

EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 336

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

JANUARY 2014

Controversy and Porn Pervade Common Core Curriculum

Common Core standards are influencing what teachers teach in elementary reading and high school English literature classes. Although proponents claim that there is no drive for a standardized Common Core curriculum, curriculum developers offer thousands of "Common Core aligned" books and teaching aids. Many school districts are using materials suggested in Appendix B of the Common Core standards.

When schools rely on Common Core (CC) Appendix B to develop literature courses for high schools, students will read books that some consider pornographic. When districts use curriculum that is "Common Core aligned," students are encountering a variety of politically charged books to which some parents may object.

Schools Use CC Text Exemplars

The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers are private lobbying organizations that own the copyright on the Common Core "state" standards, which have been adopted by all but a few states. Appendix B of the standards consists of suggested books, portions of books, poems, and informational texts that serve as "text exemplars" developed by the writers of the standards to help states choose texts.

Common Core Appendix B states:

The following text samples primarily serve to exemplify the level of complexity and quality that the [Common Core] Standards require all students in a given grade band to engage with. Additionally, they are suggestive of the breadth of texts that students should encounter in the text types required by the [CC] Standards. The choices should serve as useful guideposts in helping educators select texts of similar complexity, quality, and range for their own classrooms.

While the writers of CC state that Appendix B text exemplars "expressly do not represent a partial or complete reading list," many school districts are using the recommended books. It makes sense for teachers to teach from the texts recommended by the Common Core developers because nationwide tests are being developed based on Common Core materials.

Teachers, parents, and administrators are sometimes shocked by the content of the books that schools want students to read in order to be Common Core compliant.

Sexual Content for High Schoolers

The author of *Dreaming in Cuban*, Cristina Garcia, admits in a 2003 *Atlantic* magazine interview to having spent

only a few months in Cuba at the time she wrote this Common Core recommended book. Garcia states in the interview that, "The political and social alliance with the United States really meant the denaturalization of Cuba." She continues, in the *Atlantic* interview (4-11-03):

Cuba went from having a rural economy to a largely urbanized economy. It became increasingly defoliated as more land was planted with sugarcane, tobacco, and so on. This period was one of enormous upheaval, and the changes came on the very edge of a big empire—the United States—that was increasingly throwing its weight around the world.

But it was the sexually explicit content of the book rather than its overt anti-Americanism that prompted Buena High School in Sierra Vista, Arizona to stop

using this novel in its 10th-grade literature class. This was only after it was read aloud in class and every student had a copy of the book, according to one parent. (Breitbart.com, 9-12-13)

Other schools are refusing to use the Common Core recommended Toni Morrison novel, *The Bluest Eye*, which is a disturbing tale that includes a father raping his daughter. The crime not only occurs in the book, but it is presented from the point of view of the father, is graphically described, and is disgusting.

Another sexually explicit book listed as a Common Core exemplar is *Black Swan Green* by David Mitchell. Some wonder why 9th-graders should be studying a 13-year-old boy's description of his father's genitals, as well as his description of a sex act. One of the districts that decided there must be better literature for students to read was Newburgh, New York, where teachers complained

at a Board of Education meeting. One English teacher told the board, "At least three of the books listed on the [New York state Common Core curriculum] contain passages using inappropriate language and visual imagery that most people would consider pornographic." *Black Swan Green* was not distributed to students in Newburgh and the district is attempting to return its 6,000 copies to the publisher.

Reading for Elementary Students

The Common Core text exemplars for elementary students include some good literature that most parents would be happy to have their children read, but there are some stinkers. The Common Core text exemplars leave some wondering if this is the best we can offer our young students.

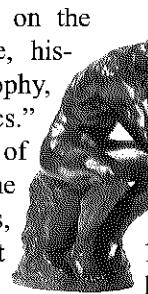
Exemplars for grades K-1 include

(See *Common Core Curriculum*, page 4)

Is the Study of the Humanities in Decline?

The *Humanities Report Card 2013* and the more detailed *The Heart of the Matter* are reports by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences on the study of "languages, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, comparative religion, and ethics." The reports are the culmination of study by the Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, formed in 2010 at the request of Congress. Since the reports were released in mid-2013, many have addressed the decline in study of the humanities.

