him to write about the Scopes Monkey Trial.
19. **Causes of the Great Depression (1929):** Frank is walking through the hallway at the end of the school day as Herbie sprints up from behind him and grabs his arm. Herbie can barely catch his breath, as he shouts that the stock market has crashed again causing another Great Depression.
20. **John Steinbeck (1930s):** Michael storms into the cafeteria ready to rant as Josh is just sitting down to enjoy his lunch. Micheal believes his history teacher is being unjust by having them read a fiction novel for class.
21. **Dust Bowl (1930s):** Elizabeth and Jacob miss the bus after school and have to walk home in the rain. Unfortunately, neither of them brought an umbrella causing Jacob to wish it would never rain again. Elizabeth reminds him that he should be careful what you wish for.
22. **New Deal (1930s):** Rosie and Herb are two leaders trying to decide how to tackle an economic crisis that has struck America in the late 1920s, the Great Depression.

23. **American Isolationism (1930s):** Lindy and Frank are getting onto the bus after the end of a long day of school. Frank is having a hard time understanding why the US stayed out of foreign conflicts for so long.
24. **Japanese & German Internment Camps (1941):** Apolo and Kristi are sitting in the back of History class watching a video about the World War Two. The video covers the barbaric treatment and death that the Nazis put their victims through.
25. **Bracero Program (1942):** Cesar and Ana are hanging out in Cesar's living room doing some reading for class. The TV is on in the background and the daily national news is on. The telecast is explaining new laws to limit some immigrants, deport others, and build a bigger wall between America and Mexico.
26. **Bataan Death March (1942):** Joe and Hideki are in gym class. They are outside on the track and are being graded on how fast they can run the mile. Joe naively compares having to run to being in a prison camp and Hideki sets him straight.
27. **Atomic Bomb (1945):** President Harry Truman is seated at his desk writing in his diary when two time traveling dudes suddenly appear before him. The President has just decided to use a new top-secret technology.
28. **GI Bill (1945):** Flint and Duke are seniors in high school. Flint has decided to go off to college next year, while Duke has just walked in the door of their favorite pizza place, having just signed up for the army.
29. **How the Cold War Began (1945):** Joey and George are just walking into school to start the day. It is a frigid late autumn day and the weather is changing between rain, sleet, and snow. The weather battle prompts a battle of their own, as they argue over who started the Cold War.
30. **United Nations (1946):** Kofi and Dag are sitting in class before the bell rings. Kofi is playing a game on his phone, while Dag is reading an article in his newspaper. Dag struggles to understand how the UN works while reading about another world conflict.
31. **Containment (1947):** There was no setting on dialogue. Harriet is at Ken's house doing homework after school. They discuss the how the US tried to control the influence of the Soviet Union after the end of WWII.
32. **Berlin Airlift (1948):** It is a weekend night and Wayne and Garth are sitting on the front hood of Garth's car in the observation area of their local airport. They are slurping giant sodas and watching the aircraft fly directly overhead. The preciseness of the airplanes' schedule reminds Wayne of another time in history that the US had to have a very strict flight plan.
33. **Suburbia/White Flight/Baby Boom (1950s):** Spock and Levitt are driving to a concert downtown, but have taken a wrong turn and are lost. They discuss the origin of the segregation of cities.

