

**The National Standards: A US history perspective**  
**By Joyce Appleby. 10 November, 1994**  
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*Editor's note: This material was put out on H-List@uicvm.uic.edu on 10 November, 1994, by the list's co-moderator. It consists of a letter from Joyce Appleby written to Mark Kornbluh (Hieach@hs1.hst.msu.edu), which attempts to defend the standards with respect to US history. This letter is followed by a selection from the US Standards by Gary Nash.*

Dear Historians -- The bruhaha over National Standards presents a simultaneous crisis and opportunity. Newt Gingrich pointed to them in his speech yesterday as an example of an elitist, left wing program to subvert American values, and people, picking up on this are apparently deluging their Reps with anguished cries of outrage. This is not just misinformation; it is manipulation of political passions. This is the crisis - to counteract these impressions before they gel. The opportunity is to get people to think about teaching in the schools with the help of a superb teachers' guide which reflects, I think, the best thinking from historians and teachers. Nothing would help more than for you to write to your Congress person. Attached are some sample standards taken at random from the book so you can see the quality and un p.c.ness of the text.

Points that are worth making:

- 1) These Standards were produced by hundreds of participating historians and teachers, informally and through their organizations (all listed in the book) We're not likely to get an effort like this again soon and I would stress, not one headed up by as dedicated an American historian as Gary Nash.
- 2) Far from being p.c. or undermining American values, these standards will help guide students to the basic study of the American past, one in which all of the familiar white, male movers and shakers are present, but placed in the context of the parallel lives of others whose existence framed their world.
- 3) Like the very best in the American tradition, these Standards encourage independent thinking based on sound evidence and comprehensive knowledge.
- 4) The hyperbolic reaction - including comparisons to Nazi and Bolshevik efforts to shape public opinion - are so wide of the mark that one can only think that someone is trying to create a target or a battle field for carrying on a vendetta of sorts against serious efforts to improve the quality of school history teaching.
- 5) This is one product whose integrity sells itself. Encourage people to order the Standards for \$18.95 plus \$5. from National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90024. Nothing will be more effective in deflating the Standards' opponents than getting them to look at them.

For the past thirty years, history instruction has taken a back seat to Social Studies. Here is a grand chance to demonstrate how rich the history of the United States is and what is involved in getting students to think about. The opponents of the Standards have the organization, but we have the quality product, and I hope you will give the time to appraise it.

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**Subject: National History Standards (fwd)**

Joyce Appleby asked me to send you a few samples from the National Standards for United States History. Would you please forward them to the History Net? Thank you!

**ERA 3: REVOLUTION AND THE NEW NATION (1754-1820s)**

Standard 1B

**DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRINCIPLES ARTICULATED IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE BY:**

**—Appleby: National History Standards—**

Explaining the major ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence and their sources. [Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances]

Demonstrating the fundamental contradictions between the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the realities of chattel slavery. [Consider multiple perspectives]

Drawing upon the principles in the Declaration of Independence to construct a sound historical argument regarding whether it justified American independence. [Interrogate historical data]

Comparing the Declaration of Independence with the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and constructing an argument evaluating their importance to the spread of constitutional democracies in the 19th and 20th centuries. [Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas]

**ERA 3: REVOLUTION AND THE NEW NATION (1754-1820s)**

Standard 3B

**DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE CREATION AND RATIFICATION OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT IT ESTABLISHED BY:**

Analyzing the factors involved in calling the Constitutional Convention, including Shay's Rebellion. [Analyze multiple causation]

Analyzing the alternative plans considered by the delegates and the major compromises agreed upon to secure the approval of the Constitution. [Examine the influence of ideas]

Analyzing the fundamental ideas behind the distribution of powers and the system of checks and balances established by the Constitution. [Examine the influence of ideas]

Comparing the arguments of Federalists and Anti-Federalists during the ratification debates and assess their relevance in late 20th-century politics. [Hypothesize the influence of the past]

**ERA 6: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDUSTRIAL UNITED STATES (1870-1900)**

Standard 1A

**DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INDUSTRIALIZATION, THE RISE OF BIG BUSINESS, AND THE ADVENT OF THE MODERN CORPORATION BY:**

Explaining how technological, transportation, communication, and marketing improvements and innovations transformed the American economy in the late 19th century. [Examine the influence of ideas]

Comparing the various types of business organizations. [Compare and contrast differing institutions]

Evaluating the careers of prominent industrial and financial leaders. [Assess the importance of the individual in history]

Explaining how business leaders sought to limit competition and maximize profits in the late 19th century. [Examine the influence of ideas]

Comparing the ascent of business entrepreneurs today with those of a century ago. [Hypothesize the influence of the past]

**ERA 7: THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN AMERICA (1890-1930)**

Standard 3B

—Appleby: National History Standards—

**DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF HOW A MODERN CAPITALIST ECONOMY EMERGED IN THE 1920s BY:**

Explaining how inventions, technological innovations, and principles of scientific management transformed production and work. [Examine the influence of ideas]

Examining the changes in the modern corporation, including labor policies and the advent of mass advertising and sales techniques. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

Analyzing the new downtowns and suburbs and how they changed urban life. [Explain historical continuity and change]

**ERA 8: THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II (1929-1945)**

Standard 1B

**DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF HOW AMERICAN LIFE CHANGED DURING THE DEPRESSION YEARS BY:**

Explaining the effects of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl on American farmers, tenants, and sharecroppers. [Analyze multiple causation]

Analyzing the impact of the Great Depression on industry and workers and explaining the response of local and state officials in combating the resulting economic and social crisis. [Analyze multiple causation]

Analyzing the impact of the Great Depression on the American family and gender roles. [Consider multiple perspectives]

Explaining the impact of the Great Depression on African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans. [Consider multiple perspectives]

Explaining the cultural life of the depression years in art, literature, and music and evaluating the government's role in promoting artistic expression. [Draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources]

**ERA 10: CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES (1968 TO THE PRESENT)**

Standard 1C

**DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES BY:**

Assessing U.S. policies toward arms limitation and improved relations with the Soviet Union. [Examine the influence of ideas]

Explaining Nixon's detente with the People's Republic of China and how it reshaped U.S. foreign policy. [Analyze multiple causation]

Examining the interconnections between the United States' role as a superpower and the evolving political struggles in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

Explaining Reagan's efforts to reassert U.S. military power and rebuild American prestige. [Hypothesize the influence of the past]

Evaluating the reasons for the collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the USSR. [Analyze multiple causation]

Evaluating the reformulation of U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]