

## *Crossroads: A Meeting of Nations* – Critique-- Grade Nine

*Crossroads: A Meeting of Nations* by Michael Cranney is a history textbook commonly used to teach grade nine social studies in British Columbia. The textbook is designed to build on the textbook, *Pathways: Civilizations through Time*, the text commonly used for grade eight social studies. *Crossroads; A Meeting of Nations*, uses a variety of disciplines such as history and geography to introduce students to world history by introducing themes of revolution, colonialism, imperialism and industrialization that introduces students to history, geography and different cultures. The textbook has a focus on introducing students to primary sources, and asks students to explore them in terms of their use and limitations. Also, activities within the book look to reinforce student's skills in terms of critical thinking and analytical skills. While the textbook has a specific focus on asking readers to evaluate primary sources on a more critical level, on many levels, the text fails to help students engage in critical media literacy.

Although *Crossroads: A Meeting of Nations* makes a clear effort to expose students to many different types of sources and media such as text, images and primary sources, it does not take a significant amount of time to have students practice analyzing the material on a critical level. For example, on page forty, the text asks readers to look closely at a pair of political cartoons. While the activity is asking students to consider the art work while considering concepts such as bias, the textbook does not offer students any clear instructions as to how to look closely at the images. It does not clearly state what sorts of things students should be looking at such as the connection between text and image. One very beneficial aspect to this activity however, is the fact that it asks students to make their own political cartoon. Allowing students to have the opportunity to produce their own piece of media, they will better understand how easy it is to construct an idea and help them to become more critical of what they read and/or see.

While textbooks such as *Crossroads: A Meeting of Nations*, by Michael Cranney, introduce students to a variety of primary sources, they often do not explicitly give students the tools to engage in critical media literacy. With so many different images and sources within books such as these, it would be incredibly useful for students to have a concrete lesson to help students better engage with the material on a critical level.