Using Internet Primary Sources to Teach Critical Thinking Skills in Government, Economics, and Contemporary World Issues

JAMES M. SHIVELEY
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Contents

Acknowledgments xi

Introduction: The Internet and the World Wide Web—Potential for Education xiii

PART I USING CRITICAL THINKING IN POLITICAL SCIENCE, ECONOMICS, AND CONTEMPORARY WORLD ISSUES 1

PART II USING PRIMARY SOURCES 17

PART III PRIMARY SOURCE SITES 37

Political Science 39

Early America 39

How to Read a 200-year-old Document 39

Mayflower Compact 40

Fundamental Orders of Connecticut 42

Peter Zenger and Freedom of the Press 43

Bacon's Rebellion 45

Iroquois Constitution 46

Albany Plan of Union 48

Stamp Act 49

Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death 51

Revolutionary Period and Early U.S. Documents **53**
Declaration of Independence 53
Articles of Confederation 54
Northwest Ordinance 56
Constitution of the United States 57
Virginia Declaration of Rights 59
Federalist Papers, Number 10 61
Proclamation of Neutrality 62
The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 64

The Nineteenth Century **66**
War of 1812 66
Monroe Doctrine 67
Declaration of Sentiments 69
Fugitive Slave Act 70
Emancipation Proclamation 72
Fourteenth Amendment 74
Fort Laramie Treaty 75
Thomas Nast Homepage 77
Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 79

The Twentieth Century **81**
Child Labor 81
Jim Crow Laws 82
Prohibition 84
Red Scare 85
First Hundred Days of the New Deal 87
World War II Posters 89
Truman and the Decision to Drop the Bomb 90
Nixon-Kennedy Debate 92
Martin Luther King, Jr.—"I Have a Dream" 94
Watergate and Nixon's Resignation 95

The Judiciary Branch **97**
John Marshall 97
Dred Scott 98
Plessy v. Ferguson 100

Scopes Monkey Trial 101
Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas 103
Thurgood Marshall 105
Roe v. Wade 106
Miranda v. Arizona 108
Today's Supreme Court 110

The Presidency and the Executive Branch 112
Presidents—In Their Own Words 112
Letters of Thomas Jefferson 113
Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address 115
Impeachment of Andrew Johnson 116
Theodore Roosevelt 118
Franklin Delano Roosevelt's First Inaugural Speech 120
Other Inaugural Speeches 121
John F. Kennedy's Berlin Speech 122
Presidential Succession Act 123
Executive Orders 125
Presidential Libraries 127

Legislative Branch 129
About the U.S. Congress 129
Tour of the Capitol Building 130
Congressional Record 132
House of Representatives 134
Senate's Official Homepage 136
Rules of the House and Senate 138
Seventeenth Amendment 139
Committees 141

Elections and the Voting Process 143
Presidential Elections and Voter Turnout 143
The Electoral College 144
National Party Committees 146
Prohibition Party 148
Learning Page Library of Congress and the Election of 1920 150
Election of 1860 151

Election of 1948 153
American Indian Movement 155

International Politics 157
Magna Carta 157
John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* 158
Edmund Burke's Speech on Conciliation with America 159
Paris Peace Treaty of 1783 161
Democracy in America by Alexis de Tocqueville 162
Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen 163
Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations 165
Universal Declaration of Human Rights 167
Truman Doctrine 168
Elections around the World 169

Economics 173

General Economic Data 173
The Dismal Scientist 173
About.Com: Economics 174
Economagic 175
GeoStat 176
Global Population and Economic Statistics 178
EconData.Net 179

International Economics 181
Foreign Currency Converter 181
International Trade Data 182

Economic History 184
U.S. Currency Exhibit 184
What Is (Was) a Dollar Worth? 185
Adam Smith's Writings on Economic Theory 186
The Leslie Brock Center for the Study of Colonial Currency 188
David Hume's Economic Writings 189
David Ricardo's Writings 190
Factory Life circa 1900 192

Internet Modern History Sourcebook: The Industrial Revolution 193
Historical Census Data 194

Macroeconomic Data 196
Unemployment and Productivity 196
Gross Domestic Product 197
Budget of the U.S. Government 199
Income and Poverty 200

Other Economics Sites 203
Contemporary Economic and Business Cartoons 203
The Stock Market Indexes 204
The Department of Commerce 205
State and County Demographic and Economic Profiles 206
WOODROW 208
Dr. Yardeni's Economic History Page 209