34. **Pop Art (1950s & 1960s):** Andrew and Roy are on a field trip to the art museum and have been given some time to wander off on their own and explore the museum. Roy discovers a form of art that he can actually appreciate.
- Teacher Note - To really make this Dialogue interactive, print off or display on an overhead projector, the pieces of art that are mentioned in the discussion so that listeners can understand what Andrew and Roy are talking about.*
35. **McCarthyism (1950):** Andrew returns to John with another pressing political and, perhaps, psychological matter to deal with. His new strategy for student council reminds John of a strategy from the past.
36. **Korean War (1950-53):** Mac is sitting in the food court at the mall, when his friend Kim sits down and joins him. Kim is confused about some writing on a hat that she just saw and asks for an explanation.
37. **Brown vs. Board of Education (1954):** The year is 1954 and Stanley Reed, an associate justice for the Supreme Court of the United States, is sitting in his office behind his desk reading some legal papers. He hears a knock at the door, who we know to be the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Earl Warren.
38. **Interstate Highway System (1956):** Dwight and Wilson are sitting around in Dwight's home at the beginning of summer vacation. They decide to take a road trip and debate their route.
39. **Great Society (1960s):** Riley walks into the library, and sees his friend Felipe sitting at a table reading a book. Felipe is reading a biography on Lyndon B. Johnson and shares one of his best accomplishments with Riley.
40. **Malcolm X vs. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1960s):** Two leaders of the African American Civil Rights movement sit down and discuss their differences.
41. **Presidential Debates (1960):** Ken is sitting in his first period class five minutes before the bell rings, when Nic slides into his desk right next to him. They both can't wait to talk about the Presidential debate that was on TV last night.
42. **Mapp vs. Ohio (1961):** Dolly is visiting her friend Warren at his house. They are supposed to be studying for their upcoming test. She enters the room and walks in on Warren paging through the swimsuit issue of a popular magazine. Dolly decides to teach him a lesson is respecting women and history.
43. **Peace Corps (1961):** Erica and Mia have just graduated from college and Mia is having trouble deciding what to do next. Erica meets Mia at a coffee shop to try to help her figure it out.
44. **Cuban Missile Crisis (1962):** Johnny and Robbie are at Johnny's house, getting ready to start studying for a history test. They start by reviewing the Cuban Missile Crisis.

45. **Environmentalism/EPA/Rachel Carson (1962):** Nelson and Jane are walking through a local pharmacy before purchasing tasty beverages. They walk down the paper products aisle and Nelson picks up a package of toilet paper that has an environmentally friendly tag on it. She doesn't understand the sudden popularity of the Green Movement.
46. **Tinker vs. Des Moines (1965):** John and Mary Beth are sitting at home discussing a law that the federal government is currently debating on passing.
47. **March on the Pentagon (1967):** Tanya and Robyn solve a moral dilemma with the help of a magical phone and a disgruntled literary figure from the past.
48. **1968 Olympics (1968):** Peter and Norman are sitting at home during summer vacation in an Olympic year. They are watching the daily broadcast of daytime Olympic coverage and discuss how politics have influenced the games in the past.
49. **My Lai (1968):** Ronnie and Calley are sitting on a couch playing a shoot 'em up war video game. Ronnie is glad that the video game makers have some sense of decency, at least when it comes to naming the missions in the game.
50. **Stonewall Riots (1969):** Danielle and Nicole walk up to their favorite restaurant, only to see that it is closed. They are glad that their situation isn't as bad as what they learned in history class earlier that day.
51. **Foreign Policy: Nixon vs. Carter (1970s):** Two leaders, Jimmy and Richard, discuss their different perspectives on how the US should direct its foreign policy during the tumultuous 1970s.
52. **Equal Rights Amendment (1970s):** Amy and Andrea discuss women's rights and try to revive an Amendment nearly a century old.
53. **Pentagon Papers (1971):** Lucy is relaxing in her family's living room when she is startled by her friend Peter frantically pounding on the door. In his hand is a manila folder filled with papers that he claims hold photocopies of private documents from his work.
54. **The Watergate Scandal (1972):** Luke meets Leia at her locker before lunch as usual. However, today he seems troubled by something and Leia tries to get him to open up about it.
55. **Iran Hostage Crisis (1979):** Ryan and Sam are sitting in the detention room on a Saturday. The teacher has not arrived yet. Ryan feels that they are unfairly being held and Sam reminds him what a real hostage situation is like.
56. **Reaganomics (1980s):** Two leaders, Ron and Frank, have two very different visions for the economic future of the United States. The two men discuss their differing opinions.
57. **Iran-Contra Affair (1986):** Olly, Ron and Caspar are eating lunch in the cafeteria. Ron is busy throwing food at the girls at the next table trying to get their attention. The swapping of food for sufficient ammo leads to a conversation n the Iran-Contra Affair.

