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Benefits of Storytelling Methodologies
In 4th and 5th Grade Historical Instruction

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Reading with a Concentration in Storytelling

by
Julia E. Watts
May 2006

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Keywords: Storytelling, Historical Instruction, History, Social Studies, Stories, Education

ABSTRACT

Benefits of Storytelling Methodologies
In 4th and 5th Grade Historical Instruction
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This study examines the benefits of using stories to teach history to 4th and 5th grade students. In order to determine student attitude toward history, students completed a History Affinity scale prior to and after being exposed to one of 2 teaching methods. Students in the experimental group listened to and participated in oral narratives during their history lesson while students in the control group received conventional lecture and note-taking instruction. After collecting and analyzing the data, results indicate a significant increase in history affinity in the positive direction for the experimental group with no change in history affinity for the control group. Conducted amongst 228 students, all attending the same elementary school in Southern Indiana, this study speaks to the potential of improving teaching methods throughout the history curriculum through increased use of storytelling methods.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is dedicated to all students who experience difficulty in the social studies. It is my hope that one day history will become personal to you by way of someone's story. I wish to thank the 4th and 5th grade students and teachers who allowed me to come into their rooms each day in order to present history through my stories. Although you were unaware, you taught me more than I ever hoped to learn about how to be an effective teacher and storyteller. For that, you have my deepest gratitude. To Dr. Joseph Sobol, who never accepted less than my best effort and for providing continued support and encouragement, I am forever and gratefully indebted.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Beyond Boredom

Peek into a typical 4th or 5th grade classroom while history is being taught and the scene you will see is likely to be discouraging. The looks on the faces of many of the students convey only boredom. The majority of the class follows sleepily along as another classmate reads dutifully from the week's chapter. The teacher may interrupt from time to time in order to emphasize an important date or name, perhaps even taking the time to point out a significant geographic location on the classroom map. After what seems like an eternity you notice a stirring; students appear all too anxious to lift the corners of their books as they near the end of the last paragraph. Shutting their books with a sigh of relief, they are thankful that history is over for another day. In a room down the hallway, you may find the lesson progressing in a different format, but the students' expressions and responses will be all too similar. This time, perhaps, the teacher is more actively engaged in the lesson by giving a lecture rather than simply having the students read aloud from the chapter, but look closely – it should not take long before you notice the same faraway looks of boredom and disengagement glazing the eyes of nearly every student in the room.

I fear these scenes are all too common in many elementary schools. They stem from the tree of conventional historical pedagogy; one in which instruction comes in the forms described above. Using conventional methods, teachers typically either lecture on the day's topic, hoping students will remember what has been emphasized, or they

engage students in an oral reading exercise rather than a lesson on the events in history, causing boredom for most and frustration for those students whose reading skills are below grade level. These conventional teaching methods are based upon a grave misconception – that history will rarely, if ever, grab the attention of elementary students. Therefore, teachers may feel it is better to simply skim over the material with students rather than work at finding a gripping instructional method which would allow students to travel through time in order to experience history for themselves. For some teachers, it appears easier to allow students to give lip service to the words in the chapters of the text rather than finding ways for their students to internalize the lives of the characters about whom they are reading.

As an elementary school teacher, I am reminded almost daily that students find the subject of history difficult and tedious. This can lead to resistance to the subject matter on the part of students and, in turn, can result in seemingly insurmountable challenges for teachers of history in presenting lesson material. When students become resistant, teachers must rise to the occasion and find new ways to present historical information. However time consuming, it is possible to find an affective hook on which students can hang their interest, enabling them to experience history rather than simply read about it. Storytelling is one instructional method capable of providing that hook. Storytelling methodology uses oral stories, or narratives, related by the teacher, in addition to opportunities for students to respond to and re-create those stories through various activities. Because children “experience, remember, and communicate their lives as stories” (Wagler, 1991, p.22), and because storytelling possesses many affective elements - a few of which include plot, characterization, cause-and-effect relationships,

descriptive language, repetition, and emotional involvement - storytelling is more engaging to students than the expository text they read in state-required textbooks. Storytelling provides an excellent avenue of instruction for teachers trying to capture the attention of students who may see history as nothing more than long ago dates and faceless names.

Review of Related Literature

This observation that students often experience resistance to history is not new. Over the last 40 to 50 years, it has spurred a fair amount of research (Chiodo & Byford, 2004). Not alone among these researchers, Gentilucci (2004) finds that it is not the students who are to blame so much as the methods employed by their teachers. In fact, he claims that students are “genuinely interested” in learning and even remain focused on the “subjects that matter” (p. 137), yet, according to Chiodo and Byford, when it comes to learning history, students still hold tightly to an attitude that history is boring and irrelevant to their lives. How, then, can teachers convey a message to students that history *is* one of those subjects that matter?

According to Yarema (2002), the challenge in teaching history today exists not in presenting more history to be learned but in making history meaningful and real to students so that they develop a sense of enjoyment for learning history. Rather than being passive learners in a textbook-lecture class, Yarema argues that students must come away from history feeling engaged by it and understanding that it is vital to them in some way. While there are benefits to using the textbook-lecture method of teaching (primarily, the dissemination of great amounts of information in one instructional period), this method

does have its limitations as well. Students often feel disconnected to the events they are studying and typically get lost in the presentation of so much material at one time.

In the same article, Yarema (2002) points out that 2 years after the study by the Bradley Commission on History in Schools (1988), one of the commissioners suggested that teachers should be freed from mandates requiring them to use certain textbooks so that they might exhibit flexibility in choosing materials and methods that would enhance student interest in learning history.