Contemporary World Issues 211
China and Taiwan 211
Cuba and the United States 212
HIV and Africa 213
Human Rights in China 214
North Korea 215
Refugee Crisis 217
Drugs in Colombia 218
India and Pakistan 219
Newspapers around the World 220
Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty 222
Terrorism 223
World Trade Organization 225
Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries 227
Middle East Conflict 228
World Hunger 230
Third World Debt 231
The Rights of Children 233

Selected Primary Source Databases 235

Index 239

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Introduction: The Internet and the World Wide Web—Potential for Education

From the use of electronic mail to the transmission of multimedia such as digital audio and video, the Internet/WWW has become pervasive in many of our daily lives. Whether buying a book at Amazon.com (e-commerce) or finding out the latest college football scores (information gathering) or listening to a classical radio station in Cleveland from your living room in Denver (entertainment), many Americans consume Internet/WWW services on a daily basis. Estimates place the number of Internet/WWW users in the United States at between 88 and 92 million (*Information Please*, 1999).

Why has Internet/WWW use become such a widespread phenomenon? First, access to both computers and Internet service providers (ISPs) has been steadily increasing since 1990; by 1998, nearly half of American households had a home computer (*Wall Street Journal*). Second, the Internet/WWW provides heretofore unobtainable access to nearly unlimited information in a staggering variety of formats from myriad sources. The very nature of a digital information network—such as the Internet—implies that once information, or any type of media, has been digitized, access to that information is no longer bound by time or space. People can now access much of the Library of Congress on-line, take a "virtual tour" of the Louvre, or buy stocks from the New York Stock Exchange—all unthinkable for ordinary Americans even a few years ago. Even more important, perhaps, is that access to this information, via the Internet/WWW, is possible at a very low cost. Because it is no longer necessary to bear the transportation costs associated with traveling to Paris to see the Louvre, for example, more Americans (and other people around the globe) have access to such experiences than ever before.

Perhaps the best measure of the pervasiveness of the Internet/WWW in our society is the degree to which "the web" has entered the American lexicon. During the last few years of the decade of the 1990s, for example, such words and phrases as "e-mail," "surfing," "downloading," and "dot.com" became commonplace in news broadcasts and everyday conversations. Certainly such language is prevalent in the many recent television commercials that extol the virtues of e-commerce for both businesses and consumers.

Citing many of the same reasons noted above, experts and pundits have recently extolled the potential of the Internet/WWW for educational applications as well. Because of its interactive and multimedia nature, the Internet/WWW has been highly touted as an increasingly important aspect of both elementary and secondary education. For example, in a nationwide study of Internet/WWW use by teachers, Henry J. Becker concluded that "along with word processing, the Internet may be the most valuable of the many computer technologies available to teachers and students" (Becker 1999, 32).

Experts point to several powerful benefits for using the Internet/WWW in the classroom and library media center. Jeri Wilson (1995) has argued that the Internet/WWW has the ability to break down the classroom's physical limitations and to allow students access to experiences well beyond the limited resources available in classrooms and media centers. Such experiences might include having students e-mail an expert scientist with questions about a chemistry problem, students listen to digital audio files of 1930s folk music archived at the Library of Congress, or take a virtual fieldtrip to the Amazon rain forest. All of these experiences are well beyond the capabilities of nearly any school or teacher.

Joseph Braun, Phyllis Fernlund, and Charles White (1998) believed that the use of the Internet/WWW could develop students' inquiry and analytical skills. Indeed, the nature of the Internet/WWW as a wide-open information superhighway provides a perfect backdrop for developing and honing research and critical thinking skills. Unlike traditional information sources (e.g., libraries, encyclopedias), the Internet/WWW is "unfiltered" in the sense that information is not reviewed for accuracy before publication on-line. Indeed, the only "filter" on the Internet is whether one has a computer and access to a server at an Internet node for posting web pages. We have described this lack of information filtering as an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills in students:

> For some (teachers), the commitment of teaching their students critical-thinking skills and having them apply these skills to the Internet is simply an extension of the central task that they are already engaged in, namely, the effort to foster a critical citizenry able to make reasoned decisions. (Engle and Ochoa 1988)

> Teachers do this whenever they have their students apply critical thinking to their textbooks, some current event in the news, a recent television commercial, or a political campaign speech. For others, this represents perhaps the latest best reason for teaching critical-thinking and reading skills directly. In either case, for the classroom teacher to assume the role as the exclusive filter for Internet material in their classroom is to deny students the opportunity to learn the information-gathering skills needed in a democracy, skills they will need to apply daily once they have left the classroom. (Shiveley and VanFossen, 1999, 43)

Charles White (1997) has also argued that the use of the Internet/WWW in classrooms can expand students' experience with visual technologies. These visual technologies include digital resources—increasingly available on the Internet/WWW—such as graphics interchange format (GIF) images, QuickTime VR (virtual reality) files, and on-demand streaming video. These media allow students to go beyond not only their own classrooms and media centers but also beyond the medium of print or text. In an increasingly multimedia society, these can be valuable experiences.