58. **NAFTA (1994):** Willy and Jorge are in the cafeteria. They sit down at a lunch table and eye up their undesirable lunches in front of them. They decide that the rule about not trading lunches is unfair and that they should be able to do it without any restrictions.
59. **2000 Election (2000):** George and Al are friends walking down the street on Election Day. George isn't planning on voting so Al reminds him why every vote counts.
60. **War on Terror (2001):** Colin and Condyl are two leaders debating what the government's policy should be during the War on Terror. They disagree on how the United States should respond to the attack.
61. **Citizen's United (2010):** Russ is reading the news on his tablet, when Mitch walks into the room. They discuss the history of campaign finance laws and the new decision the Supreme Court has reached.
62. **Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X Discuss the Civil Rights Movement:** In this first example of a student-written dialogue, Malcolm X is arguing for separation while Martin Luther King Jr. is arguing for integration.
63. **Captains of Industry or Robber Barons?:** In this second example of a student-written dialogue, one historian is suggesting that Carnegie is a leader of industry and a positive factor for American, while historian two believes that Carnegie was a "robber baron" who made his wealth on the backs of poor workers.

2. Transcontinental Railroad (1869)

Jane stops by her friend Jim's house and sees clothes and suitcases scattered everywhere.

Jane: Hey Jim! Looks like you're packing for quite a trip.

Jim: Ugh, yeah. I'm going to visit my grandparents in San Francisco. We're going to be gone for almost two weeks.

Jane: Cool! I would love to go to California. My dad's idea of a vacation is spending the night at a hotel with a pool and an all-you-can-eat buffet.

Jim: San Francisco will be alright, I guess, but the trip is going to take two days each way because we're taking the train! My parents are so lame. Why can't we just fly there? That would take, like, five hours.

Jane: That is weird. Didn't your family fly there last summer?

Jim: Yeah!! My dad said something stupid about some "Transcontinental Railroad" and "seeing the country."

Jane: Ahh, it's another one of your dad's "U.S. History" trips, like the time you guys tried to travel to Hawaii by boat through the Panama Canal to see what it was like and your mom got malaria. Didn't your dad dress up like Teddy Roosevelt on that one?



Jim: I think I racked up several thousand dollars in bills from my future therapist thanks to that.

Jane: Well, for what it's worth, I think this trip sounds like a great idea. The Transcontinental Railroad was certainly a difficult and dangerous project for workers, but traveling across the West by rail doesn't contain the disease risk that some of your dad's other ventures have offered.

Jim: Here's the thing: I don't even know what the "Transcontinental Railroad" is. I think my dad had us lost in the Everglades trying to recreate Ponce de León's journey through Florida when you guys studied that in history class.

Jane: The Transcontinental Railroad was a six year project that was started in 1863 by the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific Railroad Companies to complete a route from a station shared by Omaha and Council Bluffs to one located in Sacramento. Once finished, it would then be possible to travel from coast to coast by train for the first time.

- Jim: That's it? I mean, I understand the usefulness of it, but building railroad tracks halfway across the country? Sounds boring.
- Jane: Do you have any idea how difficult this project was? First, there's the political problem. The federal government had to give out tons of money in the form of loans and land grants to the railroad companies so they could finish the project. This is why it took so long for the work to get started. They argued for years in Congress about where the route would go because there were so many conflicting interests. The route meant big money for the places that it went through. It wasn't until the Civil War, when the South wasn't at the bargaining table anymore, that Congress finally agreed to a plan.
- Jim: Wait, so who actually built it? The government or those railroad companies?
- Jane: The companies built and owned the lines, but they did it using land granted to them by the government and through government loans. The Congress wanted it to be privately owned and run, but knew that it would never be built without government assistance.
- Jim: OK, so once they got things started, was it smooth sailing from there?
- Jane: Now I can see why your dad wants to take you on this trip. Think about the geography of the American West!
- Jim: Well . . . it's all beaches right?
- Jane: Just wait until you see the massive snow-covered mountains that they needed to blast through in the Rockies to build tunnels and the blazing heat they had to withstand in the deserts of Nevada! That doesn't even take into account workplace accidents and attacks by Native Americans, who were seeing their land continually stripped away.
- Jim: Who would be crazy enough to take a job working on something like this?
- Jane: Easy for you to say! For a lot of immigrants, this was the only kind of job they could find and represented a real opportunity. The Union Pacific found desperate men and put them to work. Many of them were Irish immigrants or Civil War veterans who couldn't find a job at home. The Central Pacific Railroad started the project from California and hired thousands of Chinese immigrants. They paid them significantly less than their white workers and refused to provide them with meals.
- Jim: That's horrible.
- Jane: They also gave them the most dangerous jobs. There are stories of Chinese workers hanging over cliffs in baskets to plant dynamite or others being buried in avalanches. As far as the company was concerned, they were all easily replaceable.