It is important to understand from the outset that this decline halted sometime in the mid-1980s and since then the overall rate of study in the humanities has held steady. According to the



Humanities Report Card 2013, "Despite reports on the drop in the number of humanities majors since the 1960s, the number of bachelor's degrees in the humanities has grown appreciably since its nadir in the mid-1980s, with more than 185,000 degrees reported in each year from 2009 to 2011." There was an overall drop from 14% to 7% from 1970 to 1985, but humanities study has held steady at 7% since then. (New York Times, 10-31-13)

Colleges and universities receive outside funding from the federal government and from businesses to support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) study, but only a few foundations and philanthropies provide any funding for the study of English,

foreign language, history, and other humanities subjects.

"College is increasingly being defined narrowly as job preparation, not as something designed to educate the whole person," stated the president of the American Council of Learned Societies. The president of Bard College emphasizes that the study of humanities offers skills that help all students understand values and conflicting philosophical issues, stating, "We have failed to make the case that those skills are as essential to engineers and scientists and businessmen as to philosophy professors." (New York Times, 10-31-13)

Mourning the Humanities: A Sentimental Fantasy?

In a *Wall Street Journal* essay titled "Who Ruined the Humanities?" author Lee Siegel argues that the hand wringing about the decline in the study of humanities is a "sentimental fantasy." He writes that there is no substance to fears that the decline "leads to numerous pernicious personal conditions, such as the inability to think critically, to write clearly, to empathize with other people, to be curious about other people and places, to engage with great literature after graduation, to recognize truth, beauty and goodness." He goes on to state that students and young adults will read literature and philosophy on their own and simply avoid what he calls the "drudgery and toil" that the classics become when studied in a classroom, which turns them into "bland exercises in competition, hierarchy, and information-accumulation that are these works' mortal enemies."

Mr. Siegel's observations may indicate the poor teaching ability of the pro-

Let's Change That Pesky Bill of Rights!

Sixth-grade students in an Arkansas school were given an assignment to update the "outdated" Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States. They had not studied the Bill of Rights, yet were asked to change it. Such an assignment seems to denigrate the importance of the right to free speech, the right to bear arms, limits on federal power, and other guaranteed rights that students could theoretically ditch. (National Review, 10-9-13)

The assignment is titled "Assessment over the Bill of Rights," which doesn't make grammatical sense. The assignment directions state:

Prioritize, revise, omit two and add two amendments to the Bill of Rights. You need to work together as a team. Each member's viewpoint needs to be respected and considered, but does not need to be agreed with. Remember, it

is okay to agree to disagree! Keeping that in mind, you still need to come to consensus (agreement) about your prioritization, revisions, omissions and additions.

One parent interviewed by DigitalJournal.com was particularly concerned because her daughter and her classmates had not yet studied the Bill of Rights as they currently stand, the actual manner in which they could be amended, or even how an amendment is ratified in the first place. The parent said, "Funny thing, she was never told how the Bill of Rights is amended; I do not believe that amended was even used in the class language, only 'changed.'" The parent said that there is no book used in the history class, "only handouts that are put in a box for

(See *Bill of Rights*, page 4)

(See *Decline of Humanities*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

The North Carolina Association of Educators, an affiliate of the National Education Association teachers union, has filed suit to halt the state's successful school voucher program. The union is trying to stop thousands of low-income students from receiving taxpayer money to attend private schools. They claim that since teachers have not received a raise for three years it is wrong to let students leave public schools with financial support to attend school elsewhere. The president of Parents for Educational Freedom of North Carolina, said, "This lawsuit is nothing more than a desperate attempt by opponents of parent choice to cling to an unacceptable status quo for low-income students to stay in schools that are simply not working for them." (*High Point Enterprise*, 12-12-13)

"Catholic Is Our Core" was recently launched by The Cardinal Newman Society in response to concerns that Catholic schools are adopting inferior Common Core standards and abandoning the principles that have kept Catholic education successful. Presenting a series of papers by experts on the Common Core and its potential impact on schools, the website voices the concerns of many educators and parents, stating, "The Cardinal Newman Society is concerned that adoption of the Common Core at this time is premature. Worse, it may be a mistake that will be difficult or impossible to undo for years to come." The site states the most troubling aspect about Catholic schools adopting Common Core is that parents were not consulted.

