How Turkish Middle School Students Use the Internet to Study Social Studies[1]

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Abstract

The Internet has become one of the most common educational tools used by teachers and students in social studies education worldwide. Although there are extensive studies on how the Internet is used by teachers as an instructional tool in social studies classes, less work has been done to explain how students themselves use and interact with Internet sources to study for social studies classes. The purpose of this research is to investigate how Turkish middle school students use the Internet to study and do their social studies homework. Fifty-seven middle school students completed an open ended questionnaire in one of Northern Turkey's larger cities. The results show that this group of Turkish middle school students use the Internet extensively, both to gather information for their homework and for non-academic purposes such as playing games, using social media and downloading music and films.

Introduction

The tremendous growth in Internet technologies has brought email, web pages, online services, specialized electronic networks, and software and global information resources to our homes as well as to schools (Bennett, Bishop, Dalgarno, Waycott, & Kennedy, 2012; Friedman & Heafner, 2008; Rice & Wilson, 1999; Rose & Fernlund, 1997; Vanfossen & Shiveley, 2003; Zhang & Quintana, 2012). PEW Research Center's Internet & American Life Project's data shows that 80 % of American adults currently have Internet access either at home or on smartphones (Zickuhr & Smith, 2013). Similarly, there is a steady increase in the number of Turkish households with Internet access, with 50% reporting connection to the Internet (Turkish Statistical Agency, 2013). Accordingly, Internet access in schools has increased greatly in recent years. Virtually all schools in the United States (Wells & Lewis, 2006) and 93 % of computers located in the classroom have Internet access (Gray, Thomas, & Lewis, 2010). According to data provided by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, all high schools and 98% of elementary schools in Turkey have high-speed Internet access somewhere in their buildings (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2012).

The increasing availability of the Internet in schools has triggered the curiosity of scholars studying the role of the Internet's potential role in developing more constructive and student-centered models of social studies education (Saye, 2002). Interacting with a wide variety of resources with diverse qualities and authenticities promotes students' critical thinking, problem solving, authentic experiences, and decision making about real social

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problems (Ehman, 2002; Saye, 2002; White, 2002). While leading social studies education journals such as *Theory and Research in Social Education, Social Education,* and *Social Studies and Young Learner* have published technology themed issues in recent years (Friedman & VanFossen, 2010; Mason Bolick, 2002), very little research explores the actual use of the Internet by students in the social studies classroom. Instead, the early literature on this issue mostly focuses on convincing teachers about the value of the Internet and how teachers can use it in the social studies classroom (Friedman & VanFossen, 2010).

These studies gave few details on the methods students use to gather and process information from the Internet to complete their social studies homework or projects, leaving a gap in the literature on the use of the Internet in the social studies classroom and the Internet's effectiveness as an instructional tool (Friedman & Heafner, 2008; Friedman & VanFossen, 2010; VanFossen & Shiveley, 2003). Consequently, this research focuses on students' use of the Internet, both in class, and for homework, in social studies. Homework usually refers to students' assigned essays, which can be on wide variety of topics such as biographies or investigating various global events and issues (i.e. earthquakes, global warming) in a social studies class in Turkey.

Literature Review

How the Internet is Used in Social Studies Education

The literature on Internet use in social studies education mostly focuses on introducing and evaluating various websites that are potentially useful in the social studies classroom (Berson, Berson, Desai, Falls, & Fenaughty, 2008; Berson, Cruz, Duplass, & Johnston, 2007; Bisland & Fraboni, 2007; Friedman & VanFossen, 2010) and the advantages and importance of data gathering activities in social studies education (Mason Bolick, 2002; Vanfossen & Shiveley, 2003; Whitworth & Berson, 2003).

Vanfossen and Shiveley's (2003) study shows that 80% of the National Council for Social Studies conference sessions devoted to the Internet between 1995 and 2002 addressed an overview of Internet use, teaching strategies utilizing the Internet, or the introduction of new websites. The study indicates that only slightly more than four percent of the presentations were research studies on Internet use in the social studies classroom. In their review of 325 articles about technology use in social studies education, Whitworth and Berson (2003) found that only eight of the articles were research based. The rest consisted of lists of websites, reviews of websites, and lesson plans or general lesson ideas, with Internet access" and "accessing information from the Web" as the most common uses of technology in social studies education.

The Pew Internet and American Life (Purcell, et al, 2012) reports reveal that teens use online sources extensively when doing research in this digital age. Search engines such as Google and online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia are the most popular online sources, used by an overwhelming majority of students (Purcell, et al,, 2012). Other studies show that students prefer to use certain resources such as Wikipedia and Answers.com, and that they are wary of using other sources (Friedman & Heafner, 2008). Students tend to use Internet sources to access information without proper reading, analyzing and synthesizing (Zhang & Quintana, 2012), especially those students given little time by the teachers to engage with the available online texts (Walker, 2010). Other studies provide disturbing findings that students only use Internet sources to plagiarize information for their projects and homework (Cranmer, 2006; Garrison & Bromley, 2004). Purcell, Buchanan, and Friedrich (2013) state that "with so much material available publicly in digital form, the temptation for students to copy and

paste others' work into their own is a concern for many teachers…" (p. 42). A more troubling point is that most of these students were unaware that copying and pasting information is considered cheating (Cranmer, 2006).

Students use the Internet mostly to play games, chat online with friends, and share photos rather than for academic purposes (Tally, 2007). Although Tally acknowledged the fluency of students using computer and other digital technologies in this era, he complains about the lack of academic uses by students. Kafai and Sutton (1999) found that, among the elementary students they studied, a predominant use of computers was for "game playing", and that the most frequent Internet activity was "net-surfing" followed by "information retrieval" and "e-mail uses". The authors conclude that, "… the results of this survey reconfirm the findings of studies conducted in the '80s. While the number of computers at home has changed significantly over the past ten years, children's academic home computing as such has not changed in substantial ways" (p. 354).

In their study with 236 middle and secondary school social studies teachers in Indiana, VanFossen and Waterson (2008) found low levels of higher order thinking by participants in their educational use of the Internet. Only a few participant teachers (9 %) occasionally or frequently "have students compare/contrast information from websites with different points of view" and "have students complete inquiry oriented WebQuests". Only 20.4 % of the teachers "have students analyze webpages for bias and accuracy", while 73.2% never did (Vanfossen & Waterson, 2008).

These findings raise the issue of the credibility of Internet sources. Many people can easily upload any information onto the web, and this information can be inaccurate or misguided (Braun, 1997; Bruce, 2000; Kiili, Laurinen, & Marttunen, 2008). Braun (1997) notes that "students now have much freer access to sources of information, and unless they are prepared to make use of critical thinking skills as they download data, they can easily be manipulated or persuaded into accepting information that is misleading and erroneous" (p.153). Teachers must help students to develop abilities to analyze the authenticity of information gathered from the Internet. For example, Bruce (2000) suggests that teachers need to help students engage in "dialectic reading" – evaluating, reflecting and comparing – as a necessary skill when retrieving information from the web.

The Use of the Internet in Social Studies Education in Turkey

Recently, Internet access has been increasing in Turkey (Turkish Statistical Agency, 2013). Although there are no general restrictions for the use of the Internet, use of websites with content such as child pornography can be restricted by court order in Turkey. As stated above, Internet access in schools has also been increasing rapidly (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2012). The Internet in schools is mostly made available for administrators and teachers rather than for students. Students are only allowed Internet access during their weekly, two hour computer lessons. The school computer labs are usually not available for the use of other courses such as social studies. Students who want or need the Internet for their social studies homework or projects must therefore use computers and Internet connections outside of their schools.

While discussion continues from various positions about the use of the Internet in social studies education, the literature in Turkey on this issue is still quite young. Most of the studies in the Turkish social studies literature are limited to quantitative studies that do not go beyond listing the ways that students use the Internet. According to these studies, Turkish students at K-12 levels use the Internet to "gather information for homework" (Akdağ &

Çoklar, 2009; Yalçınalp & Aşkar, 2003), "play games" and "communicate" (Orhan & Akkoyunlu, 2004; Sakarya, Tercan, & Çoklar, 2011). Google has been identified as the most common research tool used by Turkish students to gather information from the Internet (Sakarya et al., 2011).

Very few studies in Turkey focus on investigating the attitudes of students towards Internet use for homework and study. Altun's (2008) study examined middle school students' attitudes toward online homework sites, while Arıkan and Altun's (2007) study focuses on the pre-service (preschool and elementary) teachers' attitudes toward these sites. The researchers in these follow-up studies (Arıkan & Altun, 2007; Altun, 2008) used the same survey instrument. The instrument, developed by Arıkan and Altun (2007) has two types of response protocols. These protocols require the participants to check their responses (either "yes", "no" or "strongly agree", "agree", no idea", "disagree", and "strongly disagree") to pre-stated prompts. Both of these studies conducted on Turkish middle school students (n=737) and pre-service teachers (n=219) provide similar results. The vast majority (nearly 90%) of the participants in both studies report "saving time while doing homework" as the most significant advantage of these sites. Additionally, both groups find using online homework sites "enjoyable", while middle school students (70%) (Altun, 2008) find the studying process more pleasant than pre-service teachers (47%) when online homework websites used (Arıkan & Altun, 2007). While both groups are in favour of these sites, they also expressed some suggestions to improve the quality of online homework sites. More than 85% of the participants in both studies agreed that "the content of online homework sites should be examined by experts". A majority of the participants (students= 72 %; pre-service teachers= 84%) recommended that online homework sites should direct students to sources rather than present the finished homework itself ready for submission to the teacher (Altun, 2008; Arıkan & Altun, 2007). Sixty-five percent of students and 87% of pre-service teachers reported that teachers should encourage the use of resource centers and libraries in order to prevent students from using online homework sites so much (Altun, 2008; Arıkan & Altun, 2007).