Jim: How many died by the end of the project?

Jane: By the time a final gold spike joined the two tracks in Promontory, Utah, about 2,000 workers died and over 20,000 were injured working on the Transcontinental Railroad. A lot of blood was spilled and many families lost fathers, but this route caused the population of the West to explode.

Jim: Sounds like a classic American story. Amazing progress, but a dark side too.

Jane: Exactly! Now you'll have plenty to think about during your trip!

Jim: You're right, as usual.

9. The Jungle (1906)

Frankie and Nathan are sitting at a lunch table with their lunch trays in front of them. Today's main course was a hot dog.

- Joey: Ugh, I can't eat this. *(throwing hot dog down on plate after taking only one bite)* This is disgusting. I'm becoming a vegetarian.
- Nathan: Let me ask you this, did you find a finger in your hot dog?
- Joey: Ewww!!! Oh my gosh! No, I didn't find a finger in it!
- Nathan: Well, then, consider yourself lucky.
- Joey: Lucky? How am I lucky? I was just served a bunch of questionable ground up turkey and beef parts boiled into a tube.
- Nathan: One Mr. Upton Sinclair would consider that hot dog more of a tube steak and a delicacy compared to what he was used to.
- Joey: This thing? *(waving the limp hot dog around)* A delicacy?
- Nathan: Yeah, back at the beginning of the twentieth century you'd never know what to expect in one of those things. Could have been a human finger, maybe some rat droppings, you just never knew.
- Joey: What?! Who was this Upton Sinclair guy and why was he getting hot dogs with human fingers in them?
- Nathan: Have you seen any of those food movies recently where it talks about how horrible our food is to eat these days because of the way they feed the animals and force them to live in confined spaces?
- Joey: Yeah, I've seen those. Those farms that sell beef and chicken to big fast food restaurants and stuff basically just fatten up animals as fast as they can, then they slaughter them in huge slaughter houses with no regard for the animal's health.
- Nathan: Exactly. Well, those are our problems today, but back then it wasn't about how the factories treated the live animals, it was about what they turned the animals into.
- Joey: So this Upton Sinclair guy was the filmmaker back then that exposed the horrible things that went into sausage?
- Nathan: Yes and no. They didn't have movies back then, so he wrote books. His most famous book was when he investigated and explored the sausage factories. It was a fiction novel based on an immigrant's experiences, called *The Jungle*.
- Joey: Yeah, I've kind of figured that out from what you said. So human fingers, rat droppings, what else?
- Nathan: Not even just human fingers. In some rare cases an entire person might fall into a vat and be ground up. But, if you've got rat droppings, what else do you have problems with?

Joey: Rats, ugh. (*shivering*)

Nathan: Yep. The rats crawled all over the meat, leaving their droppings and whatever else they did on top of the meat. All of it went right into the mixer for the sausage.

Joey: And if you've got rats that means you've probably got rat poison?

Nathan: Dang straight. They just dumped the rat poison right on top of the meat, then when they needed it, plop (*tilts his hand*) right into the meat grinder.

Joey: Ahhhh! (*shivering again*) This is horrible! They didn't even rinse it off!

Nathan: If people got lucky the meat may have been rinsed off by rain water that leaked in through the roof. But if there was meat on the floor they just swept it up, sawdust, nails, dismembered body parts, and all, plop (*tilts hand again*) Right into the meat grinder.

Joey: And people kept buying this stuff?! Why on earth would people buy this?

Nathan: People were poor. They had to take chances on this meat or starve. What would you do? Plus, aside from the workers, people didn't know about it.

Joey: At this point I'm not so sure which I'd choose. Didn't people get sick?