Members of the American Social Studies Association (ASSA) voted in December to join anti-Israel groups to boycott Israeli universities. ASSA members voted in favor of a resolution that signals solidarity with Palestinians and open hostility toward Israel. At least 45 colleges, including Harvard and Yale, have condemned the ASSA boycott and support continuing academic interaction with Israeli universities.

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at 7800 Bonhomme Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105, (314) 721-1213, fax (314) 721-3373. Editor: Virginia Barth. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund. Annual subscription \$25. Back issues available @ \$2. Periodicals postage paid at Alton, Illinois.

Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org>
E-mail: education@eagleforum.org

Zero Tolerance Causing Turmoil

Efforts to keep students safe on campus and punish those who would impinge on that safety sometimes have unintended consequences. Events continue to unfold across the nation that turn individual schools into laughingstocks. Sometimes school administrators are in a tight spot and must follow the law, but sometimes they choose outlandish solutions to small problems.

Students often face troubling consequences over zero-tolerance incidents. According to the *New York Times*, "Faced with mounting evidence that get-tough policies in schools are leading to arrest records, low academic achievement, and high dropout rates that especially affect minority students, cities and school districts around the country are rethinking their approach to minor offenses." (12-2-2013)

Some schools are amending their policies to allow students to remain at school with in-school suspensions, instead of casting them out. Often suspended and expelled students roam the streets and get into more trouble.

Punished for Honesty

In a zero-tolerance weapons incident, a Pittsburgh area high school student was suspended for being honest. David Schaffner III accidentally brought his pocketknife to a football game. He had been using it in the woods to cut branches, according to his father. Schaffner simply forgot to take it out of his pocket before his dad dropped him off at the game. When he realized his mistake, he approached a security guard and voluntarily turned in his knife. There was no metal detector or bag check; the teen sought to follow the rules although he was in no danger of getting caught with the knife. The student said the security guard "put it on the table next to him, said I could go into the game and he'd get me later on." The Fox Chapel High School principal soon found David and kicked him out of the football game. The following Monday morning he proceeded to suspend the student for ten days.

David's father said, "To me it sends a message, you should probably lie, because you're going to get punished." Pittsburgh attorney Phil DiLucente asked, "What are we teaching our youth today? To *not* be honest, to *not* be open and forthcoming?" (CBS Pittsburgh, 9-20-13)

Virginia Pellet Guns

The Virginia Beach City Public School District has put three boys on long-term suspension for playing with Airsoft guns on private property, 70 yards away from a bus stop while awaiting the bus. Airsoft guns are air-powered guns that shoot plastic pellets that are non-lethal. The police have not and will not be fil-

ing charges in this incident. The 7th-grade student whose yard the kids were playing in said, "We see the bus come. We put the gun down. We did not take the Airsoft gun

to the bus stop. We did not take the gun to school." The father of another Larkspur Middle School

student who was suspended in the incident said, "I always thought this was a Dad deal, not a school deal. It was a parental issue not a school issue." The school district claims one of the boys jumped off private property and into the street.

The school district issued a statement that said, "This is not an example of a public educator overreaching. This was not zero tolerance at all. This was a measured response to a threat to student safety." A disciplinary committee suspended the boys until at least January 2014; at that time there will be another hearing to determine whether the boys may return to school. (Daily Caller, 9-25-13 & WAVY News, 9-26-13)

Fishing Knives in Georgia

In Georgia, police performing a random sweep found fishing knives in a tackle box in a 17-year-old student's car. A search warrant was obtained when a drug-sniffing dog smelled residue from fireworks in the vehicle.

The student told the *Marietta Daily Journal*, "I have an attorney and I'm hoping to get the felony dropped so I can still get in the Air Force." The student faced two to ten years in prison and fines of up to \$10,000 if convicted. He served a ten-day suspension from school, but the district attorney agreed to a "pretrial diversion program," which may include community service and if successfully completed will result in a clean record for the student.