In conclusion, there are few studies in Turkey focusing on students' use of the Internet for homework and education. The existing studies are primarily quantitative, and are therefore not particularly informative about the students' working process while using Internet sources for their homework. The focus of this research is to investigate how students use Internet sources to study social studies or do their homework.

Methodology

Settings and Participants

Data was collected in one middle school in a large city in the Northern region of Turkey. Located in a central neighborhood of the city, there are 1378 students (657 girls and 721 boys) and 37 teachers. The school has elementary and middle school sections in two different buildings, with 17 classrooms, a counseling room, a sports room, a library, a computer lab, and a conference room. The general population of the school is characterized as middle class or lower middle class.

Fifty-seven (29 girls and 28 boys) 7th grade students voluntarily participated in the study. As Turkish students take general social studies courses from 4th through 7th grade, the 7th grade was selected because it is the last level at which students take social studies courses. After this grade, students can only take discipline-based courses such as history, geography or sociology. Seventh grade was also deemed the most appropriate level because they have

already had numerous experiences using the Internet throughout their previous 3 years of social studies courses. The students and their teacher were informed about the purpose of the research, and were told that responding to the questionnaire would help the researcher to understand how students used the Internet to study social studies. All participating students were given an open-ended questionnaire. Six selected students among them were interviewed.

Data Collection

Data was collected through an anonymous, open-ended questionnaire developed by the researcher (see Appendix). It included basic demographic information about the students, six questions to evaluate the participants as Internet users, their frequency of Internet use, and how they use the Internet when they study social studies or do their social studies homework. Two other educators reviewed the questionnaire (one university professor and one teacher), and the questionnaire was then modified according to their suggestions and recommendations. Data was collected in the spring semester of 2012. Students were given instructions for completing the questionnaire, and the participants completed it in approximately 20 minutes. Teachers were then asked to identify 6 students of varying achievement levels (low, middle, and high) to be interviewed. Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix, question 6) were conducted to acquire deeper understanding of the students' use of the Internet. Audio-recorded interviews lasted between five and ten minutes, and were transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Initially, the quantitative section of the questionnaire was analyzed using basic statistical methods such as frequency count and mean count. The first five questions in the survey aimed to acquire information about students' self-reported proficiencies as Internet users, and their frequency and manner of Internet use. Thus, students' responses for these questions are presented in separate tables (see tables 1-4), including the frequency counts and percentiles.

The qualitative parts of the questionnaire and interview transcripts were analyzed, starting with initial readings and exploring the data corpus (Creswell, 2005). Accordingly, I read all the questionnaires and interview transcripts as the first step of analyzing the data, wrote memos and highlighted the possible key quotes. An inductive analysis approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) was used in order to create the coding categories that emerged from the questionnaires and interview transcripts. After the initial analysis coding categories, subcategories, such as "typing homework title on a search engine", "Google", "Wikipedia", " how homework is written (combine, summarize, copy-paste, compare)" emerged from the data.

I used a triangulation analysis strategy to increase reliability (Patton, 2002), wherein another professor from an educational field also analyzed the data. The codes and categories created by each researcher were then compared and negotiated to reach a consensus. The triangulation method was also employed to ensure the accuracy of frequency counts for each category. Selected quotes from the questionnaires and interview transcripts were translated from Turkish to English, and are presented and discussed.

Findings

Participants' Internet Use

Initial questions from the survey were about students' Internet availability at home and their habits of Internet use. These questions aim to acquire information about the length of time students spend on the Internet, their proficiencies as Internet users, and their manner of Internet use. The data analysis indicates that more than two-thirds (n=38, 66.5%) of the total participants had an Internet connection in their homes. More than a quarter of the participants (n=15, 26%) did not have any Internet access in their homes. Four students did not answer this question.

Students were also asked about the average length of time they spent on the Internet every day. As can be seen from table 1, the majority of the students (86%) used the Internet every day, although the length of time spent varied. Only eight students (14%) reported that they did not use the Internet.

Table 1

Length of time spent on the Internet per day by participants.

Length of time per day	Frequency	Ratio (%)
None	8	14
0-1 Hours	31	54.5
2-3 Hours	15	26.5
3 or more Hours	3	5

Participants were also asked about their competency of Internet use. As can be seen from table 2, more than three quarters of the total participants rated themselves as "very good" (n= 17, 30%) or "good" (n= 26, 45.5%) Internet users, and almost a quarter of the (n=13, 23%) participants saw themselves as "moderate" users. Only one participant labeled himself/herself as a "bad" Internet user. None of the participants labeled themselves as a "very bad" Internet user. As all of these responses are self-reported, the responses to this question may not represent completely the actual levels of their proficiency as Internet users. Based on their responses as a whole, however, it can be assumed majority of the participants can at least navigate on the Internet, and find and download information in various forms.

The majority of the participants believe they are proficient Internet users. This is an interesting finding, as a considerable number (n=15, 26%) of the participants did not have Internet access at their homes. Thus, it is likely that these participants have become proficient users by interacting with the Internet in different places such as in schools, Internet cafes, or the private homes of friends or relatives. In fact, a few students indicated that they usually went to Internet cafes or a friend's house to do their homework in their responses to the questionnaire.

Table 2

Self-reported Internet competency of the participants.

Internet competency of the participants	Frequency	Ratio (%)
Very good	17	30
Good	26	45.5
Moderate	13	23
Bad	1	1.5
Very Bad	0	0

After establishing the participants' frequency and proficiency with Internet use, the ways they use the Internet were analyzed. Participants were given a list of methods of Internet use (see Appendix question 4), and were asked to indicate their reasons for such use. Participants were allowed to check more than one reason for Internet use for this question. The participants were also asked to list their top three most common motives for Internet use in a follow-up question on the questionnaire. The data gathered from these questions are presented in table 3 and table 4.

Table 3
Participants' reasons for Internet use.

Methods of Internet use	Frequency	Ratio (%)
Gathering information for coursework	53	93
Playing games	44	77
Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	36	63
Gathering visuals for coursework	29	51
Downloading music/films	27	47
Aimless Internet surfing	4	7
Other	3	5

As can be seen from these tables, "gathering information for coursework" was the most common reason for Internet use reported by the participants. An overwhelming majority of the participants (n=53, 93%) indicated that they used the Internet to gather information related to their courses. In addition, more than half of the participants indicated that "playing games" and interacting with "social media" were other common reasons for Internet use. "Downloading music/films" and "gathering visuals for coursework" were less common reasons. Few students indicated that they surf on the Internet aimlessly, and that they read magazines for leisure and work on programming.

As can be seen from tables 3 and 4, the order and calculated frequency for each reason for Internet use has not been changed much. It is natural to see the frequencies becoming lower in table 4 as the data presented here was based on the participants' top three

Table 4
Participants' self-reported most common reasons for Internet use.

Reason for Internet use	Frequency	Ratio (%)
Gathering information for coursework	49	86
Playing games	35	61
Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	31	54
Downloading music/films	21	37
Gathering visuals for coursework	17	30
Aimless Internet surfing	3	5
Other	2	3.5

reasons for Internet use. On the other hand, the data presented in table 3 was not only limited to three choices. Since the participants were allowed to make as many choices as they liked, the frequencies for each reason for Internet use were higher in table 3. The order of the frequency of each item in both tables has not been changed except for "downloading music/films" and "gathering visuals for coursework". As can be seen from table 3 and 4, these two items' order has been reversed.

Although there were minor differences between the frequencies and orders of the items presented in these tables, it is clear that these participants used the Internet extensively to gather information and visuals for their courses, play games, use social media, and download music and films. The next section focuses on the participants' use of the Internet to study social studies.

How the Participants Used the Internet to do Social Studies Homework

Participants were asked in both the questionnaire and interview sessions to explain how they completed social studies homework using Internet sources. The purpose of this question was to understand the ways that students gather and process information from the Internet to complete their social studies homework or projects. Analysis of the responses to this question indicated that students used a typical searching method to find information on the Internet. The vast majority of the participants (n=52, 91%) indicated that, when they had a social studies assignment, they typed their homework title on a search engine and generally completed their homework based on only one Internet source located (n=41, 72%). There were several responses from the participants about this issue.

> I did my homework using Google. I wrote it [homework] from the first website, and the information was correct. (P. # 26)

> First, I write it [homework title] on Google. Second, I read the websites I selected. Third, I find the one most appropriate for my homework and save it on Word and write it down. When I need it again, I find it from the Word document. (P. #56)

> First, I wrote the topic of my homework on Google. Then, I selected the most appropriate website for my homework. If I cannot find it from Google, I search in the websites I know. (P. #49)

> First I enter the topic of the homework on Google; I select one of the websites [from the search results] and find a picture appropriate for it [homework]. (P. #38)

As can be understood from the responses, the most frequently used search engine by the participants was Google. Forty-two respondents (74%) cited *Google* as their primary search engine, which is notable because students were not asked to specify any search engine they used when they were doing Internet searches. Nevertheless, a majority of the participants named Google as the search engine they used frequently. The participants also cited Vikipedi, which is the Turkish version of Wikipedia, as the most common and trusted Internet source (n=27, 47%) used for their homework. Below are the selected responses about this issue.