Access to the Internet/WWW is growing among the nation's schools. National data have suggested that approximately 90 percent of the nation's schools have access to the Internet in some location within the school building (Becker 1999). Results from recent state-level studies have indicated that in some states this percentage may be even higher. VanFossen (2000) reported that more than 95 percent of the respondents in a study of secondary teachers in Indiana had access to the Internet/WWW somewhere in their school building.

How does the tremendous potential of the Internet/WWW—along with this increased access—affect students in the social studies classroom? To better examine this question, one needs to first take a brief look at the nature of social studies, its traditional role in public education, and the logical "fit" between social studies and the Internet/WWW.

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Ever since the inception of social studies as a field of study, debate and criticism have enveloped the field in regard to its definition, scope and sequence, and purpose. One way of helping teachers and students better understand the nature of social studies is to focus on some of the widely accepted goals in this field. Social studies, particularly that aspect that focuses on political science, economics, and world issues, is often broadly defined as "that part of the elementary and high school curriculum which has the primary responsibility for helping students to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to participate in the civic life of their local communities, the nation, and the world"

(Banks and Clegg 1990). To achieve this, social studies teachers are urged to use an interdisciplinary approach and multiple perspectives to promote the skills of participatory citizenship, decision making, and critical thinking (Adler 1991; National Council for the Social Studies 1992).

Participatory citizenship has always been an important part of the social studies curriculum. According to W. Parker, "This is where, if anywhere, the core knowledge base of citizenship will be debated and developed. Social studies is the only place in the school curriculum where focused inquiry on democratic ideals and practices might be located" (1990, 17). Participatory citizenship is often best emphasized in political science and world issues courses, and, in recent decades it has been infused throughout many history and geography courses (Butts 1993). Economics also has been a content area closely associated with the goals of citizenship education. The case for economic literacy as it is connected to democratic citizenship is built on the premise that Americans think and talk about economic issues, that these issues affect us as citizens, and that economic issues are primarily concerned with making decisions, a primary attribute of democratic citizenship (Schug and Walstad 1991). According to S.L. Miller, "Economics is for everyone in part because we live in an economic world. Most of the major decisions that confront us are fundamentally economic. Effective decision making and participation in a democratic republic requires citizens to have at least a minimum of competency in economics" (1987, 162).

Students benefit from certain skills that assist them in making decisions. Some of these skills include collecting, analyzing, and organizing information, and then determining how best to use this information when reaching conclusions. One of the best strategies utilized by teachers to help students develop these skills is teaching through inquiry or discovery. In inquiry-oriented instruction, students are challenged with a problem, or a "point of perplexity," from which they proceed through a series of steps to solve the problem. These steps include defining the problem, developing a tentative solution to the problem (hypothesis), gathering any analyzing relevant data, testing the hypothesis, accepting or rejecting the hypothesis, and—after reaching a conclusion—testing this conclusion in new situations (Dewey 1933). An inquiry or discovery-oriented approach to instruction promotes reflection, decision making, and participation more than a didactic expository approach, and it is therefore very consistent with the goals of social studies (Ferguson 1991).

Critical thinking is also seen as "essential to citizenship in a democratic society where citizens are confronted by persistent and complex social problems" (Stanley 1991, 255). Critical thinking has been defined as the rules of logical inquiry or argument analysis (Newmann 1975) or as "a collection of discrete skills or operations each of which to some degree or other combines analysis and evaluation" (Beyer 1985, 272). More on

how critical thinking applies specifically to the social studies will be covered in Chapter 1; however, most would agree that the teaching of critical thinking skills is considered a fundamental component of citizenship education at every grade level.

