

## Rationales: General Framework

### A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn (2003)

#### I. PLOT SUMMARY

*A Peoples History of the United States* is a text that outlines American history starting with Christopher Columbus and ends with George W. Bush and 9/11. Howard Zinn, the author, wrote this a document to protest mainstream United States history. Zinn focuses on minorities within the United States and tells their stories. He includes people of color, women, laborers and the poor, and citizens of other countries to represent in this body of work.

#### II. RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to analyze United States history through the perspective of people effected by the policies that most directly impact, and generally, hurt them.

Students will come to learn that United States history has many more components than the general narrative received in traditional education settings.

Students will come to recognize bias and learn to either agree or disagree with the perspective presented. Through this learning process students will benefit by learning to engage new ideas and thoughts they may have never interacted with before. I hope that students will be uncomfortable with the new information they are being presented and learn to grapple and struggle, coming out a before student because of it.

#### III. STANDARDS

From Arizona College and Career Ready Standards:

11-12.RH.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

11-12.RH.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

11-12.RH.3. Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain

11-12.RH.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text

11-12.RH.5. Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

11-12.RH.6. Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

11-12.RH.7. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

11-12.RH.8. Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

11-12.RH.9. Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

#### IV. ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS

*A People's History of the United States* is Zinn's attempt at rounding out United States history from its general narrative. There is no graphic material in the text, but there are shocking, uncommon facts about United States history that really helps the students dive deeper into the content. Zinn claims that in writing this book it was to awaken a greater consciousness of class conflict, racial injustice, sexual inequality and national arrogance. In his afterword Zinn explains historical perspective that I believe to be true and will help students further understand historical interpretation. "But there is no such thing as a pure fact, innocent of interpretation. Behind every fact presented to the world – by a teacher, a writer, anyone – is a judgement. The judgment that has been made is that this fact is important, and that other facts, omitted, are not important."

## Rationales: General Framework

### Forrest Gump (1994)

#### I. PLOT SUMMARY

The movie *Forrest Gump* covers a long stretch of United States history, specifically during the Cold War. It is about a man named Forrest Gump who accidentally causes several key moments during the Cold War. These moments ranged from giving Elvis new dance moves, prompting the Watergate scandal, or learning ping pong and then going to China to play. This shows cause and effect and gives a fun synopsis of major aspects of American culture and geography, including the Vietnam War, protest movements, and the experiences of citizens across the whole United States.

#### II. RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to visualize what the 1960's and 1970's were like in American history through watching *Forrest Gump* and then creating a scene, using this period as a guide, to help further understanding of this time period. *Forrest Gump* gives the students a snap shot what living in the 1960's and 1970's was like and this is best done through a visualization of the time. Popular culture can help students learn about history effectively because it puts them into the situations that they would have gone through if they were alive during the time period.

#### III. STANDARDS

From National Council of Social Studies:

I. Culture: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity, so that the learner can

- a. explore and describe similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures address similar human needs and concerns;
- b. give examples of how experiences may be interpreted differently by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference;
- c. describe ways in which language, stories, folktales, music, and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture and influence behavior of people living in a particular culture;
- d. compare ways in which people from different cultures think about and deal with their physical environment and social conditions; e. give examples and describe the importance of cultural unity and diversity within and across groups.

II Time, Continuity, & Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time, so that the learner can:

- a. demonstrate an understanding that different people may describe the same event or situation in diverse ways, citing reasons for the differences in views;

b. demonstrate an ability to use correctly vocabulary associated with time such as past, present, future, and long ago; read and construct simple timelines; identify examples of change; and recognize examples of cause and effect relationships;

c. compare and contrast different stories or accounts about past events, people, places, or situations, identifying how they contribute to our understanding of the past;

d. identify and use various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, maps, textbooks, photos, and others;

e. demonstrate an understanding that people in different times and places view the world differently;

f. use knowledge of facts and concepts drawn from history, along with elements of historical inquiry, to inform decision-making about and action-taking on public issues.

#### IV. ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS

Possible sensitive topics contained in *Forrest Gump*, rated PG-13: scenes of profanity, sexual content, attempted suicide, violence, and some drug use

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion toward an understanding of why this material is included in the film. In this film specifically, the sexual content is a product of the Forrest's lack of knowledge involving what an intimate relationship is like. These scenes are critical turning point for Forrest when he discovers this aspect of his relationship with Jenny and what that means. We will be skipping over the scene as I do not feel it is necessary to watch to get the point. The attempted suicide scene is one of major character development for Jenny and is important to understanding the struggle people have involving both drugs and suicide. After dealing with an abusive father and terrible male suitors Jenny succumbed to a certain lifestyle. This is the turning point for her when she realizes that she needs to turn her life around and goes home to Alabama to live with Forrest. Another area of sensitivity would come from the battle scene in Vietnam. There are loud noises such as gunfire and bombs, along with soldiers dying in battle. This scene will be showed in order to display a snapshot of combat during the Vietnam War. Students are encouraged to express their beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If a student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

*Forrest Gump* allows students a visual of the 1960's and 1970's, giving them an opportunity to experience the United States only 40-50 years ago. This movie also gives students to follow a man throughout his life and be able to experience what being an American is through the eyes of another. Their experiences in this day and age are "like a box of chocolates, they never know what they're gonna get" and this can be learned through the experience of *Forrest Gump*.