> There are well known websites like Vikipedi. I generally search on these sites. (P. #27 interview)

> [I use] well known and objective websites like vikipedi. (P. #35)

> I think for me and my peers Vikipedi is the most beneficial website… I type my homework on Google but, as I said, since Vikipedi is the most beneficial website for me and my peers, I do my homework from this website. (P. #18 interview)

> I generally use Vikipedi… because this site explains [the topics] very well, and I get higher grades when I do my homework from Vikipedi. (P. #8 interview)

Other than Vikipedi, a few students (n=6) named Facebook, Twitter, MSN, and forum websites as the Internet sources they used. Only one student stated that s/he used an online teaching and learning platform (www.okulistik.com) to do some social studies homework. "The website that I have signed up for is very good. Today I told my teacher and s/he liked it a lot" stated participant number 2. Only one student indicated that s/he preferred to use official government websites. S/he stated, "First I search within government websites. If there is not any information [about my homework] there, I use a search engine …" (P. #39). Thus, it seems that, except for Google and Vikipedi, there were no other websites commonly used by the participants. In addition, these few responses clearly indicated that the majority of participants were not particularly selective about the credibility and reliability of the sources they used for their social studies homework. For instance, only one student stated that "first of all, I investigate whether the website is good and check the information in the website, then I write my homework" (P. #28).

While the participants seemed to be skillful at conducting Internet searches and reaching various sources, they were doing little to compare Internet sources with each other or analyze and synthesize the information gathered. As can be seen from table 5, more than half of the participants (n=31, 54%) pointed out that, after they had found a number of sources on the Internet, they selected "the best", "correct", or "appropriate" source and then wrote their homework based on this single source. Below are some selected responses from this group of participants.

> After I look at all sites [retrieved from the Google search], I select the best one. (P. #34)

> I typed the homework title on Google, I looked at a few websites, and I wrote [the homework from] the better one [site]. (P. #4)

> After I read all sites [retrieved from Internet search], I select the most appropriate to my homework. (P. #56)

> I select, the best, the most understandable and the most appropriate to my homework and I write [from this] one [source]. (P. #49)

> I compared the sources with each other and I wrote from the one that definitely contained correct information. (P. #47)

As can be understood from the participants' responses, although they used such words as "the best", "correct", or "appropriate" to define the quality of the sources they selected, they did not explain what these words meant. It is possible that these participants were unaware of how they could filter or eliminate information gathered from the Internet. Correspondingly, when the participants were asked to cite the number of Internet sources they used for social studies homework, almost three quarters of the total participants (n=41, 72%) stated that, generally, they only used one source. Twelve of the participants (21%) stated that they used two sources, and only four remaining participants stated that they used three or more sources to complete

their social studies homework. Given how the majority of the participants generally used only one source to complete their social studies homework, it is unsurprising that they did little to compare and contrast sources.

Table 5
Participants' self-reported ways of processing information gathered from the Internet to do their homework.

Methods of information processing /doing homework	Frequency	Ratio (%)
Selecting the best /correct / appropriate source	31	54
Summarize	24	42
Compare sources	17	30
Combine	14	25
Copy –paste	13	23
Print the Web Pages	2	3.5

Less than one third (n= 17, 30%) of the total participants stated that they compared Internet sources with each other and/or other sources. Only four participants within this group indicated that they compared Internet sources with print sources before writing their homework: "First, I collect information from an encyclopedia, then I do an Internet search … by reading and checking information from different sources" stated participant number 29. Only a couple of students indicated that they compared the information they gathered from the Internet with various sources and their teachers before using it: "In order to find the most correct information, I enter various websites and ask my teachers" stated participant number 27. However, participant number 39 had a more sophisticated way of comparing information: "I compare [information from the Internet] by asking the teacher. If the information I find is not from a government website, I compare the information with the government website." While a few students were checking the reliability of the information they gathered from the Internet, the vast majority of the participants simply did not care about the quality of the information they gathered. This may suggest that they have not been instructed about how to check the reliability of Internet sources and filter information from the web.

After completing the researching of sources and reviewing the information they found on the Internet, a few participants pointed out different ways of writing their social studies homework. The most common approach was summarizing. A considerable number of the participants (n=24, 42%) stated that they "summarize" information they had gathered from the Internet in order to write their homework. Below are some selected responses of the participants.

I printed it [website] out from the Internet, then I read and summarized. (P. #36)

First, I read it [website], then I summarize. (P. #16)

I got a print out from a few websites, and I wrote [my homework] by summarizing. (P. # 19)

First, I enter Google and type my homework; then I find information about the [homework] topic; I click on these [websites] and summarize the information. (P. #43 interview)

A quarter of the total participants (n=14, 25 %) used the word "combine" to explain how they wrote their homework after gathering information from the Internet. Basically, this group obtained some information from each website they had found and added one to another when they wrote their homework. Below are some selected responses of these participants.

After I have checked the trustworthiness of information, I combined [it]. (P. #24)

I searched from different [Internet] sources and add the information on the one that did not contain [this specific information]. (P. #1)

I got a little information from each website, then I downloaded them to my computer and combined them in the computer (P. #2) … For instance I write the introduction [of my homework] from Vikipedi, I write the body from another website and combine these two sources by adding short sentences (interview)

Some participants (n=13, 23%) indicated that they "copied and pasted" the information they gathered from the Internet and submitted their homework in this form: "I copied from Google to Word, then I wrote [my homework]" said participant number13. Similarly, participant number 56 stated that "I saved it as Word document, then I wrote [my homework]". Two students even admitted that they just print out the related information directly from websites and submitted the homework in this form. Participant number 23 stated, "I did not write at all, I just got a print out". Likewise participant number 20 notes that "When the teacher wants the homework in handwriting, I do it this way. But sometimes we only get prints [of websites]".

In conclusion, it is clear that these groups of Turkish middle school students frequently used the Internet to gather information to do their social studies homework, but they tended to use the information without critical thinking, proper analysis, or synthesis. Although scholars, teachers, and students accept the Internet as a vital resource in social studies, members of each group appear to overlook its irresponsible uses, such as when students use unreliable sources unquestioningly, or when they just cut, copy and paste information.

Discussion

The vast majority of the participants stated that they used the Internet as a research tool to collect information and visuals for their coursework. This was an expected finding as computer and Internet availability have been growing tremendously in schools and homes (Bennett et al., 2012). Earlier studies conducted with Turkish students also showed that students use the Internet as a primary research tool for their classes (Akdağ & Çoklar, 2009; Orhan & Akkoyunlu, 2004; Sakarya et al., 2011; Yalçınalp & Aşkar, 2003).

On the other hand, the data showed that the participants tended to use the information gathered from the Internet without critical thinking, proper analysis or synthesis. As the data indicates, almost three quarters of the participants used only one Internet source for their homework, and less than one third of the participants compared the information gathered from the Internet with other sources. The majority of participants typically summarized, combined, or even copied and pasted information from the Internet for their homework. This is congruent with Friedman and Heafner's (2008) findings, which showed that students are not building higher order thinking when using Internet sources. Rather, students use the Internet to search for information and copy and paste text and images without comparing and

analyzing information (Cranmer, 2006; Garrison & Bromley, 2004), sometimes not realizing that copy and pasting information constitutes cheating (Cranmer, 2006).

This study also confirmed that students generally preferred to use only a few search engines and common websites such as Google and Vikipedia when searching on the Internet. An earlier study conducted in Turkey showed that Google was a very common (94%) search engine among elementary students (Sakarya et al., 2011). This study also showed that almost half of the participants (n=27, 47%) cited Vikipedi (the Turkish version of Wikipedia) as a primary and trusted Internet source for their homework. This finding indicates that Turkish and American students named the same website as a main source for Internet searches.

Although using the Internet in the classroom is viewed as an opportunity to make social studies pedagogy more constructivist by a number of social studies educators (Ehman, 2002; Saye, 2002; White, 2002), the findings of this study suggest the opposite. According to these authors, students' interaction with a vide variety of resources with diverse qualities and authenticities promotes their critical thinking, problem solving, authentic experiences, and decision-making about real social problems (Ehman, 2002; Saye, 2002; White, 2002). However, the findings of this study showed that the participants' interaction with Internet sources did not build such skills. Rather, the majority of the participants used Internet sources in a superficial way only to complete their homework. This study clearly showed that, although students commonly used the Internet for academic purposes, there is an evident lack in its use to develop skills in critical thinking, analysis and synthesis.

Conclusion and Implications

This study shows that this group of Turkish middle school students use the Internet extensively to gather information for their homework in addition to playing games, using social media and downloading music and films. However, the data shows that a great number of students use the Internet for homework uncritically lacking source comparison, analysis and synthesis. Rather, most use the information gathered from the Internet came from a single source. There could be several reasons for this shallow use of the Internet, including the hegemony of the fixed curriculum and standardized testing, or other reasons. The pressure of succeeding in standardized tests and the fixed curriculum tend to pressure students so that they may not give much importance to this type of homework. Nevertheless, I would argue that the main reason could be the habits and culture of the Internet uses of the students and teachers in Turkey. Turkish students and even some teachers tend to believe whatever they read or see on the Internet, and are seemingly less worried about the quality and reliability of the information.

Braun (1997) notes that if students do not use "critical thinking skills as they downloaded data, they can easily be manipulated or persuaded into accepting information that is misleading and erroneous" (p.153). Teachers must therefore help students to develop techniques to encourage more active interrogation of the reliability of Internet information. Accordingly, I suggest the following list of tasks for students when they are collecting information from the Internet.

Checking the credibility of Internet sources. Students must check the credibility of Internet sources before using them, by asking questions to analyze the trustworthiness of Internet sources. One such question is "Who is the site owner?" If it is a governmental organization's official website or a well-known NGO's website, it may be considered a trusted source. If it is another type of website, the author (if there is any) of the online text

must be checked and the following questions must be answered: "Who is the author? What is their field of expertise?" Finally, the information must be checked regarding when it was last updated. There is a vast amount of outdated information on the Internet, and students must be cautious about using this information.