Citizenship education also needs to promote understanding and appreciation of the multiple perspectives vital to a democratic society. A pluralistic democratic society can work only when its diverse groups really believe that they and those around them are an important part of the institutions and social structure in which they are immersed (Banks and Banks 1993). When multiple perspectives are infused throughout a school's curriculum, classrooms become more consistent with key democratic principles. Such a curriculum encourages students to view people from a pluralistic perspective—one that is inclusive, non-stereotypical, and unprejudiced which helps prepare them to "build authentic, democratic communities" (Alter 1995, 355)

Finally, teachers of social studies believe that the approach most consistent with the goals and skills of democratic citizenship as stressed above is best achieved through an interdisciplinary approach. This is apparent in the definition provided by the National Council for the Social Studies which, in part, states that social studies is

> the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. (National Council for the Social Studies 1992, 3)

After reviewing the purpose and nature of the social studies and reflecting on many of the characteristics associated with the Internet, one could conclude that the recent increased access that social studies students and teachers have to the Internet/WWW is fortuitous indeed.

USE OF THE INTERNET/WWW BY SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS

Internet/WWW resources abound for teachers of all subject areas and all grade levels, but such resources seem particularly well-suited to the social studies (Braun, Fernlund, and White 1998). The social studies are interdisciplinary by their very nature, and the content disciplines (e.g., political science and economics) that make up the social studies draw heavily on all types of information and media. Because the Internet/WWW structure provides wide access to rich sources of just this kind of

information and media, it would seem to correspond very well with the field of social studies and the disciplines that undergird the field.

Indeed, typing in the term "social studies" at the search engine Yahoo! generates 158 site matches and more than 1,200 web pages devoted, in some shape or form, to social studies education. What are some examples of these social studies resources? Teachers and students might choose to log on to National Geographic On-Line (www.nationalgeographic.com) and view a web cast of a presentation on life in Ancient Egypt or in modern Havana, or develop and print out maps of any country in the world, or take a trip on the Underground Railroad. Teachers and students might also log on to the National Archives and Records Administration (www.nara.gov) and download a copy of the Declaration of Independence, photographs of slave life in the antebellum south, or propaganda posters from World War II. Teachers and students could also use the Intercultural E-mail Classroom Connection <www.stolaf.edu/network/iecc/> to exchange e-mail messages with students in a classroom in Japan or Russia or Canada about life in those countries. Even this short list demonstrates the powerful potential of this medium.

Indeed, some social studies teachers have already seen the benefits to classroom use of the Internet/WWW. In a study of secondary social studies teachers' Internet/WWW use, VanFossen asked teachers to describe why they thought the Internet/WWW was important or valuable in the classroom. One enthusiastic teacher responded, "Teachers would have to be crazy not to use the Internet!" (1999, 5). A second teacher outlined the reasons why:

> Many people say exploratory learning is important. There is no better way for kids to explore a subject than to do it on the 'net. I have students getting excited about what they find. Often they feel they get info I don't know. Sometimes they do. Often times [*sic*] people think math and science are the only subjects that use computers. Social studies teachers need to use the Internet. We already have a bad reputation of being boring teachers of a boring subject! (VanFossen 1999, 1)

In spite of the Internet/WWW's perceived fit with education (and with social studies in particular), and enthusiasm of teachers like those above, research has indicated that few teachers are actually integrating this medium into their lesson plans in any meaningful way. Becker found that nearly a third of the teachers surveyed (from grade 4 to grade 12) were not using the Internet/WWW at all in their classrooms; another 40 percent admitted to only "occasional" use (1999, 5). Data suggest that Internet/WWW use among social studies teachers is no better. VanFossen (1999) found that, although more than 85 percent of respondents were employing the Internet/WWW in some way for their own professional

use (e.g., planning or research), few were using the medium in their classrooms. For example, two-thirds of the respondents had never used the Internet/WWW to take students on a virtual fieldtrip of a museum site, and slightly less than half had never developed an interactive lesson that required students to use the Internet/WWW to complete some task or assignment. Additionally, VanFossen discovered that more than 80 percent of the social studies teachers who responded wished they were using the Internet/WWW more than they currently were.

These findings seem to beg the question: if social studies teachers have access to the Internet/WWW, have myriad interesting and useful web sites to access, and want to use the Internet/WWW more than they currently are—why aren't they? Two factors seem to explain this lack of use. First, social studies teachers, like most other teachers, suffer from a lack of formal training in the classroom use of the Internet/WWW. R. Coley (1997) found that 85 percent of teachers had less than nine clock hours in general training—one would assume that Internet/WWW training was some subset of these nine hours—in using the computer in the classroom. VanFossen found similar results among social studies teachers. This lack of training was summarized by one teacher in VanFossen's study: "I would like to attend a workshop where an actual lesson is taught and authentic (alternative) assessments are given. We need hands-on, not just what web sites to access. We need to see it done, then practice it" (1999, 15).