In another Georgia incident, a student was arrested and charged with a felony under the zero-tolerance law because he had a pocketknife in the console of his car when parked on campus.

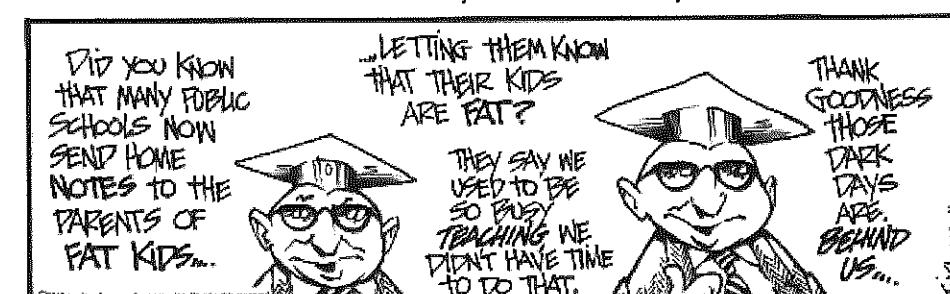
Cobb County District Attorney Vic Reynolds, commenting on the two incidents, said, "Having to raise two teenagers myself, it concerns me these kids can get jammed up on things because these laws don't allow for any mitigating circumstances." As the Georgia law stands, authorities are given no discretion to use common sense. There is movement in Georgia to alter zero-tolerance laws to allow for some common sense and discretion by authorities and schools. (*Marietta Daily Journal*, 10-17-13)

125 Shotgun Shells, a Machete, and Firebombs

Schools that are genuinely concerned about safety in situations that call

(See Zero Tolerance, page 4)

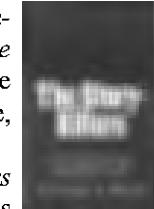
MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Book of the Month



The Story-Killers: A Common-Sense Case Against the Common Core, Terrence O. Moore, CreateSpace, 2013, \$15.00.



The Story-Killers describes the numerous flaws of Common Core in an exposé of the central planners' prescription for American education. Common Core favors buzzwords and has used fear tactics to scare and bribe the nation into adopting the standards and subsequent tests, using terms like "career and college readiness" and "twenty-first century global competition." They foment the idea that we must adopt Common Core or else American students will fall farther behind. They promote "job training" and "workforce preparation." But education is not only about getting a job, nor is it about attending college. Education is meant to prepare individuals for life as well-informed, independent, and analytical thinkers.

Moore states that the "crisis in literacy has been the result of schools not teaching students to read properly since about 1960." He continues, "as schools have experimented with the way children learn to read," each "new, untested, outlandish" experiment has been a "disaster." Great literature, which he calls "the study of humanity," has been replaced by informational texts and recent works that have no value aside from an occasional multicultural component.

Modern curricula, and Common Core in particular, prevent students from reading great poetry, stories, and speeches. The author fears that it is so nihilistic and trite that "it could very well turn [students] off of life." When a valuable literary work slips in, the "story-killers" ruin it for students by making them tear it apart with boring "compare and contrast" exercises and other dissections "in a lifeless, mechanical way," including those based on race, sex, or other political or social provocations.

Moore's prescription for righting American education is "a traditional, classical, liberal education," which he outlines in detail. He has the advantage over the writers, promoters, and subsidizers of Common Core in that he has actually operated a successful school. His high school curriculum embraces "not so much the past but the permanent": classics "without the interference of the postmodern purveyors of perversity, pettiness, and ennui." Students read primary sources and original documents, from authors of "the best that has been thought and said and done and discovered."

While Common Core students read "a history of the grocery bag while they could be reading Homer or Shakespeare or Dickens," (yes, that is an actual CC Appendix B text exemplar), Dr. Moore has offered real solutions aimed at student achievement. Every citizen should read *The Story-Killers* and then do everything they can to stop Common Core.