      Checking the trustworthiness of information. After filtering Internet sources, students must also check the trustworthiness of information gathered from the Internet. Students can do this by comparing the information with other Internet and print sources. This strategy allows them to eliminate erroneous and/or misleading information.

      Reflective reading and analyzing information. Students must read and analyze information collected from the Internet reflectively and critically (Bruce, 2000) in order to make their own meanings of the information gathered.

      Synthesizing information. Finally, students must synthesize the information collected from all sources, put it into their own words, and submit their assignments in this form.

      Applying these strategies may help students to filter Internet sources and promote their reflective reading, analysis, and synthesis skills. Nonetheless, as the data in this study suggests, it seems that the participants have neither been instructed about how to check the trustworthiness of Internet sources, filtering and checking information, nor how to process it analytically and critically.

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Appendix: How do you use the Internet for your social studies homework?

Gender: □ Female   □ Male

Age :.. Grade / Class ....

1. Do you have an Internet connection at your home?   □ Yes   □ No

2. How many hours do you spend on the Internet in a day (on average)?

   a) None 0-1 hours
   b) 2-3 hours
   c) more than 3 hours

3. How do you rate yourself as an Internet user?
   a) Very good   b) Good   c) Moderate   d) Bad   e) Very Bad

4. What are your purposes for Internet use? (You can check more than one item).
   a) Gathering information for coursework
   b) Gathering visuals for coursework.
   c) Playing games
   d) Using e-mail
   e) Using social media websites / chatting (Facebook, Twitter etc.)
   f) Downloading music and films
   g) Aimless Internet surfing
   h) Other. Specify ....

5. Please list the top three most common Internet uses among those you have checked above.

   a) …………………………………………
   b) …………………………………………
   c) …………………………………………

6. Please give an example that tells us how you complete social studies homework using the Internet.

   a) How did you search for and find sources on the Internet for this homework?
   b) How many Internet sources did you use for this homework?
   c) How did you compare the information you gathered from different Internet sources, and how did you decide which source(s) to use?
   d) How did you complete and finalize your homework using these Internet sources?

In Defense of Simulating Complex and Tragic Historical Episodes: A Measured Response to the Outcry Over a New England Slavery Simulation

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Abstract

A slavery simulation that took place as part of a field trip for students of a Hartford junior high academy led a father to file a human rights suit against the school district, and for one official to comment that simulations of complex and tragic human phenomena have "no place in an educational system." In light of these conclusions, this paper explores this case in the context of other similar simulations in order to offer a more measured response to using them in classrooms, one that balances the value of such simulations with the hazards they present for teachers and students.

Introduction

Simulations and other experiential learning activities have long been part of the social studies curriculum. This strategy is often used to enliven discussion of complex issues and perspectives, particularly around topics which may be difficult for students to grasp conceptually or empathetically through other means (e.g. Arnold, 1998; Bloom, 2005; Byrnes & Kiger, 1990; Ganzler, 2010; Lay & Smaric, 2006). Simulations may be ideal for this purpose because they can help teachers bring students' subjective experiences to the surface in order to draw out further learning (Lederman, 1984; Lederman & Kato, 1995). For these reasons, simulations can elicit strong emotional involvement from the students participating in them. And while such emotional engagement can be a strong affordance for learning, it may be problematic if students are not properly prepared and debriefed. Moreover, when their parents are not appropriately informed about the nature or purposes of the simulation in advance, their children's experiences may raise serious concerns that need to be addressed retrospectively. The recent failure of a school in Hartford, Connecticut to address these needs in advance put simulations under a spotlight when a parent filed a human rights complaint against their daughter's school district after she participated in a slavery simulation as part of a four-day school trip.

Controversy Surrounds a Slavery Simulation in Connecticut

According to the story reported in the *Hartford Courant*, the parents of the 12 year old girl "were not informed that students would be part of a slavery re-enactment" (De La Torre, 2013). The girl's father, James Baker, testified to the Hartford Board of Education that he was present to "make you aware of the sanctioned social and emotional abuse my daughter and her classmates suffered during a field trip with the HMTCA [Hartford Magnet Trinity

College Academy]" (Baker, 2013). He explained how students were put in a dark room and packed uncomfortably together to simulate being in a slave ship. Later they were taken into the woods to pretend to pick cotton and to participate in an Underground Railroad experience. During these experiences some students were demeaned by having their teeth checked, were called names, and threatened that "if I were to run away they would whip me until I bled on the floor, and then either cut my Achilles so I can't run again or hang me" (p. 2). Baker argued further that the school:

> Practiced cultural insensitivity by placing African American students in simulations of slavery and racial bigotry. If the school placed Jewish kids in a harsh re-enactment of Nazi death camps that would be equally problematic. Why, because the Stanford Prison Experiment in 1971 demonstrated the power of role play on identity and behavior and how mind and body reacts negatively to simulations. (p. 2)

In their own defense, *Nature's Classroom*, the organization that runs the simulation argued that students have been attending the program for many years and that the goal of the simulation was for students to develop an "awareness of physical and emotional and cultural supremacy over another….It's a very, very, heartfelt understanding of an underclassed group" (De La Torre, 2013). Vanessa De La Torre also reported that a "social worker and interventions specialist" at the school "debriefed dozens of students who participated in the Underground Railroad exercise" finding that students took away some positive lessons, like not taking the freedoms they have for granted and better understanding what slaves went through (De La Torre, 2013). More troubling, however, is that students were at times not clear whether the threats of simulation leaders were real or part of the experience, and that "students verbally reported that they felt uncomfortable and confused with the statements" these leaders made (De La Torre, 2013).

"No Place in an Educational System"

These events have led the executive director of Connecticut's African-American Affairs Commission, Glenn Cassis, to state that such simulations "[have] no place in an educational system" (De La Torre, 2013). The argument that simulations of complex and tragic episodes of the human experience should be out-of-bounds is not new. The rationale is derived from two key arguments. The first, hinted at by James Baker in his testimony wherein he referred to the Stanford Prison Experiment, highlights the degree to which participants within an artificial framework can psychologically take on the roles of the dominators and the dominated, thereby losing sight of what is performance and what is real (Baker, 2013). Simulations hold within them the potential to exacerbate these very human tendencies. Thus, Baker is right to be concerned about the potential for a poorly run simulation to devolve into a situation that is confusing and scary for students like his daughter and her classmates.

The second line of reasoning holds that simulations "provide an unrealistic view of tortuously complex and horrific situations that serve to minimize the significance of what victims experience" (Totten, 2000, p. 165). Totten and Feinberg (1995) argued that the pedagogical goal of fostering empathy for those who lived through the Holocaust did not compensate for the potential of such activities to trivialize the activity. As such, the Holocaust (and by extension, slavery) should, he argued, be considered out-of-bounds for simulations, which "will almost inevitably end up being simplistic and bereft of the historical

accuracy that is desired. The end result is that they will not further the educational objective for studying this history, but rather retard it" (p. 330). Totten's and Feinberg's concerns are not without merit. One of the key struggles simulation designers face in creating simulations is verisimilitude, or the near representation of reality. Simulations must strike a balance between representing the phenomena realistically (Baranowski, 2006), while doing so in a simplified manner such that participants can derive meaning from the activity without undue interference from the noise of reality (Aldrich, 2006; Leigh & Spindler, 2004). That is to say that "reality is not always the best learning environment" (Aldrich, 2006, p. 49). What can be concerning is when the simulation is so simplistic that it leaves students with an inaccurate or uncomplicated view of history, or conversely when a simulation is so complex that students fail to derive any coherent meaning from the experience. Simulations of the variety discussed in this paper have the added layer of balancing student discomfort within the context of verisimilitude.

Situating Simulations of the Complex & Tragic

Not all simulations, even those dealing with reverential topics like the Holocaust appear to be as problematic as Totten and Feinberg (1995) would have their readers believe; nor do they degenerate into chaos as the spectre of Zimbardo's prison experiment would suggest (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973). Simone Schweber's (2003) self-described bias against simulations was challenged by one teacher's deft execution of a Holocaust simulation, based on the *Gestapo Game*. In her rich account of the simulation, Schweber argued that the simulation remained morally complex, which enabled students to garner deep insights into the Holocaust. Specifically, she noted that students, particularly a young woman named Calypso, who continued to lack certain amounts of knowledge about the Holocaust, nevertheless demonstrated a "moral learning" that "dwarfed her informational gap….Calypso had learned about Jewish victimization, if not in all its historical complexity, at least in meaningful, moral depth" (p. 180). Moreover, she posited that students' sense that they were having fun could more accurately be interpreted as their attempt to describe their productive engagement with the topic, and that "it did not mean they weren't taking the subject matter seriously; they simply lacked the language to express respectful, wholehearted engagement" (2004, p.106). Schweber (2003; 2004) continued to be torn over the fact that students feel some emotional stress resulting from their experiences within this simulation. Of specific concern to Schweber was that the success of the simulation and the care over students' psychological wellbeing were at times difficult for the teacher to navigate, particularly given that in this context, the teacher played the role of the persecutor. Her role helped to shield students from the dominator/dominated quagmire when students are pitted against each other; however, it also obscured from view some of the needs this teacher's students may have expressed to her had she not taken on this role (Schweber, 2003, pp. 181-182). At the same time, Ben-Peretz (2003) argued that the stress produced by the simulation described in Schweber's (2003) account may have enabled students to care more deeply about the Holocaust through the process of collective, emotional catharsis. In this way, there is a twofold burden on educators who choose to engage their students in simulations of complex and tragic human episodes. First, they need to help ensure the activities are rich enough and emotionally fraught enough not to trivialize the historical human experience. At the same time, they need to prepare their students to grapple with the emotional depth of simulations and to be cognizant of students' emotional needs throughout

the experience. Without these capacities, the challenges students face in navigating these simulations become more problematic. Schweber (2003) concluded:

> Done well, they allow students emotional and intellectual access to past events; done poorly, they pose miseducative, indeed harmful, opportunities galore. Although Ms. Bess's Holocaust simulation was not morally uncomplicated, it was nonetheless impressive enough to change this researcher's biases against the possibilities of the genre (p.185).

