Teaching and learning through Hollywood, or commercial, film productions is anything but a new approach and has been something of a mainstay in the classroom for nearly a century. Purposeful and effective instruction through film, however, is not problem-free and there are many challenges that accompany classroom applications of Hollywood motion pictures. In response to the problems and possibilities associated with teaching through film, we have developed the Hollywood or History? book series. The series consists of a collection of collaboratively developed practical, and classroom-ready lesson plans that might assist K-12 history/social studies teachers endeavoring to make effective use of film in their classrooms. Using the Hollywood or History? strategy, each lesson plan offers teachers an inquiry-based approach which allows students to analyze motion pictures, television shows, documentaries, and cartoons using multiple sources.

Books in this series:

- Hollywood or History?
- Hollywood or History?
- Hollywood or History?
- Hollywood or History?

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Traumagenic events—episodes that have caused or are likely to cause trauma—color the experiences of K-12 students and the social studies curriculum they encounter in U.S. schools. At the same time that the global COVID-19 pandemic has heightened educators’ awareness of collective trauma, the racial reckoning of 2020 has drawn important attention to historical and transgenerational trauma. At a time when social studies educators can simply no longer ignore “difficult” knowledge, instruction that acknowledges trauma in social studies classrooms is essential.

Through employing relational pedagogies and foregrounding voices that are too often silenced, the lessons in Hollywood or History? An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Using Film to Acknowledge Trauma in Social Studies engage students in examining the role of traumatic or traumagenic events in social studies curriculum. The 20 Hollywood or History? lessons are organized by themes such as political trauma and war and genocide. Each lesson presents film clips, instructional strategies, and primary and secondary sources targeted to the identified K-12 grade levels. As a collection, they provide ready-to-teach resources that are perfect for teachers who are committed to acknowledging trauma in their social studies instruction.


Teaching with film is not a new approach in the social studies classroom. Different publications, such as Hollywood or History, have bridged the gap with challenges attached to using historical film and engage students through inquiry, not entertainment. To continue with the Hollywood or History strategy, this text uses television shows (sitcoms) to brings issue-centered curriculum to middle and high school classrooms. By exploring issues in specific episodes, students can learn the history behind an issue, relate it to their lives, and develop an informed decision associated with the issue.

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) framework is an integral part to the exploration of issue-centered curriculum. In each chapter, the students will work through the four dimensions and develop critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. My hope is that this text can play a small role in walking practicing teachers through the C3 framework while allowing students to learn about issues that affect society and the communities where they live.
The rationale for the present text, Hollywood or History? An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Using Film to Teach About Inequality and Inequity Throughout History stems from two main things. First and foremost is the fact that the reviews of the first two volumes in the Hollywood or History? series have been overwhelmingly positive, especially as it pertains to the application of the strategy for practitioners. Classroom utility and teacher practice have continued to be the primary objectives in developing the Hollywood or History? strategy. The second thing is that this most recent volume in the series takes it in a new direction—rather than focusing on eras in history, it focuses on the themes of inequity and inequality throughout history, and how teachers can utilize the Hollywood or History? strategy to tackle some of the more complicated content throughout history that many teachers tend to shy away from.

There is a firm belief that students’ connection to film, along with teachers’ ability to use film in an effective manner, will help alleviate some of the challenges of teaching challenging topics such as inequity and inequality in terms of gender, race, socioeconomic status, and so much more. The book provides 30 secondary lesson plans (grades 6-12) that address nine different topics centered around inequity and inequality throughout history, many of which connect students to the world we are living in today. The intended audience for the book are teachers who teach social studies at the 6th-12th grade level both in the United States and other countries. An additional audience will be college and university social studies/history methods professors in the United States and worldwide.

The challenges of teaching history are acute where we consider the world history classroom. Generalized world history courses are a part of many, if not most, K-12 curricular frameworks in the United States. While United States history tends to dominate the scholarship and conversation, there are an equally wide number of middle-level and secondary students and teachers engaged in the study of world history in our public schools. And the challenges are real. In the first place, if we are to mark content coverage as a curricular obstacle in the history classroom, generally, then we must underscore that concern in the world history classroom and for obvious reasons. The curricular terrain to choose from is immense and forever expanding, dealing with the development of numerous civilizations over millennia and across a wide geographic expanse. In addition to curricular concerns, world historical topics are inherently farther away from most students’ lives, not just temporally, but often geographically and culturally.

Thus the rationale for the present text, Hollywood or History? An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Using Film to Teach World History. The reviews of the first volume Hollywood or History? An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Using Film to Teach United States History strategy have been overwhelmingly positive, especially as it pertains to the application of the strategy for practitioner. Classroom utility and teacher practice have remained our primary objectives in developing the Hollywood or History? strategy and we are encouraged by the possibilities of Volume II and the capacity of this most recent text to impact teaching and learning in world history. We believe that students’ connection to film, along with teachers’ ability to use film in an effective manner, will help alleviate some of the challenges of teaching world history. The book provides 30 second lesson plans (grades 6-12) that address nine eras in world history.
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