

Rains, F. V. (2006). "The color of social studies: A post-social studies reality check," In E. W. Ross (Ed.), *The social studies curriculum: Purposes, problems and possibilities*, 3rd edition, The State University of New York Press

Article Critique: Jana Unruh

Rains' article looks at the role of social studies in real life situations. She focuses on a few case studies, which includes her research in aboriginal communities in the United States.

Thesis: Rains focuses on the post social studies realities. She argues that the true color of social studies is evident and seen explicitly in the realities of aboriginal university students. When the social studies curriculum bypasses non-dominant histories students lose opportunities to learn about race relations.

Rains addresses two types of approaches to social studies.

1. Pre-social studies processes: This focuses more on the delivery of the material, and deciding what will be taught and how. However, the actual content is usually not critiqued by the teacher. Content is taken at face value and is taught strictly for curriculum purposes.
2. Post social studies realities: These are the realities that aboriginal students are faced after they and their peers have gone through high school social studies classes. These realities include the lack of information taught by the curriculum and the ignorance it embeds within society about aboriginal history and current day communities.

Case studies and research

- Rains' case studies are examples of post social studies realities, in which social studies failed to educate the child in anything other than Eurocentric history.
- These case studies are stories of aboriginal university students' encounters with their peers. They are also reflections of their high school teachers and their oblivion to the issues their students were facing.

Rains states, "Social studies has the power to be the place where students could acquire through content, inquiry and practice accurate information on race" (Rains, 142). One of her strategies to incorporate post social studies reality into pre social studies process are as follows...

- The consequences of contact
- The consequences of racial inequalities
- The consequences of decisions made historically around race
- More than just the names of great and small
- Beyond consequences, that we address who benefited and who did not, from such consequences
- How social movements were formed, why, by who, and what happened?

Rains' article provides a critical approach to teaching social studies. She pushes for the teaching of aboriginal local histories from aboriginal perspectives. In her article she addresses the lack of opportunity for aboriginal people to learn about the different tribes. However, today we have First Nations 12 and Social Justice 12, which address many of these issues. The downfall to these courses is that they are taken as an elective and not required. Therefore, only a few students are learning this content and the majority of students are still not being taught their local race relations.

Rains article also critiques the curriculum for the superficiality of the content being taught to elementary students regarding Aboriginal history. While this is a valid point, aboriginal history has to have a starting point. Yes, it can be made more meaningful, but the level of depth is debatable. If we want children to be getting to the "meat" of these issues in elementary grades, content does need to be dealt with in a very sensitive matter. Discussing the Trail of Tears is often seen as genocide of the American Indians, and students in grade 4-5 are not discussing similar issues such as genocide in Rwanda or Cambodia. Social studies curriculum does need to be more meaningful for young students. However, as teachers we do need to recognize the sensitivity and cognitive ability of young children and teach within that zone.

Overall, Rains provides great insight into pre-social studies processes and post social studies realities. It inspired me to go beyond the delivery of the material and look at the core issues plaguing society. By doing this, students can become truly educated and aware of the historical and current race relations in their community.