When simulations are used in order to engage students affectively such that they empathize with historical actors, teachers enter a space that is rife with hazards, but also potentially rich with rewards like those described by Schweber. Others too, have noted such positive outcomes.

Byrnes' and Kiger's (1990) research on Jane Elliot's brown/blue eyes simulation demonstrated that this deeply emotional exercise led to positive shifts in students' views of African-Americans compared to more traditional approaches to teaching that aimed to reduce prejudice, albeit at a university level. This activity was, however, arguably a positive learning experience even for young students in an elementary context. In the *PBS Frontline* documentary *A Class Divided* (Peters & Cobb, 1985), Elliot had a chance to interview her former 3rd grade class, who were by then adults, about the simulation. At one point she asked them "is the learning worth the agony?" The former students' immediate response was "yes." One of the former students elaborated saying, "it made everything a lot different than what it was. You, ah, we was a lot better family, even in our houses we was probably, because, ah, it was hard on you. When you had your best friend one day, then he's your enemy the next, it brings it out real quick in you" (Peters & Cobb, 1985).

Similarly, the *Yellow Bibs* discrimination activity observed by Maitles and McKelvie (2010) inspired students to take up the defense of those who suffered the indignities of discrimination by the Genocide Awareness Day speakers. Several students approached the principal, protesting the treatment of their peers, which is precisely the kind of sensibilities we want our students to embody, namely standing up against injustice. Together, the works of Schweber (2003; 2004), Byrnes and Kiger (1990), Maitles and McKelvie (2010), and Peters and Cobb (1985) provide cases that contraindicate the assertions that such simulations are necessarily miseducative and thereby have no place in the curriculum.

Proceed with Care

Nevertheless, students' participation in such simulations should be carefully considered. Age is one important factor, and surely plays a role in the debate over the appropriateness of the slavery simulation conducted by *Nature's Classroom*. The younger the student, the more carefully educators must evaluate whether students have the personal tools to deal with the moral and emotional complexities of these simulations. In an interview, Brenda Trofanenko argued that the study of such events that require students to grapple with "difficult knowledge" should be reserved for high school because younger students lack certain critical capacities to navigate these issues (Ciciora, 2009).

At the same time, in a world in which students' constant access to desensitizing media may callous them to images or descriptions of human suffering (Signorielli, 2005), it may be all the more necessary to instigate opportunities for them to express and engage in relevant empathetic experiences and discourses. Thus, experiences like simulations that aim to increase empathy and care may constitute inoculations against media desensitization. In this light, it is easy to see why waiting until high school to expose students to simulated

experiences may pose its own moral perils—ones of omission. To be sure, the question of readiness is not clearly demarcated, nor agreed upon; nevertheless, it is one factor that social studies teachers should be cognizant of as they plan their curricula.

Beyond the question of student readiness is the fact that those who run these simulations should be well prepared, not just in the orchestration of the simulation but also in recognizing the emotional hazards that are part and parcel with the kinds of experiences described above. Baker (2013) is right to be concerned that, in his words, "no one in this school administration was conscious of the potential psychological and physical harm this activity might pose for all students. We trusted the principal and teachers and this administration to protect our daughter" (p. 2). Educators need to approach these activities with emotional and cultural sensitivity, be wary of early signs of psychological distress, have the tools to support students as they navigate any stress and strain they may feel, and know how to prepare both parents and students to make sense of the experiences before, throughout, and after the simulation is enacted. To be sure, this demands a lot of teachers, and so it should. Teachers must be amply prepared to engage in such simulations effectively.

To say that these activities have no place in an educational system is an understandable, reactive response, but one that clearly lacks discrimination. There are clear and defensible educational benefits that students derive from their participation in social studies simulations, even ones that attempt to address complex and tragic episodes of the human experience. To do away with them is to carelessly dispose of the good with the bad. The Connecticut case does, however, bring to light the challenges that such simulations may pose, thus illuminating the high standard to which simulations and those who implement them must be held, particularly when dealing with scenarios such as slavery or the Holocaust. As a simulations researcher, I continue to see valuable growth in the area of simulations in educational contexts. At the same time, I also acknowledge that the lack of training many teachers receive for running these complex, dynamic activities is highly problematic.

In this way, the debate about whether these simulations are appropriate is misplaced. Research demonstrates that in well prepared and caring hands, they are powerful and memorable additions to the social studies curriculum (Schweber, 2003; 2004). These simulations may also enable students to wrestle with notions of historical memory and the acquisition of difficult knowledge by asking students to embody this knowledge. In this way, educators can help to circumvent the desensitizing effect that has made the imagery of human tragedy commonplace, even banal, in the eyes of our media-soaked youth (Lehrer & Milton, 2011). Our reticence to utilize activities that may cause students emotional discomfort is perhaps just as concerning, insofar as our aversion to doing so may further contribute to the sanitization of human history. To introduce opportunities for students to wrestle with the rich and, at times, troubling emotional landscape of history deepens what social studies has to offer, and, potentially, opens up the past to more textured dimensions than more traditional forms of historical analysis. Both have a place in the social studies curriculum and both are accessible to children in different ways.

The more pressing issue for the social studies community to explore is the manner in which teachers are prepared to undertake complex activities like simulations. Anecdotally, teachers appear to receive very little training of this variety. As a result of this gap in their learning teachers, even experienced ones, who elect to teach by using simulations may be left to develop their capacities through trial and error instead of under the tutelage of a mentor. As such, the provision of professional training around the use of simulations may help to ensure that teachers are well equipped to employ simulations and able to manage effectively the controlled chaos that these activities require for their success (Wright-Maley, 2013). Such

training may also enable them to traverse the moral landscape through which they and their students must navigate, and to see clearly the ethical boundaries across which their curriculum should not venture.

Simulations should, and do, allow students to get close to historical experience. This emotional proximity helps to foster the kind of "caring for" (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 234) and "caring about" (p. 229) history that drives students' desire "to care for people in the past" that may help to support other learning goals (p.236). At the same time, these experiences, run amok, have the capacity to wound students. Teachers must therefore be present to help ensure that students can approach the historical experiences as they would a fire: Close enough to feel the heat, but not so close that they get burnt[2]. Thus, the issue at hand is more correctly a question of implementation: For whom are these simulations appropriate and how can they be appropriately included in the curriculum? As a profession we must consider that if simulations of this kind are going to be included, educators need to be prepared to use them effectively. In doing so, we will help to enable educators the ability to use a potent tool that can help, in turn, to advance students' critical and empathetic capacities. At the same time, simulations must be wielded skilfully so that parents can rest assured that their children will reap the benefits simulations have been demonstrated to provide such that their learning is "worth the agony" (Peters & Cobb, 1985).

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[2] Thank-you to Parag Joshi for this metaphor

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"'I am Canada': Exploring Social Responsibility in Social Studies Using Young Adult Historical Fiction"

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Abstract

This paper explores educating for democratic citizenship with a focus on the intersection between reading and values, specifically the nurturing of social responsibility. Using a pre-designed framework for teaching for social responsibility, excerpts from a young adult historical fiction series are used to consider learning possibilities in the social studies classroom.

Introduction

In the following excerpt from Carol Matas' book *Behind Enemy Lines* (2012), a Canadian soldier wonders how things got so bad for the Jews in Europe while a Jewish resistance fighter challenges him about Canada's policy on Jewish immigration during the World War II era.

> 'But why did anyone put up with it? I can tell you, if anyone had tried to do that at home—in Canada—we would have made their life a misery!' 'Really?' he said. 'Then I wonder why your country won't take in any Jewish children with visas. We tried to get a large group out of a camp. They had visas for Canada, the Germans said they could go, and Canada refused to take them'. 'I don't believe you!' I said. (Matas, 2012, p. 54)

It is here, in rich excerpts such as this that creative social studies teachers begin to envision the incredible learning potential embedded within literature. Why did the Jews and others "put up" with infringements on peoples' rights? What was Canada's immigration policy during this time? Did this event from the book actually occur? Were there other examples of prohibited Jewish immigration? Why? These questions beg to be asked and answered using helpful thinking strategies and imaginative means of presentation. This paper explores educating for democratic citizenship with a focus on the intersection between reading and values, specifically the nurturing of social responsibility. Using a pre-designed framework for teaching for social responsibility, excerpts from a young adult historical fiction series are used to consider learning possibilities in the social studies classroom.

Background

For most children, schools are the first and most extensive public institution they encounter in their lives. Indeed, the first day of school is considered a significant marker on a life journey not only because it indicates a child is growing up but because they are also

growing out. He or she is adding the public sphere as a new social domain in which to conduct their lives.

Schools as the arena for this initial foray into the public sphere are thus identified as having a particular mandate: educating for citizenship. In Canada, it is educating for *democratic* citizenship. Across Canada, curricula used to frame teaching within schools espouse this as their central goal (Sears, 2004). Education entails many things including, with greater or lesser emphasis depending on the school, province, or region of the country, learning to read, write, speak, calculate, question, and answer. In addition, schools teach children content knowledge deemed important for future employment and for the conduct of their role as democratic citizens, as well as nurturing values deemed important for personal growth and the continuance and enhancement of the civil society. It is the intersection of reading and values as part of educating for democratic citizenship that is the focus of this paper.