Nathan: Absolutely. The Spanish-American War was going on at the time, and one meat company made canned meat for the army. Their cans of meat had actually expired, so they took them back, re-labeled them with a different expiration date, and sent them back to the army. Then, when the cans got shipped to a warmer climate they started to explode from the gases of the rotten meat inside. You may want to check on this fact, but I've heard that more people died in that war from food poisoning than from battle.

Joey: Eck. I can't believe this. Did anything good come out of this?

Nathan: Thankfully, yes. What would eventually become the Food and Drug Administration of the government was created. It's their job to inspect factories and food products to make sure they are healthy and safe to eat.

Joey: (*shaking the limp hot dog again*) So even though it's gross, it's still safe to eat?

Nathan: Still safe to eat, one or sixty eight.

Joey: I think I'll still stick to becoming a vegetarian. (*drops hot dog down on plate*)

11. Ludlow Massacre (1914)

Rocky and Louis are sitting in a car outside of a fast food restaurant, waiting for their friend, Louis, to get out of work. Louis comes out to the car, slamming the door as he gets in.

Louis: I can't believe this! They're making me work an extra shift this weekend!

Rocky: *(sarcastic)* Sounds terrible. They're paying you to work more.

Louis: It's not so much the working that I mind, it's the lack of respect, you know? I should get a union started in this place.

Rocky: Well, at least you don't have to work for John Rockefeller and live in a company town.

Louis: Rockefeller, yeah, that guy must have just been a real prince to work for. He'd probably go all Ludlow on me.

Debby: *(leaning forward from the back seat)* What on earth are you guys talking about? Ludlow? Company towns? What kind of reference is that? I get Rockefeller; he was a billionaire that treated his employees like dirt.

Rocky: Ludlow was a coal mining town in Colorado in the early nineteen hundreds. One of the companies that mined there was owned by Rockefeller.

Louis: And in many of the mines, the miners were paid for how much coal they brought out, but they weren't paid if they did things to make the mine safer, like putting up supports.

Debby: What?! That's insane! That would be like paying you for how many burgers you flip and then not caring about the grease burns you get.
(smiling)

Louis: Ha ha, very funny. The point is that the miners in Colorado tried to join a miner's union because they knew that union mines had proven to be safer across the country.

Rocky: To try to break the union, the company started to hire immigrant workers that spoke different languages so that it would be harder to get together and form groups.

Louis: Eventually, the union was successful and the miners went on strike.

Debby: So I'm guessing that if they went on strike then they were kicked out of the company town?

Rocky: Exactly.

Debby: What's a company town?

Louis: It was a town that companies set up to house their workers and supply them with everything they needed.

Debby: Sounds kind of nice, actually. Not having to worry about anything after work.

Rocky: Except that they took away your freedom. Often times, you couldn't leave the town, and non-workers couldn't enter. You had to buy the company brands, no name brand things there. And if you talked bad about the company. *(shaking his head)* Look out.

Debby: Dang. So what happened to the workers that were striking and kicked out of the company town?

Louis: The evicted workers set up a camp outside the town on public land. And it was real messy there between the strikers and the company.

Rocky: Sometimes, the striking workers would sabotage some equipment or the mine.

Louis: So the mining companies set up protection by forming militias or armed guard troops. There were some small fights between the strikers and militias.

Louis: Then, one morning all heck broke loose. One of the militia leaders went down into the striker camp in Ludlow, looking for one of the strike leaders. As he approached the camp, his militia set up machine guns on the hills surrounding the camp.

Debby: What?! That sounds like a kind of drastic step! Did the strikers do something to protect themselves?

Rocky: Yeah, they grabbed their guns and found positions that seemed good to protect themselves.

Louis: Then somebody fired; we're still not sure who, but the militia unleashed their machine guns. The battle went on most of the day.

Rocky: While the strikers had more people, the militia had better weapons, with the machine guns, as well as better firing spots from the hills around the camp.

Debby: *(disgusted)* Ugh.

Louis: And once the strikers fled the camp to run to the hills, the militia went down and burned the camp.

Rocky: But what they didn't know, or maybe they did, was that the strikers had dug foxholes, almost tiny little basements, under their tents to hide from bullets that would sometimes shoot through the tents.

Debby: And people were still hiding in those foxholes when they burned them?