FOCUS: Hubby, R.I.P. — Hooray! The Common Core Takes on Marriage

by Terrence Moore

First published at Townhall on December 9, 2013.

What are young people being taught in school these days about love and marriage? In these times of chronic family breakdown, are the nation's schools doing anything to build up the family, or are they contributing to its demise? Let's take a look at an actual high-school textbook to find out.

In Prentice-Hall's LITERATURE: *The American Experience*, volume one, Common Core Edition, we find a short story by Kate Chopin called "The Story of an Hour." The comments made in the Teacher's Edition tell us what this story is about and how it will be taught:

Mrs. Mallard gets the unexpected news that her husband has been killed in an accident. She quickly recovers from the shock to discover that what she feels is relief. Though she mourns his passing, she delights in the freedom that will now be hers. Shut up in her room, she relishes the opportunities ahead of her.

The introduction to the story in the students' edition reveals that the editors are very much champions of Chopin's writing:

Background — "The Story of an Hour" was considered daring in the nineteenth century. The editors of at least two magazines refused the story because they thought it was immoral. They wanted Chopin to soften her female character, to make her less independent and unhappy in her marriage. Undaunted, Chopin continued to deal with issues of women's growth and emancipation in her writing, advancing ideas that are widely accepted today.

Mmm . . . Which ideas are widely accepted today? That if your husband kicks the bucket you should experience grief for about five minutes and then relish your new *freedom*? That widowhood equals *opportunity*?

Well, you might wonder, was he a bad husband? Was he a drunk? Did he beat her? Was this the only way out? Apparently not. Here are Chopin's own words:

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

How could a wife think so only moments after she is told her husband is dead? Well, characters in literature, like people in real life, make choices. Here is the choice Mrs. Mallard is making:

And yet she had loved him — sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion, which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

Funny, I do not remember *self-assertion* being included in any marriage vows. Welcome to the new Nietzschean marriage, where *will to power* replaces love and sacrifice and two becoming one.

Presumably, this story could be discussed in class any number of ways. Here are the questions I would ask: Is Mrs. Mallard a good wife? Why did she

get married in the first place? Do the Mallards have children? How would you like to be Mr. Mallard, knowing that your wife would feel a sense of relief and freedom if you were to die? What words best describe Mrs. Mallard's character?

Is self-assertion a higher moral principle than love? But perhaps I am too much of a traditionalist in these matters, having a wife and four children and being prone to get misty with every Jane Austen novel I read.

The questions featured in the margins of the Teacher's Edition indicate that a very different discussion will be taking place:

Ask students: Which part of the paragraph illustrates Mrs. Mallard's independence?

Answer: Her independence becomes clear when she spreads her arms to welcome the future — it is hers alone.

Ask students: What does Mrs. Mallard's action symbolize, and how does it affect readers?

Possible response: The action symbolizes Mrs. Mallard's desire for independence. Readers are forced to reflect on the negative aspects of nineteenth-century marriages.

"The negative aspects of nineteenth-century marriages": wasn't a nineteenth-century marriage sort of like, well, *marriage*?

So we return to our original question: Are the schools of today doing anything to build up marriage and family, or are they contributing to the demise of marriage and family — and indeed *love* on which the family is built? What sort of

soul is being cultivated in young people by reading Kate Chopin? Stories like this depressing tale (accompanied by the editors' script) reveal that the progressive education establishment is very much in the family destruction business. Simply put, they are trying to romanticize narcissism and selfishness — the cancer of families and the death of love.

Such "lessons" now bear the logo of the Common Core, the educational regimen that we are told is the yellow brick road to "college and career readiness in a twenty-first-century global economy." Yet since the Common Core has come under a lot of pressure of late, its advocates are claiming that it is only a "set of standards" and does not dictate curriculum. "Don't mind us. We're just innocent little standards (and test) makers who want to bring much-needed rigor to the schools." Rubbish. As I show in detail in my book *The Story-Killers*, the arch-testers of the Common Core are very deliberately replacing what is still left of good literature in the schools (and there is not very much, admittedly) with a combination of guilt-inducing, post-modern, multicultural mush and outright political indoctrination. In other words, the progressive education establishment, now marshaled under the banner of the Common Core, is deliberately taking away the great stories of a great people: the stories that teach us how to be good and just and brave and loving and free. Of course, the architects of the Common Core do not just come out and say that because, as with Obamacare, the American people have to be comforted by the words "keep your doctor." In the case of the Common Core, we are being told we can keep our Jane Austen. "But if you want to read Kate Chopin instead, well, we just happen to have 'The Story of an Hour' in this Common Core textbook with lots of ready-made prompt questions to ask students, and, yes, it will probably be on the standardized exam that you live and die by. But Common Core is just a set of standards. Honest."