Why Reading? It's hard for most of us to imagine a world in which we are unable to read. From signs to newspapers, from instruction manuals to the Internet, we are inundated daily with various forms of text that each of us is expected to be able to read if we are to live our lives fully. Therefore, society expects schools to place an emphasis on learning to read. However, educating for democratic citizenship entails more than simply knowing how to read. Wolk (2009) states, "living in a democracy poses specific obligations for reading. While a nation needs workers who *can* read, a vibrant democracy requires people that *do* read, read widely, read critically, and act in response to their reading" (p. 665). He builds on earlier work by Engle and Ochoa (1988) who believe that the decision-making inherent in democratic societies requires citizens to develop certain intellectual and political skills. The ability to read *well* (i.e., critically and deeply) is one of those skills to be developed.

Why Values? Nurturing values has always been part of educating for citizenship. The question has always been what values should be promoted? Who decides? How should they be nurtured? Case (2008) believes that there are no simple answers to these questions, but suggests there is broad societal consensus around the personal and social values identified in and encouraged by Canadian curricula for over fifty years. Though Canadians might disagree on ways of approaching the teaching of these values, they generally seem to agree that certain values need to be nurtured to maintain and enhance the civil society.

Embedded within a list of personal and social values that includes "respect for work well done", "respect for the rule of law", "desire to make a productive contribution to society", is one of particular interest—"acceptance of social responsibility" (Case, 2008, p. 172). Curriculum documents from across Canada have identified this value as an important part of educating for citizenship, viewing it as necessary for students' individual and social development. For example, British Columbia's Ministry of Education (2008) published its *Program Guide for Graduate Transitions* stating that by graduation students should achieve "the knowledge and skills required to be socially responsible citizens who act in caring and principled ways, respecting the diversity of all people and the rights of others to hold different ideas and beliefs" (p. 2). Though less explicit, Ontario's Ministry of Education (2005) broadly

refers to social responsibility stating in its *Canadian and World Studies, Grades 11 and 12* curriculum document:

> Students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizenship, as well as willingness to show respect, tolerance, and understanding towards individuals, groups, and cultures of the global community and respect and responsibility towards the environment. They are also expected to understand that protecting human rights and taking a stand against racism and other expressions of hatred and discrimination are basic requirements of responsible citizenship. (p. 24)

These curricular excerpts give insight into the meaning of social responsibility but perhaps Berman (1997) said it most succinctly, calling it "a personal investment in the well-being of people and the planet" (p. 15).

As a professor in a faculty of education preparing future teachers, I encourage pre-service teachers to take seriously the need to awaken in their future students a consciousness of the world while helping them develop the knowledge and inspiration to make a better world. One of the ways I suggest these dispositions can be encouraged is by exploring social responsibility through the use of young adult historical fiction in social studies.

Narrative, Historical Fiction, and Social Studies: A Review of the Literature

Before proceeding to an exploration of social responsibility using young adult historical fiction, some contextualization is required. Herein I offer a review of the academic and professional literature related to narratives, historical fiction, and social studies.

People have always found meaning through narratives. Beginning with oral traditions and continuing with visual forms and written texts, people have created narratives to convey experiences, communicate understandings, and express feelings. In this light, it is not surprising that narratives found their way into the social studies, though not without controversy. The relationship between the social studies and narratives is contested ground. Speaking in reference to history, one of the social studies disciplines, Husbands (1996) notes that the "uneven border between fact and fiction, between truth and lies, between emotional and causal logic" (p. 46) has often been derided and dismissed by academic historians and history teachers alike. Most believing that the fictive aspects of narratives—the embellishments and outright imaginary elements—detract from learning the 'facts', as well as the investigation procedures, analytical processes, and expository techniques traditionally used in the study of history.

However, academic historiography has within its disciplinary confines proponents who have embraced the "border territory" of narratives (Husbands, 1996, p. 58). For example, Natalie Zemon Davies (1987) has explored the place of narrative techniques and rhetorical forms in archival documents from 16th century French courts, noting that "storytelling is part of the history" (p. 4). This perspective also extends to the field of education. Educational psychologist, Jerome Bruner (1986), notes that both narratives and 'paradigmatic' thinking have their place in understanding the past, stating,

each provide distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be used a means for convincing another. Yet what they convince of is fundamentally different: arguments convince of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness. (p. 11)

Bruner notes one of the key elements narratives offer students of history—humanity. As Penelope Livey (as cited in Husbands, 1996) says in her exposition of the virtues of fictive narratives, "history cannot come so near to human hearts and human passions as a good novel can. To make a bygone age live again, history…must be turned into a good novel" (p. 59). Birkerts (1994) would undoubtedly concur, stating that, "literary works have always derived their artistic value, their importance, from the fact that they comprehended the changing terms of our world and gave us narratives that could help us understand the forces impinging on our lives" (p. 204).

For the social studies teacher, making the world come alive or appear life-like while also intriguing, inspiring, and informing students, requires good storytelling as found in novels and excerpts from novels, specifically young adult historical fiction. Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1993) define historical fiction as "all realistic stories that are set in the past" (p. 601). Young adult historical fiction is that which is targeted at an adolescent reading audience. The academic and professional landscape in Education includes an extensive array of literature on what kind of books teachers should consider when incorporating young adult historical fiction into their social studies classes (types), why they ought to (rationales), and how they might incorporate them (strategies).

Types. The types of young adult historical fiction teachers should consider are, of course, those books (or excerpts from books) with persons, places, events, themes, and issues related to the social studies curriculum to be taught to students. Books should also be age and reading-level appropriate to the student or students at hand. Above all, they should have engaging character(s) and plot. Beyond this, authors encourage teachers to consider folk literature as a source of cultural understanding (Virtue & Vogler, 2008); novels with Native perspectives (Meyer, 2011); multicultural themes and subject matter (Knapp & Vance, 1994; Smith & Johnson, 1995; Fry, 2009); characters, settings and events that are global in nature (Smolen & Martin, 2011); characters with exceptionalities (Lintner, 2011); as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender themes (Sieben, 2010).

Rationales. Few teachers, particularly at the elementary and intermediate school levels, would argue that young adult historical fiction doesn't have a place in the social studies classroom and thus student learning. A review of rationales for using young adult historical fiction illustrates an array of beliefs and understandings about what it offers students, the ways students learn, and the goals to be achieved. Huck (1977) notes that its use allows students to imaginatively enter into the past and explore "conflicts, suffering, joys and despair of those who lived before us" (p. 469), while Johnston (2000) states that "literature can offer students insights into events and experiences beyond their own world view and enable them to reflect on their own lives in re-imagined ways" (p. 1).

Others focus on the integration of literature to enhance reading ability (Boyle-Baise, Hsu & Johnson, 2008); foster critical thought, talk, and inquiry (Roser & Keehn, 2002); enhance concept development (James & Zarrillo, 1989); acquire and extend cultural, geographical, historical, and economic concepts (Savage & Savage, 1993); teach values (Kim Suh & Traiger, 1999); explore spirituality (Cottingham, 2005); learn historical processes through a focus on evidence, perspective, and interpretation (Monte-Sano, 2011); augment civic learning (Paquette & Kaufman, 2008); and increase social studies content knowledge (Huftalin & Ferroli, 2012/2013). In the end, the rationales for integrating young adult historical fiction in social studies are succinctly stated by Clark (2002):

> the primary reason why it is worthwhile to use novels (or excerpts) in the teaching of social studies…is to help students personalize events, to develop historical empathy, a strong sense of what it actually might have been like to have those experiences, in a way that textbooks cannot. (p. 2)

Strategies. In an exploration of trade books and social studies teaching, McGowan and Sutton (1988) noted that explanatory or "how to" articles constituted 68% of then recent scholarship. It is highly unlikely that much has changed in the years since. Indeed, many teachers are convinced of the merits of using trade books, novels, or what I've termed young adult historical fiction, and are more interested in the strategies they can use in the classroom. The literature outlines approaches for using multimedia lesson plans and webquests (Taylor, 2011); literature response journals (Farris, Howe & Fuhler, 1998); literature circles (McCall, 2010); story composition (Martin & Brooke, 2002); graphic novels (Cromer & Clark, 2007; Mathews, 2011); songs (Palmer & Burroughs, 2001); visual images (Youngs, 2012); and murals, mobiles and dioramas (Davis & Palmer, 1992). As exemplars of the scholarship in this area, Turk, Klein & Dickstein (2007) outline a series of strategies that consider eras, themes, essential questions, identity, and use of language. Kieran Egan (1986) suggests that any social studies topic can be approached as a good story and has outlined his own "story-telling approach" involving the answering of questions as the story unfolds. As well, authors encourage and outline the integration of literature and social studies with mathematics (Kinniburgh & Byrd, 200); geography (Flaim & Chiodo, 1994); art (Buedel, 2005/2006); drama (Fennessey, 1995); and, of course, English (Hicks & Martin, 1997). It would seem that the possibilities are endless.

Young Adult Historical Fiction: The 'I am Canada' Series

There is a wealth of quality books available to social studies teachers today. However, of particular interest for this paper is a series of books released by Scholastic Canada beginning in 2010 called 'I am Canada'. Designed as a companion series to the 'Dear Canada' series started 2002 that features female characters in the lead, this series presents male protagonists engaging in interesting adventures in historical settings. Though reviewers often refer to 'I am Canada' as a "series aimed at boys" ("I am Canada series", 2013), teachers should refrain from grouping books into gender categories and presenting them in gender specific ways. Gender is a highly contested concept and traditional notions of what it means to be a girl or boy are being challenged by society as well as scholarship the field of young

adult fiction (Moeller, 2011; Crisp, 2009; Bean & Harper, 2007; Harper, 2007; Dutro, 2001). Teachers need to be mindful not to propagate gender stereotypes and heteronormativity in their classrooms. Assuming a book is only suitable for a boy or girl serves to create a marginalizing climate for those who speak, act and think differently than the majority, and is potentially harmful. In short, not all boys are engaged by war stories and not all girls are inspired by heroines waiting to be rescued and that must be respected when considering what books to make available to students and how to use them effectively. The 'I am Canada' series, in the hands of a thoughtful teacher, offers the potential for *all* students to critically explore important and relevant social issues.