Louis: Yep. Mostly women and children. About twenty people died that day and they called it the Ludlow Massacre.

Debby: Hey! I've heard that song, by that folk singer, Woody Guthrie.

Rocky: Yeah, now you know what he was writing about.

Debby: So what happened to the strike?

Louis: Well, the leader of the militia was never punished for the killings and the strikers were blacklisted from working in mines. But, eventually, laws were passed to protect mine workers.

Debby: Jeez.

Louis: Yeah, I guess my job maybe isn't that bad after all. But if they want one more extra shift...!

19. Causes of the Great Depression (1929)

Frank is walking through the hallway at the end of the school day as Herbie sprints up from behind him and grabs his arm. Herbie can barely catch his breath.

Herbie: Dude! Did you hear? The stock market dropped three hundred points today. It crashed! We're going into another Great Depression!

Frank: *(sarcastically, raising his eyebrows)* Seriously?

Herbie: Yeah, man! Three hundred points! Go to the bank and get all your money, now!

Frank: No, I mean, are you seriously worried?

Herbie: I don't know why you're not freaking out! There could be millions of jobless people because of this, even worse than the Great Recession that we lived through.



Frank: OK, let's start right there. During this recent Great Recession, the unemployment rate was usually right around ten percent. So, one out of every ten people that wanted a job didn't have a job. Any guess for the Great Depression unemployment?

Herbie: Wow, ten percent doesn't sound all that bad, but I've heard that this was basically the end of the world. Great Depression unemployment, *(thoughtful pause)* twenty percent?

Frank: Actually, yeah, you're pretty close. During the Great Depression unemployment hovered around twenty percent, with a maximum of around thirty percent, but most likely neither the thirty percent, or our more recent ten percent, counts the millions of millions of people that gave up trying to get jobs.

Herbie: Wow, so that means that at least one out of every four people that wanted a job didn't have a job. That seems a lot more serious than this recent one.

Frank: Ehh, depends who you are, I guess. Anyway, that was one of the other causes of why the Great Depression went on for 12 years. If people can't work, they can't buy things-

Herbie: And if people can't buy things, then companies can't make money and give people jobs.

Frank: Exactly. It was kind of a never-ending cycle of unemployment. There was another cycle that some people might point to as a cause of the Great Depression, or at least why some people may have expected a depression at that time.

Herbie: Another cycle? So you mean some people could have predicted the Great Depression, and even the Great Recession.

Frank: Yep. In fact, some people did predict the Great Recession. It's called the Business Cycle or Economic Cycle. Sometimes businesses are making money because people are buying things, sometimes they are losing money because people can't buy things.

Herbie: Oh yeah, I've heard of this. They're not always called depressions or recessions either. Sometimes they're called panics or crises.

Frank: You know it. It's kind of like the saying, "What goes up must come down."

Herbie: And right before the Depression and Recession everything was up; people were buying things and businesses were making money. So we have the Business Cycle as a long-term cause and unemployment as a short-term cause. You mentioned there were other causes of the Great Depression?

Frank: Yeah, you ever seen your parents use a credit card?

Herbie: Heck yeah! They just bought an eight thousand dollar living room set. (shocked) Credit cards were a cause of the Great Depression?!

Frank: Not credit cards exactly, but credit. People would buy things without having the money to pay for them right away. Instead, the company would pay for it for the person by using credit. So, if the company suddenly decided they wanted their money-

Herbie: -then the person would have to pay it right away. Yikes. So if the company gave out too much credit, then couldn't get people-

Frank: -potentially unemployed people-

Herbie: -to give them the money for their stuff, then the company went out of business.

Frank: And this didn't just happen with individuals, it happened with countries. America loaned out billions of dollars to countries for World War One.

Herbie: So then other countries owed us money, and from what you're saying I'm guessing these countries didn't or couldn't pay us back. Which means those countries went bankrupt trying to pay us, and America lost money when they couldn't pay us.

Frank: Right on, Herb.

Herbie: So what was the final cause of the Great Depression?

Frank: Well, it's by no means the final cause, there were a couple of others, but I don't have time for that right now, so let's wrap it up with what we started with: the stock market, and this actually goes right in line with the idea of credit.