Because I am not a story-spoiler, I have refrained from giving away the ending of Chopin's morbid matrimonial tale. But there is a twist. You will want to read the rest of the story to find out what happens. To find out what happens — or should happen — to the Common Core, you will want to read my book, which has a much happier ending.

Microsoft's Race to the Bottom



Microsoft, whose founder Bill Gates has spent hundreds of millions of dollars funding and promoting Common Core, has now thrown away the very model Common Core is based upon at his own company. "Stacked ranking," the now "former" Microsoft model, allows for only a certain percentage of employees to rank at the top, another group to be good performers, and so on down to poor performers. Hooray for Microsoft, which finally realized that putting such restrictions on employees caused them to become dispirited, unproductive, and unhappy at work. In a *Vanity Fair* article titled, "Microsoft's Lost Decade," the author states that in the "last decade Microsoft's stock barely budged from around \$30, while Apple's stock is worth more than 20 times what it was 10 years ago." (8-2012)

Gates has used his vast fortune to force his stacked ranking system onto the U.S. school system. He gave grants, influenced policymakers, and promoted

Common Core using his failed company model. In order to receive Race to the Top money from the Obama administration, states competed against each other using stacked ranking, allowing only those states who successfully jumped through specific hoops to receive money. Innovation was not rewarded. Answering questions in a prescribed manner on a test of sorts was the only way for states to get the money.

This "high stakes testing" and promotion of competition rather than collaboration among Microsoft workers "effectively crippled Microsoft's ability to innovate," according to the *Vanity Fair* article. Many say it is now crippling the nation's schools. Students are stressed by high stakes testing and failing to learn how to think because of an overwhelming focus on "teaching to the test." Teacher job satisfaction is at a low point and teachers are leaving the profession as they are scripted, controlled, and judged

in an unprecedented Microsoft manner.

The public school system can't turn on a dime and it will take years to recover from the damage done so far. It may take years for the educators in charge to even realize that the risky, untried, and untested systems put in place are destroying the creativity of students and teachers. As one blogger recently commented: "So let me get this straight. The big business method of evaluation that now rules our schools is no longer the big business method of evaluation? And collaboration and teamwork, which have been abandoned by our schools in favor of the big business method of evaluation, is in?" (OnTheCommons.org, 11-29-13)

Apple founder, the late Steve Jobs, said of Bill Gates, "Winning business was more important than making great products. Microsoft never had the humanities and liberal arts in its DNA." Job's organization, Apple, won the decade and kept its focus on what it knows — technology. Wouldn't it have been great if Gates had focused on his own business and kept his nose out of education?

Terrence O. Moore teaches history at Hillsdale College. He was the principal of a successful classical charter school for seven years and is an advisor to the Barney Charter School Initiative at Hillsdale College. Dr. Moore also served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1990-1993. He wrote *The Perfect Game*, a book about boys growing up in Texas. His newest book is *The Story Killers: A Common-Sense Case Against the Common Core*. (See book review in this issue of the Education Reporter.)

Common Core Curriculum

(Continued from page 1)

the informational text "Wind Power" from *National Geographic Young Explorers* (2009), a poem of sorts that reads in part, "Look at the windmills spin! They turn the wind into electricity." Another K-1 offering is *Ted, the Fly Guy*, written in 2003, about which the *School Library Journal* writes, "The cartoon illustrations showing characters with exaggerated wide eyes are delightful, but the text is somewhat weak and disjointed." (Amazon.com)

Where Do Polar Bears Live? by Sarah Thomson is a CC text exemplar for 2nd- and 3rd-graders about which *Booklist* at Amazon.com states, "The author covers the impact of global warming on polar bears' food sources, as a shrinking ice pack makes seal-hunting particularly challenging, and the book's last two pages cover climate change in even more detail, including suggestions for ways that kids can reduce their carbon footprints."