Seven novels have been released thus far and the following is a brief overview of the books than could be used to explore social responsibility.

***Prisoner of Dieppe* (2010)** Written by Hugh Brewster, *Prisoner of Dieppe* (2010) is the story of 18 year-old Alistair "Allie" Morrison, who on the coaxing of his friend Mackie, enlists in the Canadian forces in 1941. Eager for battle after months of training in England, the boys' first battle is the disastrous raid on the German-held French port of Dieppe. While a thousand Canadians died that day, Allie and Mackie survive and are taken as POWs to Stalag VIIIB in Germany. Still shell-shocked from fighting and living in tough conditions, the soldiers struggle to maintain their courage and hope for victorious rescue or heroic escape.

***Blood and Iron* (2010)** *Blood and Iron* (2010) is written by Paul Yee and tells the story of young Lee Heen-gwong as he immigrates to Canada from China with his debt-ridden father and grandfather to work on the great "Iron Road". The living conditions provided for workers are miserable and work on the railway is almost unbearable. Dynamiting tunnels and transporting tons of rock and gravel turns out to be deadly for many of the Chinese workers and friction with the "Red Beards" (whites), who barely acknowledge these deaths, threatens to boil over. Heen finds refuge in his journal, where his sharp observations of the peril and injustice facing the Chinese workers serve as an indelible testament to their contributions to Canadian history.

***Shot at Dawn* (2011)** Written by John Wilson, *Shot at Dawn* (2011) explores the reality of trench warfare through the eyes of Allan McBride. Like many other young soldiers, Allan enthusiastically signed up for the chance to join the war effort and be a part of the fighting. But after months in the ravaged battlefields of France, watching men like his friends Ken and Bob get blown up by German shelling, Allan snaps and he leaves his unit, believing he is walking home to Canada to get help for a friend. Allan wanders aimlessly before being taken in by a band of real deserters — men who have abandoned their units, attempting to survive in the woods of northern France. Once Allan realizes what he's done, he's overwhelmed by the reality of his circumstance: whether he is caught or returns to his unit voluntarily he'll undoubtedly be charged with desertion, which is a capital offense.

***Deadly Voyage* (2011)** In one of many books written in anticipation of the centennial of the world's most infamous maritime disaster, *Deadly Voyage* (2011) author Hugh Brewster brings forth the story of 14 year-old Jamie Laidlaw and his family as they journey from England to Canada on board the RMS *Titanic* in 1912. The biggest ship in the world was thought to be "unsinkable" but it proves only too fragile when confronted with a deadly mixture of ego, negligence, icebergs, and the sea. Sinking fast, Jamie takes his fate into his own hands, by jumping into the sea and surviving the cold on an overturned lifeboat. Over 1,500 of the original 2,224 passengers perished on April 5th but Jamie is rescued by the *Carpathia* only to learn his life has changed forever.

***Behind Enemy Lines* (2012)** *Behind Enemy Lines* (2012) is written by renowned children's author Carol Matas. It is the World War II story of pilot Sam Frederikson who finds himself caught in Nazi-occupied France in 1944. Finding himself working with the French Resistance only to be captured and sent to Buchenwald concentration camp as a spy, Sam experiences many deprivations and witnesses numerous atrocities on his journey. He struggles to maintain hope that the Allies will emerge victorious and liberate the prisoners, before it's too late.

***A Call to Battle* (2012)** Timed for release on the 200th anniversary of the start of the War of 1812, Gillian Chan's tale, *A Call to Battle* (2012), relates the ambitions of Alexander "Sandy" MacKay to fight along side his father and brother against the invading American forces. Brought up in Ancaster, Upper Canada, Sandy eventually finds himself on the front lines of the July, 1814 battle at Lundy's Lane. He soon realizes that the fight for country and glory comes at a terrible price for all.

***Storm the Fortress* (2013)** Maxine Trottier's novel *Storm the Fortress* (2013) tells the story of the Siege of Québec in 1759 through the eyes of young Nova Scotian, William Jenkins. Sailing on the British warship *Pembroke* with his faithful dog, King Louis, William crosses paths with Generals Wolfe and Montcalm, as well as his childhood friend, Vairon, now a French soldier. This sets off a series of events that cause William to question what it means to be loyal to his king and to his friend.

Exploring Social Responsibility Using the 'I am Canada' Series

Stephen Wolk (2009) developed a framework for exploring social responsibility. It includes ten related and occasionally overlapping themes that are used herein as the basis for developing inquiry-based teaching ideas using the 'I Am Canada' series. As Wolk (2009) states, "teaching through inquiry and teaching for social responsibility have a symbiotic relationship. Classroom inquiry nurtures social responsibility, and living a socially responsible life means to live a life of inquiry" (p. 666). The themes are:
- Caring and Empathy
- Social Problems and Social Justice

- Government and the Constitution
- Power and Propaganda
- Social Imagination
- Historical Consciousness and Historical Empathy
- Multicultural Community
- Global Awareness
- War and Peace
- Environmental Literacy

Each theme is considered in turn by using specific excerpts from the seven 'I am Canada' books, ideas for exploring social responsibility are presented. These ideas are not intended to be finished or completed lessons or units but an example of the possibilities for teaching social responsibility in the elementary or intermediate social studies classroom using young adult historical fiction.

Caring and Empathy. Exploring caring and empathy are the first of Wolk's (2009) themes. It involves more than caring for one's belongings and empathizing with others who are hurt or injured, though this is part of it. Here, caring and empathy as related to social responsibility is a deep understanding that each of us is connected to each other, the Earth and creatures of the Earth. Given this, our very survival and growth as human beings, civilizations and caretakers of the Earth entails developing a sense of caring and empathy. Noddings (1991) wrote about the need for schools to teach caring. She believed that "caring should be the foundation of our curriculums, including caring for ideas, friends, family, the earth and its ecosystems, human-made objects, and strangers and distant others" (p. 110).

In Wilson's *Shot at Dawn* (2011), Allan expresses the following after witnessing his childhood hero Ken suffer an emotional breakdown under horrific trench warfare conditions, "I had spent most of my life trying to imitate Ken. He was the reason I was in the war at all. To see him weeping and shaking uncontrollably in the shell hole had been horrifying. I felt betrayed that he had turned out to be a coward" (Wilson, 2011, p. 83).

Over time, Allan begins to crack under the pressure as well, which provides him with new insight into the fragility of the human mind and spirit under trying conditions. Chart Allan's initial labeling of Ken as a 'coward' to his eventual empathizing with his friend as a person doing the best he could in difficult circumstances by identifying passages from the book. Why was Allan initially so harsh with Ken? What causes him to change his viewpoint? In a journal entry, share an experience whereby you were initially harsh with someone only to come to better understand what they're going through. What happened to change your viewpoint?

Social Problems and Social Justice. Teaching for social responsibility means exploring issues of social justice and attempting to understand what is at the root of social problems. It also entails considering possible actions that can be taken to make positive change. According to Wolk (2009), "living a socially responsible life means understanding and acting to improve problems …especially involving gender, economic class, and sexual orientation" (p. 667).

In *Deadly Voyage* (2011), the Titanic hits an iceberg and begins sinking. As the crew is attempting to load the lifeboats, the following occurs:

'Women and children only!' Officer Lightoller called out when the boat was ready. Third class women in coats and shawls were escorted forward, some of them carrying children. 'Any more women?' Lightoller shouted when the boat was about half full. 'There *are* no more women!' a voice in the crowd yelled as several men clambered into the boat. 'Out, *now*, all of you!' order Lightoller as he pulled one man out. The others sheepishly followed. (Brewster, 2011, p. 96)

Why did the officer act as he did? While never part of international maritime law, the cultural notion of saving the weak and vulnerable persists. In this age of gender equality should gender or age be a consideration in disaster situations at all? Debate the issue.

Government. Wolk's (2009) third theme is entitled 'Government and the Constitution', clearly a reference to governance within of the United States. Using young adult historical fiction can be an entry point to learning about governments.

In *Shot at Dawn* (2011), author John Wilson explains in the historical notes that when war broke out in Europe, Canada and other parts of the British Empire were also at war. Explore how the government of Canada was structured in 1914 and how it is structured in 2013. How do the structures differ? What happened to cause these changes? In what ways are the structures the same? How might the structures be improved? Present your findings to the class.

Power and Propaganda. All countries uses propaganda as a means to an end, whether that is to influence public perception, shift attitudes, or motivate action. Recognizing propaganda as a tool of power is central to educating for democratic citizenship. Social responsibility not only requires an understanding of how power can be abused, but the consciousness to see it and the ethical commitment to counter it.

In *Behind Enemy Lines* (2012), Carol Matas effectively composes a scene whereby reality, rumor, power, and propaganda collide. Speaking with a Jewish prisoner in Buchenwald concentration camp, Sam shared the following:

Finally I said, 'A good friend of mine is Jewish and he told me that Jews were being rounded up. He told me there was torture, even murder.' 'But you didn't believe it?' 'I don't know what to believe now, after seeing that' I said, jerking my head toward the bodies. 'We didn't believe it either,' the man said sadly. (Matas, 2012, pp. 135-136)

Why did Sam doubt his friend? Why did he continue to struggle with doubts after seeing the dead bodies waiting to be cremated? Why did the Jewish prisoner also have early doubts? Create powerful questions about propaganda as a tool of power to consider with a guest

speaker on the Holocaust. How can people be prepared to confront propaganda campaigns in the future?