Herbie: What?! Now you're going to tell me that people were investing with credit?

Frank: You're darn right. They bought everything else on credit, so why not stock? It's called buying on expected returns. You assume that your first stock is going to make five hundred dollars-

Herbie: -so you buy another stock with five hundred dollars worth of credit?

Frank: Yep, and if your first stock unexpectedly ends up losing money, you have no money to pay, so both you and the company lose money.

Herbie: Jeez. Well, we'd better get to work at Burger Empire so we can pay off our credit card balances, hey?

Frank: Your credit card balance. I pay with debit.

32. Berlin Airlift (1948)

It is a weekend night and Wayne and Garth are sitting on the front hood of Garth's car in the observation area of their local airport. They are slurping giant sodas and watching the aircraft fly directly overhead.

Wayne: It's so crazy how much of a schedule these planes are on. It's like there is one landing every five minutes, almost exactly.

Garth: Yeah, it's so weird. There are literally thousands of airplanes up in the sky, flying around at thousands of feet in the air just waiting to get to their destination. And for the most part, their schedules work so well that it's all timed out for them to land so precisely on time.

Wayne: Yeah, we think we have this planned well now, think about how much planning and perfect timing the Berlin Airlift must have taken.



Garth: *(wide-eyed, confused)* Huhwaaa?!

Wayne: *(raising eyebrows)* The Berlin Airlift? *(raising eyebrows further)* To try to beat the Soviet blockade of Berlin? *(sighs, shakes his head)* You're hopeless.

Garth: Well, I'm sorry I'm not a history genius like you. Just because I don't know the exact date the Nazis bombed Pearl Harbor doesn't mean I'm dumb. But this airlift thing sounds interesting, so please inform me if you would.

Wayne: Well, first of all the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, not the Nazis . . .

Garth: I know, I'm a movie genius, I was quoting a movie.

Wayne: *(slightly embarrassed)* Oh, sorry. But the Berlin Airlift.

Garth: Yes, the Berlin Airlift. Now I already know that Berlin was separated into an East Zone and a West Zone: The East run by the communist Soviet Union, and the West run by America and its allies. West Berlin was actually surrounded by communist East Germany, wasn't it?

Wayne: Exactly, but three years after the war in 1948 the Soviet Union decided that enough was enough and they set up a blockade around West Berlin.

Garth: So they didn't allow any American supplies into or out of the city?

Wayne: Yep, and West Berlin was basically living off of those supplies. Cutting off all of the land and water routes into the city could have destroyed it.

Garth: But because you said this was an airlift, I'm guessing that the Soviets didn't have the guts to shoot down airplanes.

Wayne: You could say it that way.

Garth: Why didn't we just pull out our guns like Americans always do and blast our way in?

Wayne: For one thing, three years after the war had ended, nearly all of the actual Allied troops had left. And also because we were kind of sick of war.

Garth: So then why didn't the Soviets just attack and force the Allies out?

Wayne: The Soviets wanted to get into another war even less than America wanted to get into another war, so they took the peaceful way, and created a blockade instead.

Garth: They were basically daring the Americans to fly supplies into West Berlin?

Wayne: Yep, they were bluffing, because there was no way that the Soviets wanted to get into another war.

Garth: So the Americans called the Soviet bluff and flew supply planes into West Berlin anyway?

Wayne: Not only did they call it, they laid down a great hand.

Garth: What types of things did they haul in?

Wayne: What types of things do you need to live?

Garth: Food, shelter-

Wayne: All of it, sent in everyday. Thousands of tons of food were shipped in everyday to feed the entire city of West Berlin.

Garth: Shelter? What do you mean by that?

Wayne: Well they didn't need the actual houses or apartments, but Germany gets cold. They needed additional thousands of tons of coal and oil each day to heat and power buildings.

Garth: Thousands of tons? So they needed thousands of tons of food, and thousands of tons of coal and oil every single day?

Wayne: Yep, West Berlin had a couple million people in it at the time. Airplanes were landing in Berlin nearly every single minute at the height of the airlift.

Garth: *(stunned)* Every minute? That's insane!!! How long did this go on?

Wayne: It lasted nearly nine months. From the summer of 1948 to the spring of 1949.