For 4th- and 5th-graders, Common Core creators use *Sorry, Wrong Number* by Lucille Fletcher as an example of what children ages 9-11 should read. This play is described at Amazon.com: "When wires get crossed, a woman accidentally overhears the telephone conversation of two men plotting a murder. Suspense and terror mounts as the woman slowly realizes that the intended victim is herself."

Obama as Elementary Messiah

A Common Core aligned English language arts lesson plan for 3rd-, 4th-, and 5th-graders, developed by a teacher and based on the book *Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope*, has raised concerns of some observers. According to the website offering the lesson plan, it ostensibly teaches the "author's viewpoint," which is a CC goal. Some claim that the book and lesson plan portray President Obama as a "messianic" figure. The author of the book responded to this on her website, writing: "When the title of the book came to me in a flash of inspiration, it never once occurred to me that conservative reviewers and commentators would take the title and beat me over the head with it! Of course, we live in the land of free speech, so they may spew whatever they choose."

The following quotes from the book are two of many that seem to paint "Barry" Barack Obama, the boy who became President, in a dramatic, larger-than-life manner:

When Barack wasn't studying, he liked to jog along the Hudson River. He couldn't help but notice the river of hurt and hate and history that separated blacks from whites. Being both, he could not take sides. 'Don't worry,' said Hope. 'I will be your bridge. In time you will be the bridge for others.'

Another excerpt from *Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope*, is here quoted in the poetic style used in the book (from the author's website):



One Sunday when Barack was sitting in church,
Barack heard God say,
'Slow down,
Look around you.
Now look to me.
There is hope enough here to last a lifetime.'
Barack smiled,
tears rolling down his cheeks.
Suddenly he knew for certain
Hope would last long enough
for him to make a difference.

It is unknown how many schools are using this book or how many teachers will use this "CC aligned" lesson plan. It is, however, one example from the massive amount of curriculum being offered and claiming to be "Common Core aligned." Most school districts lack adequate personnel trained to determine appropriate curriculum and some fear that calling inappropriate curriculum Common Core will enable uncommonly poor works, and those that are clearly propaganda, to slip into classrooms.

Common Core Anti-Americanism

Education Action Group (EAG) founder Kyle Olson obtained Common Core teacher guides produced by the Zaner-Bloser company that include a two-week lesson plan for 4th-graders using the book *The Jacket*. Olson states that, "It's a fun little book about racism and white privilege — a left-wing concept that teaches African Americans [that] the values of American society are designed to benefit white people."

A Zaner-Bloser guide to the book "Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez," introduces 2nd-graders to the founder of the United Farm Workers union and "equality

lessons." As part of this two-week lesson, students read the book, then indicate the living conditions of the farm workers on one side of a page and the living conditions of the landowners and business owners on the opposite side. Teachers are instructed to say, "Fairness and equality exist when the scales are balanced" and that "unfairness and inequality exist when the scales are weighted heavily to one side and are out of balance." Teachers then get the classroom conversation going by asking the 2nd-graders, "Do you think both sides are equal?" EAG's Olson ironically asks, "You don't suppose the lesson creators truly meant to get political — and start indoctrinating — children that young, do you?" He points out that seven-year-olds don't know about "economics or property rights," nor do they have the perspective to "understand that most first-generation Americans came to this country with very little except the hope to one day escape poverty through hard work and give their children a better life than they had. And many of them found better lives." (EAGNews.org, 10-17-13 and 10-21-13)

These lesson plans will indoctrinate students against the same American opportunities that allowed millions of immigrants to arrive here penniless, work hard, and achieve the American dream.