Social Imagination. Greene (1995) defines 'social imagination' as "the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, and in our schools" (p. 5). Teaching for social responsibility entails helping students to question the world we live in and envision a better world that could be.

Although, the traumatic effects of war were largely unknown and misunderstood during WWI, some were beginning to imagine new treatments for soldiers suffering the psychological scars of battle. In *Shot at Dawn* (2011), Ken explains the help he received:

> A doctor in London realized that I had more wrong with me than a bullet through the chest. He arranged to have me transferred to Craiglockhart, a place in Scotland where there was a Doctor Rivers who was working with shell-shocked officers. The man was a wonder. He actually understood. (Wilson, 2011, pp. 164-165)

Research the concept of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and develop an informational multimedia presentation for the class. How were "shell-shocked soldiers" perceived during World War I? How are they perceived today? What other experiences can cause PTSD? What services are available to assist those who suffer from PTSD? What could be improved?

Historical Consciousness and Historical Empathy. Historical consciousness and historical empathy are critical for developing a sense of social responsibility. As Wolk (2009) states, "citizens cannot make informed and critical decisions on civic matters…without an understanding of past people and events. Knowledge of the past should help shape our opinions in the present and our vision for the future" (p. 668).

Gillian Chan's novel, *A Call to Battle* (2012), portrays Alexander "Sandy" MacKay as an Upper Canadian boy enflamed with anger and hate for the Yankee invaders. He wants to join his father and older brother in battle against the 'enemy', finding glory and adventure along the way. However, something happens to Sandy when, during a pitched battle, he stumbles upon Abell, a wounded American soldier.

> I did not know what to say and was not even sure that Abell would hear me now. He struggled to speak again…'I am…so tired…so cold.' I reached for him then, put one arm around his shoulders and drew him to me so that his head rested on my shoulder. I grasped his hand with my free one, and felt him weakly squeeze it.
> 'Tell…them…I…was…not alone'. (Chan, 2012, p. 151)

Why did Sandy's attitude about the 'enemy' change when he encountered Abell? Find actual stories of kindnesses extended to the 'enemy' during wartime (e.g., World War I Christmas

truces). Share these stories using a chosen medium and include consideration of how kindnesses impact on perceptions of the 'enemy' and may have impacted the post-war peace.

In Brewster's *Prisoner of Dieppe* (2010)*,* Alistair and Mackie are taken prisoner by the Germans following the failed raid on Dieppe and sent to a POW camp called Stalag VII. The conditions are extremely unpleasant:

> As they came towards us we saw they were carrying pails of soup—their lunch ration—to give to us. It was the same kind of weak and smelly cabbage soup we had been given at Verneulles and it had grubs and sand in it. But to starving me it was life-giving. There were no spoons so I drank my soup from a boot. (Brewster, 2010, p. 140)

It was the discovery of treatment of prisoners in prison camps following their liberation at the end of World War II that precipitated the creation of the Geneva Convention in 1949. Create a historical profile about the Geneva Convention. Include primary source documents relating to its creation and how it has been applied since that time. Consider why it would be in all nations' interests to adhere to humane treatment of prisoners of war.

Multicultural Community Multicultural education is too often limited to teaching about the food, fashion, and holidays of different cultures (Meyer & Rhoades, 2006). This does not serve to highlight political and moral issues of race and culture in our country and around the world.

In *Blood and Iron* (2010), Heen becomes palpably aware of the racial discrimination of the Chinese railway workers relative to the white workers or 'Red Beards'. The white workers are assigned less dangerous jobs, get paid more, and in any conflict with the Chinese workers, they are unquestioningly supported by the authorities.

> Watermelon staggered out of the tunnel, coughing from the dust. He ran to drink water. Crew Boss ripped the scooper from his hand, shoved him to the ground and overturned the pail. He cuffed him around the head. Watermelon was dazed and bleeding. We came running. Bookman shouted at Watermelon, 'You stupid fool! That water is for the Red Beards. *Your* water is over there'. (Yee, 2010, p. 71)

Why do you think the Chinese workers were treated this way? Create a timeline of significant moments from Chinese history starting with their arrival in Canada as labourers to receiving a full apology from the Canadian government in 2006. Despite this, in what ways do visible minorities continue to be discriminated against in Canada? How can we act to eliminate discrimination and enhance understanding in our multicultural communities?

Global Awareness. Despite the incredible diversity of peoples that comprise Canada, many students do not pay attention to international events nor do they know much about the world outside their communities. Books, as part of a literature based social studies program or

integrated into social studies classes, can help introduce various places around the world and humanize other countries and cultures.

The raid on Dieppe in 1942 was widely reported in the news yet few Canadians would have been familiar with it, or had even heard of the town of Dieppe, France at that time. *Prisoner of Dieppe* (2010) illustrates that beneath the headlines and short news stories of world events are individuals experiencing trauma, joy, adventure, and pain.

Alistair Morrison graphically describes not only what life was like for soldiers on the beaches and in the prison camps but also for the French people living under Nazi occupation. Choose a news event from around the world (e.g., war, natural disaster, political unrest) from a contemporary newspaper and research what is occurring in this place. Find first hand accounts that give insight into how the events are impacting peoples' lives. What is being done to assist these people? Share your results with the class.

War, Peace, and Non-Violence. Using young adult historical fiction is one way of having students investigate violence and war as well as consider actions that work to promote peace. Throughout history horrific violations have been committed against women and children during wartime.

In *Shot at Dawn* (2011), Allan tries to stop a fellow soldier from the attempted rape of a young girl while they are receiving food from a French family:

> I barely stepped outside when I heard a scream from the barn. Dropping the paper, I ran across the yard. Just inside the barn door, there was a girl lying on a pile of straw, wide-eyed and gasping. She could have been no more than fifteen. A red mark was deepening above her left eye. Pete stood over her, glaring. (Wilson, 2011, p. 149)

Research other examples of violations against women and children during wartime (e.g., Comfort Women; child soldiers) and develop an informational poster for a school presentation. Why does sexual violence against women and children continue to be a strategy used during war? Include information on organizations working to prevent such crimes and help victims (e.g., INCITE! Women of Colour Against Violence; Women Helping Women; Child Soldiers International).

Another possibility emerges from Trottier's *Storm the Fortress* (2013). In this story, William Jenkins, a British seaman, is taken prisoner in Québec only to be "rescued" from confinement by his childhood friend, Vairon. Set to work as worker clearing rubble from the streets under Vairon's supervision, William struggles between his duty to escape (and return to fighting the enemy) and the honour of his word not to escape (thereby protecting Vairon from retribution).

> 'I must have your word…that you will not try to escape from Québec, and that your behavior will be gentlemanly and honourable'. I hesitated. It seemed that it was my duty to escape, and if I could not escape, to cause as much mayhem among the enemy as I could. …'I give you my word,' I said to Vairon, 'for the sake of our old

friendship, and your offer of hospitality. I will conduct myself with honour, and I will not try to escape. But I do this reluctantly'. (Trottier, 2013, pp. 92-93)

In reading circle groups, explore the concepts of 'honour' and 'duty' in war and in peacetime. Define what Mr. Cook meant when he said to William, "without honour, life is meaningless" (Trottier, 2013, p. 92). What does it mean to live honourably? Are the "rules" about honour and duty the same or different during war and peacetime? How so? Should William break his word to his friend and try to escape? Is it ever acceptable to break your 'word'? If so, when?

Environmental Literacy. Social responsibility requires consciousness to environmental problems and the ability to critique a lack of commitment to environmental stewardship, often associated with a consumerist way of life (Wolk, 2009). Early in *Blood and Iron* (2010), Heen is amazed at the extensiveness of the forests in Canada and the work that will be necessary to build the railway.

> Our job is to open a wide path through dense forest. It is madness. The trees are so tall that their tops cannot be seen. Their branches are heavy with needles; overhead they reach out and interlock like fingers. They stand straight as pillars at a temple but press close together, smothering us in darkness that lingers all day. The trees grow so big that six or seven men with arms linked cannot circle their trunks. (Yee, 2010, p. 35)

Heen is caught between the need for money, the adventure of it all, and sadness at the coming destruction of the forest. Yee (2010) writes, "We all raced to be first to chop down a giant. At first we laughed like children. Then we realized these trees had stood for hundreds of years" (p. 35). Research the current state of forests in the rainforests of British Columbia. In what ways are they being threatened? In what ways are they being protected? Introduce fellow students to authoritative Internet websites that support your findings.

Conclusion

As part of their school mandate and as persons who share society with others, now and in the future, teachers must take seriously educating for democratic citizenship. Finding places and creating opportunities where students can be challenged to thoughtfully consider issues of social responsibility nurtures a multi-layered value needed for the maintenance and enhancement of society.

Books, including excerpts from books, can fire the imagination, raise questions, and open the door to discussion. As the academic and professional literature suggests, young adult historical fiction offers variety to a range of reading abilities, engages student interest, and is more comprehensive in range of topics, themes, and issues to explore than textbooks (McGowan & Guzzetti, 1991). As well, the creative use of young adult historical fiction gives students a sense of history (Freeman & Levstik, 1988), leads them on a journey through the complexities of life, and empowers students be socially responsible and make positive societal change (Wolk, 2009). By doing so, teachers are well on the road to fostering the type of young citizens with whom we can all be proud to share the world.

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