Garth: What did the Soviets do? How did they react to this?

Wayne: They were stunned. They didn't believe that the Americans and their allies could keep up the pace that they were on to supply everything to West Berlin. The Soviets even tried giving free food to Germans that would defect from West Berlin to East Berlin, basically nobody defected.

Garth: Wow. That's amazing. How did it end?

Wayne: The Soviets backed down. They opened up the blockade and had to negotiate the routes into West Berlin, but on the Allies' terms.

Garth: *(yelling loudly over the rumble of an approaching plane)* Amazing! Party on, Berlin!!!

Wayne: *(yelling louder)* Party on, Garth!!!

51. Foreign Policy: Nixon Vs. Carter (1970s)

Two leaders, Jimmy and Richard, discuss their different perspectives on how the US should direct its foreign policy during the tumultuous 1970s.



- Jimmy: Richard, I think it is time to change the way the United States deals with nations around the world.
- Richard: Oh really? What did you have in mind?
- Jimmy: Well, I believe that our foreign policy should be dedicated to humanitarian issues.
- Richard: What does that even mean?
- Jimmy: It means that there are millions of people who are suffering all over the globe. There are countless people that are starving, being ravaged by deadly diseases such as AIDS, and who lack clean drinking water. Civil wars and conflict have forced people into cramped refugee camps and into slavery. Drug trafficking, religious persecution, and genocide are robbing people of their way of life. All around the world, people are denied basic rights that we as Americans take for granted.
- Richard: That is horrible, but what does that have to do with the United States?
- Jimmy: Everything! We live in a global society, and as a superpower, the United States has an obligation to help those in need. All people, no matter where they are from, should have the same rights that Americans have secured in their Bill of Rights. How can we enjoy these rights at home while turning a blind eye to those in need? We have the means and ability as the most powerful nation in the world to make it a better place.
- Richard: That sounds beautiful, but what's in it for us?
- Jimmy: *(shaking his head)* You mean besides making the world a better place? Well, there actually are tangible benefits for us. By supporting democracy and human rights abroad, we eliminate ruthless dictators and tyrants who don't share our values. Supporting American values overseas could also help create allies and friendships with other nations that could be beneficial in the long run.
- Richard: Well, it sounds like you've got it all figured out, but I have to say I think you've got it all wrong.

Jimmy: Oh really? Well what do you suggest?

Richard: Well, when it basically comes down to it, the United States has to look out for number one. (*pointing to himself*)

Jimmy: What a selfish attitude!

Richard: Is it? Listen, the United States has just finished fighting a long and horrible war in Vietnam to try to make it a better place. It cost tens of thousands of lives, millions of dollars, and a lot of our prestige and support abroad. We don't have unlimited resources to help every person or every country in need. If we did that, we would be drained of all money and resources.

Jimmy: So, you are saying we should just leave everyone hang out to dry except us?

Richard: Not necessarily. I think the policy that we should look to is something called realpolitik?

Jimmy: Gesundheit!

Richard: Good one. Realpolitik basically means that our foreign policy cannot be guided by morals alone. If it is in our best interest to jump into a conflict, then we do it. If we decide that is not in the United States' best interest, then we don't.

Jimmy: What about all of these corrupt dictators that the US has been supporting the last couple of decades? Especially the ones that the CIA has helped put into power! How do you justify supporting these leaders that treat their own people so poorly?

Richard: Well, again, it may not be the best situation, but if it is what is best for the United States, then we have to run with it. Remember, that the biggest threat to us at this time is not Iran or Cuba, but the Soviet Union. We need leaders across the globe that are against the Soviets and against communism. If they fit that description, then that is good enough for me.

Jimmy: Aren't you worried that supporting such atrocious leaders might have long term consequences? It could lead to anti-American attitudes and revolutions that could seriously hurt our nation's prestige and credibility?

Richard: Like I said, winning the Cold War against the Soviets is priority number one. If America ends up on top, that will create a more prosperous nation for our citizens. Those are the people that we are responsible for, after all. I'm not going to lie man, I think your ideas are a little out there..

Jimmy: (*under his breath*) You're not going to lie? That would be a first....

Richard: What was that, peanut farmer?

Jimmy: Oh nothing...

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