A second explanation for the low degree of classroom use of the Internet/WWW is a perception among social studies teachers that using the medium takes too much time and is not worth the investment. Many social studies teachers believe that resources on the Internet/WWW are "an inch deep and a mile wide"—except for a few flashy bells and whistles, very little meaningful social studies content can be found on the Internet/WWW. One teacher summarized this view:

> I'm not convinced the Internet is great progress over the school or public library. It can be an enormous waste of time, a migraine frustration, a panacea that doesn't "pan" out, a way to spend a lot of time learning technology with a disproportionately small return in learning of subject matter. Too often the means becomes the end. (VanFossen 1999, 14)

We hope that this book will address this very sentiment and the barrier to Internet/WWW use in classrooms represented by it by providing a wide range of resources appropriate for use in social studies classrooms.

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

The purpose of this book is to discuss and demonstrate how primary sources found on the Internet can be used to teach critical thinking skills

in social studies generally and in political science, economics, and world problems specifically. This book will also provide teachers, students, and school library media specialists with a wide range of strategies for using Internet/WWW primary sources.

Many educators who do not actively embrace the use of the Internet in their classrooms perceive that the costs of its use outweigh the benefits. These teachers want to take advantage of the Internet—and indeed may feel guilty and left behind if they don't—but they find themselves in a predicament. How do they use this great new tool, teach in a manner that retains the integrity of their curriculum and content area, and do both effectively? Also, as stated earlier, many teachers believe that mining the Internet/WWW for meaningful material takes too much time, or they feel incapable of judging good sites from bad ones and are reluctant to take a chance on employing a bad site in class. Other teachers point out that the WWW is replete with on-line lessons that present style (technological bells and whistles) over substance (teacher-developed, field-tested, easily implemented lessons). The book hopes to address some of these concerns.

Social studies teachers are not always pleased with the classroom textbooks they have been given to use as their primary source. Research into the methods and materials used to teach political science, economics, and world issues reveal surprisingly similar, and unfavorable, results. Students tend to like these subjects less than any other topic in school, in large part due to the materials and methods that stultify students' interests (Goodlad 1984). Often these textbooks are described as dry, redundant, supportive of the status quo, and designed for passive learning and the transmission of facts rather than active involvement in the pursuit of knowledge (Carroll et al. 1987; Larkins, Hawkins, and Gilmore 1987). These studies seem to describe a field—social studies—that is ripe with potential to utilize new content resources such as those increasingly available on the Internet/WWW.

USER POPULATION

This book is designed to assist teachers and school library media specialists who wish to create lessons and units that integrate critical thinking and primary source documents in political science, economics, and world issues. Students will find this text helpful as a resource for research into topics or time periods that would benefit from the critical examination of the related primary source documents. Teachers (as well as preservice teachers) will be able to use this book as a reference that provides examples of the infusion of technology into the classroom related to political science, economics, and world issues. This book is in-

tended as a supplement for many of the resources currently used by classroom teachers and library specialists in these subject areas. The authors' intent is that this text be used to support secondary sources such as class texts and additional readings such as biographies, fictional readings, and multimedia presentations associated with these subjects.

TECHNICAL NOTES: HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

In order to take advantage of the Internet/WWW primary sources outlined in this book, a user need only have a relatively basic set of hardware and software resources. In addition to a Windows-compatible (with 486 processor or above preferred) or Macintosh (PowerPC processor or above preferred) computer, users must have access to the Internet via a service provider or, preferably, their school. The computer should be equipped with either Netscape Navigator, version 4.1 or above (this is preferred), or Microsoft's Internet Explorer installed in order to "browse" the Internet. Some of the primary sources described in this book require additional, readily available (without price cost) Internet/WWW software. For example, in order to listen to Internet audio files (.au, .wav, etc.), readers will need to download RealPlayer <http://www.real.com/>. In order to view Internet video files (.mpeg, .mov, .asp), Windows users are encouraged to download Windows MediaPlayer <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/mediaplayer/en/default.asp> and Macintosh users are encouraged to download Apple QuickTime <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/>.

Teachers with only one computer in the classroom (or one computer in the school building) may be able to make a single computer screen accessible to an entire class by using an LCD palette that can project a computer screen onto the wall using an overhead projector. Some school media centers may have a digital video projector that can be used in the same manner. Teachers without these resources can still make many of the primary sources described in this book available to students by printing out various primary sources and making photocopied classroom sets.

