

Chapter 5, "Give Me the Wind": The Invisibility of Racism in American History Textbooks


2. Kent Berrin, "Mythic Chords of Memory" (speech delivered at the University of Vermont, Burlington, VT., September 12, 1991).


17. Frank Owsley, a historian with Confederate sympathies, championed reasons for it other than slavery. When it was fought, however, virtually everyone, including Abraham Lincoln, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Ulysses S. Grant on the Union side and Jefferson Davis and Alexander H. Stephens, President and vice-president of the Confederacy, thought the war was caused by slavery. See Daniel Aaron, The Unfinished War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 28, 180.

18. Benjamin P. Ferrero, Public Opinion and the Teaching of History in the United States (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 66–70. Nor was the South a great incubator of pro-slavery textbooks in those decades.


In November 1984, 2–5, tells of the influence of the civil rights movement. The new treatments of slavery are closest to most of those written at the time and to the primary sources.

79. Americans who did not experience segregation, which ended in the South in about 1970, may consider these words melodramatic. American history textbooks do not help today’s students feel the reality of the period. Please see the last field study of segregation, Lorenzo, The Mississippi chlorine, 45–48, 51, and 131–34.

80. In The Mississippi chlorine: Between Black and White, p. 84, I show how black economic success in itself alliﬂed white southerners and was hard to maintain without legal rights.


82. Thus, Land of Promise treats racism by Woodrow Wilson on page 54; the black migration north during World War I on page 561, and the 1819 race riots on page 598. To gain any uniﬁed understanding of the南北, a student would have to be an acrobat with the index.

83. Each other textbook, Life and Liberty, offers one sentence: “After the Cold War, problems for blacks had increased.”

84. In the late decades of the nineteenth century, at least three reasons for racism can be identiﬁed.

85. Ideals of the Republican Party in the East. In the West, America’s role is to the Paciﬁc over the broken bones of Chinese workers and invoke cultures of the Plains Indians led to increased racism and ended our commitment to equal citizenship without regard to race. See Patricia Nelson Limerick, “The Case of the Premiere Depature: The Trans-Mississippi West and American History Textbooks,” Journal of American History 78, no. 4 (March 1992): 1387. Nationally, our expansion overseas in the 1890s (Hawaii, Cuba, the Philippines) was both a result and a cause of our increasing white supremacy, expressed in the phrase “manifest destiny.”


Chapter 6. John Brown and Abrahm Lincoln: The Unpredictability of Anticommunist in American History Textbooks


5. Many textbook authors do describe the acts of William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Weld, and tens of other abolitionists, but without their words and ideas and without much sympathy. Black abolitionists—Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass—emerge with more life. American Adventures is exceptional in its warm and extended treatment of Thaddeus Stevens, and Discovering American History is an inquiry text, quote enough Garrison that students can get a sense of the man’s position.


7. Of course Wise wanted to ﬁnd Brown so he could hang him, but as Brown’s defenders wanted to argue him insane so he could be spared. The best evidence as to Brown’s state of mind is provided by his own letters, statements, and interviews, which show no trace of insanity. See also the discussion by Stephen B. Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 529–30. Wise’s “Message to the Virginia Legislature, December 5, 1859,” is reprinted in Schniederhelm, ed., The Response to John Brown, 132–53; his evaluation of Brown is on page 143. Wise is additionally quoted by Henry David Thoreau in “A Plea for Captain John Brown,” on page 51 of same.

8. At Brown point out his last speech in court, each “jointed of his own accord,” this was true even of his own accord.