Decline of Humanities

(Continued from page 1)

fessors he had during his own college career. Further, some may wonder if Siegel encounters any college students of today; they spend hours on social network sites, texting with friends, and engaging in other technological distractions. Can we really expect them at some point to read poetry, literature, and philosophy on their own without the breadth requirements that some colleges still require? The *Humanities Report Card* indicates that reading for pleasure by Americans declined 11% between 1992 to 2008.

It is true that deconstructing literary works on the basis of class, gender, race, and other artificial constructs detracts from the original intent of the creators of great works and has helped lead to decline in the value of humanities study. Background information about conditions during the author's lifetime should be given to students, but to ignore the merit of a work itself and instead focus on seeing it through the narrow scope of artificial constructs is always a mistake.

David Brooks describes this in a *New York Times* op-ed (6-20-13):

The humanities turned from an inward to an outward focus. They were less about the old notions of truth, beauty, and goodness and more about political and social categories like race, class and gender. Liberal arts professors grew more moralistic when talking about politics but more tentative about private morality because they didn't want to offend anybody. . . . To the earnest 19-year-old with lofty dreams of self-understanding and moral greatness, the humanities in this guise were bound to seem less consequential and more boring.

Baby Out With Bath Water?

The editors of the Harvard student newspaper, *The Crimson*, published a veritable obituary for study of the humanities, stating, "We never thought we would see the day when adults were bemoaning the foresight and responsibility of the American youth. But the national anxiety over the decline of the humani-

Bill of Rights

(Continued from page 1)

their table to share and place in their binders." How could students possibly make informed decisions when they are uninformed?

This exercise is an example of the "collaborative" group work that is encouraged by Common Core and that many feel leads to "group think." Students may be persuaded to go along with

Zero Tolerance

(Continued from page 2)

for instant response must take action to protect students. Just one day after the first anniversary of the tragic slaughter of innocents in Newtown, Connecticut, a 17-year-old student was killed at a suburban Denver high school by a student gunman who then took his own life. The murderous student entered the school with a shotgun, more than 125 shotgun shells, a machete, and three homemade firebombs, according to the Associated Press. When a sheriff's deputy on duty at the school confronted the student, he committed suicide. Many still wonder

ties major smacks of exactly that sentiment." (11-8-13) Harvard University has had a 10% decline in students studying humanities subjects in the last ten years, a higher rate than average across all colleges. Citing an "unforgiving job market" and parental pressure, the editors state that they are "not especially sorry to see the English majors go." They believe fewer humanities scholars and more STEM students "will mean a greater probability of breakthroughs in research."

The *Crimson* editors write, "We refuse to rue a development that has advances in things like medicine, technological efficiency, and environmental sustainability as its natural consequence." Some may say they are lauding developments that have not yet and may well never occur, as well as showing a juvenile belief that such progress occurs in a STEM vacuum. Equally confusing is their belief that individuals will continue to explore the humanities on their own. "Whether they study history and literature, applied math, or organismic and evolutionary biology, people will continue to seek truth in philosophy, solace in music, and company in the pages of books." Does the converse apply, that English literature, Greek philosophy, and French majors will explore higher math, and evolutionary biology on their own, without the necessary exposure that allows them to develop an interest in these subjects?

According to the *Humanities Report Card*, only 13% of college students are learning languages of "critical need," defined as necessary for "international security and global competitiveness," a deficiency that could lead to national security issues. *The Heart of the Matter*, the complete 2013 report of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, suggests three goals and makes thirteen recommendations for advancing the humanities and social sciences in America, not just at colleges and universities. Many still believe in the value of the humanities and the study of great classical texts.

more outspoken classmates instead of speaking their mind. Individual students are unable to display their own talents or knowledge when work is done in a group setting.

It is unclear whether this is a Common Core assignment but the Bryant School District in Arkansas operates under Common Core standards.

how such a heavily armed individual was ever able to enter the school.

A balance between protecting students from real threats and making logical responses to smaller infractions must be found for all schools. Although some schools have security officers, few schools are allowing armed teachers and armed guards. Schools advertising that they are gun-free zones seem to present an open invitation to armed crazies who are out to kill. Heavily armed individuals' ability to enter schools must be addressed by all districts and stopped at all schools.