FAIR USE ISSUES

As noted previously, one use of primary source materials accessed over the Internet/WWW is to print out representative examples or classroom sets for distribution to students in class. This brings classroom teachers into the debate over the fair use of Internet/WWW materials. Generally, materials produced by federal agencies are in the public domain and may be reproduced without permission for fair use (National

Archives 1999). The fair use statute refers to Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976:

> *Limitations on exclusive rights: Fair use*
> Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 106 and 106A, the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified in that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright. In determining whether the use made of a work in any particular case is a fair use the factors to be considered shall include—
>
> 1. the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;
> 2. the nature of the copyrighted work;
> 3. the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and
> 4. the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. (statute downloaded from Consortium for Educational Technology in University Systems <http://www.cetus.org/fair5.html>)

Among the examples that fall under these fair use criteria are "reproduction by a teacher or a student . . . to illustrate a lesson" (Library of Congress 1999, 1). For example, the Library of Congress' copyright restrictions indicate that access to materials in the public domain for "noncommercial, educational and research purposes" requires no written permission (Library of Congress 1999). We are of the opinion that nearly all of the materials described in this book fall under public domain, fair use criteria.

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) of 1998 describes the nature and use of copyrighted materials and digital technology that did not exist, or were in limited use, when the 1976 Copyright Act was passed. One result of the DMCA was to assign copyright—without the creator having to apply for a copyright—to every single document or piece of media that appears on the Internet/WWW. While this is an important change to the 1976 act—among other things, this change recognizes the instantaneous nature of publishing on the WWW—the DMCA did not change the basic elements of the fair use doctrine. When making a decision about fair use of Internet/WWW resources, then, the same criteria should be used. If the work or resource found on the WWW is in the public domain, teachers should feel confident they are adhering to the fair use doctrine.

However, we also feel obliged to warn readers that the line between fair use and copyright infringement is a fine one. In its pamphlet on fair use, the Copyright Office stated that there "is no specific number of

words or lines that may be taken without permission" and that the safest course is seek "permission from the copyright owner before using copyrighted material" (Library of Congress 1999, 1). Therefore we offer two suggestions for the classroom teacher intent on using primary source material from the Internet/WWW. First, when in doubt about whether a primary source document requires permission to reproduce, e-mail the web master of the site you are downloading the material from and inquire about the permissions needed. Second, it is always a good idea to provide credits for images or other primary source material used. Simply typing a line across the bottom of the printed document is usually enough (e.g., "image downloaded from the Library of Congress American Memory site <http://memory.loc.gov/>").

BOOK ARRANGEMENT

This book is arranged in three parts. Part I presents an overview of critical thinking. It discusses what critical thinking is (and what it is commonly misunderstood to be) as it pertains to the social science areas of political science, economics, and world issues. Part I also discusses research findings related to, and suggested practices designed for, assisting the teaching of critical thinking. Part II defines and gives characteristics of primary sources and distinguishes these from secondary and tertiary sources. Instructional strategies are provided for using primary source documents in the classroom or media center. Part III presents 118 Internet/WWW sites containing primary source documents in the areas of political science (82), economics (27), and contemporary world issues (17). Each site description contains an abstract of the web site and a set of questions and activities designed to promote the application of critical thinking skills to the primary sources found at that site. Where applicable, web sites are followed by the listing and brief abstracts of subject-related web sites. The book concludes with a listing of selected primary source databases for future reference.

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USING CRITICAL THINKING IN POLITICAL SCIENCE, ECONOMICS, AND CONTEMPORARY WORLD ISSUES

1

INTRODUCTION

One would be hard pressed to generate a case against the need for critical thinking in a democratic society. It is widely understood that critical thinking skills are vital to an educated citizenry. This, however, may be where agreement stops on this subject. How critical thinking is defined, how it is applied, and how and when it should be taught (indeed, whether it can be taught at all) are all topics of debate within the social studies. In an effort to clarify some of the issues surrounding critical thinking as it applies to political science, economics, and contemporary world issues, this chapter reviews problems associated with defining critical thinking in general, defines critical thinking as it applies to the social studies, describes characteristics and skills commonly associated with critical thinking in social studies, reviews the research conducted on critical thinking in social studies, and examines how critical thinking may be applied specifically to political science, economics, and world issues.

CRITICAL THINKING DEFINED

The term "critical thinking" is so commonly used that consensus on the meaning of the term remains elusive. Definitions of critical thinking that do have broad support, however, tend to be too vague to be useful to educators. For example, if it is defined as "reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis 1991, 1) or "the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking, in order