One way that teachers are beginning to help students enjoy history is through the use of story. White (1993) states that “as the events of the story unfold, students experience the drama and excitement of the tale and are able to see that many issues, dilemmas, and struggles of an earlier time still confront us today” (p. 306). This is an experience not always afforded in the presentation of names, dates, and places in the textbook-lecture method of instruction.

Several individuals are beginning to recognize the benefits that storytelling holds in a history curriculum. As a result of this, there exists a movement of authors, educators, researchers, and storytellers who are already using historical dramatizations to present history to students of all ages. Strickbine (1993), noting that students often exhibit a disinterest for history, reminds us of several storytellers who have dedicated a large portion of their repertoires to historical reconstructions in order that history might be presented to students in a more “palatable” fashion (p. 11). Consider Black’s (1992) defense for using stories to relate history to her listeners:

The rationale for using story to teach history is simple and clear. When our imaginations are open and alive, facts, faces and figures pour in, making an

indelible mark upon our minds. Whether it is the issues of an era, a specific historic event, or the act of a single man or woman who touched the flow of time, a story can illuminate the details of person, place, and time in a way that enables us to identify and thus understand them (p. 3)

Roe, Alfred, and Smith (1998) as cited in Bolley (2002) remind educators, “The power of a good story has been used for centuries by teachers who have known that narrative is almost always more interesting than exposition” (p. 8). Again, as referred to in Bolley, Roe et al. “point out that history is a subject that particularly lends itself to the oral tradition, as it is the *story* of the past” (p. 9). Black concurs saying, “The stuff of history usually includes *who, what, where, and when*. The stuff of story adds on *why* and the human details that enable you to identify with a human being’s goals and actions” (1992, p. 4).

Recognizing that history is indeed the story of the past, Bolley (2002) used numerous primary and secondary historical sources as well as works of historical fiction to craft 10 historical stories relevant to Michigan history and presented them to 4th and 7th grade students as an alternative to the conventional textbook-lecture method. In similar fashion, recognizing the power stories have to help students make connections to the past, Strickbine (1993) developed a model for teaching Colorado history using stories. In this model, Strickbine took the conceptual information used in the 4th grade Colorado history curriculum and infused it with folkloric sources “in order to achieve the most interesting presentation of material” (p. 4). Although Strickbine focused solely on Colorado history, she acknowledges that this model will work for any region by saying, “With a meaningful introduction to a period in history via story, students may research significant

moments... and create a timeline around the story moment” (p. 35). She goes on to say, “Students can be prompted to undergo searches for local characters, stories about specific geographical configurations or local festivals, legends, or superstitions, and develop stories on their own” (p. 47). When students are allowed to take learning into their own hands in this manner, they are no longer passive learners but are active participants in an engaging and vital learning process. It is at this point that students can begin to understand history’s relevance to their lives.

While a great deal of research has been conducted concerning how children learn in general (Gardner, 1983), research is currently almost non-existent in the specific area of children’s learning of history and the value they place on that learning. In fact, according to VanSledright and Brophy (1992), while many of the studies conducted in the area of social studies and history

provide background for studying many elementary social studies topics, they do not directly address the learning of history, nor have those in the field of social studies curriculum and teaching research developed much information about children’s knowledge and thinking about U.S. history (p. 838).

According to Downey and Levstik (1991) as referred to in VanSledright and Brophy, “information about children’s historical knowledge and thinking is badly needed as a research base to support efforts to teach history for understanding and use of knowledge” (p. 838). This study is an effort to assist in that research.

In order to study the benefits of storytelling in enhancing student learning and appreciation of history, storytelling must first be defined. According to Baker and Green (1987), storytelling is the oral interpretation of stories, be they traditional, literary, or

personal experience, each told naturally with all the flavor and language of its own particular tradition. In 1992, VanSledright and Brophy defined storytelling as “narrative reinterpretation” (p. 846). In addition, storytelling is an art form that all human beings hold in common, in all places, and in all times, and is used in many ways; to educate, inspire, and entertain; to record historical events; and to transmit cultural customs (Brand & Donato, 2002). For the purpose of this study, we shall define historical storytelling as oral narrative reinterpretation of historical events. At this point it seems appropriate to stress the crucial element of orality in teaching and learning. In his book, *Orality and Literacy*, Ong (2002) states that knowledge is born of human experience, and in order to process that experience verbally, one often places the events of human experience into the natural flow in which they occur. Often the best way to deal with that flow of events is a story line. Ong continues by saying that while narrative exists in all cultures, it is most central in oral cultures to the management of information. In primary oral cultures, that is, cultures completely unfamiliar with writing (i.e., existing prior to the invention of the printed symbol), knowledge was managed through the use of stories of human action, or narratives. Furthering this idea of story line and narrative, Ong relates that oral narratives are structured in a way that allows for easy retrieval of information. In primary oral cultures, narratives serve as storehouses of history. Although students today live and participate in a literate culture rather than an oral culture, oral narrative (or storytelling) still facilitates easy retrieval of information because of aforementioned affective elements. In fact, consider this statement by Brand and Donato when thinking about reading from a history text versus hearing a story about the same subject matter:

Storytelling, as compared to story reading, is often more dramatic, more colorful, and more active. As a result, students are more likely to tune in to a story well told than a story well read. This storytelling attention advantage is especially true for children who have short attention spans and for those with limited visual and /or auditory skills. With its use of large and bold visuals and its expressive and action-oriented sequence of events storytelling elicits and sustains attention (p. 10).

Remembering our definition of historical storytelling then, keep in mind that narrative reinterpretations can begin forming in one's mind after reading or hearing about any event. Again, for the purpose of this study, let us consider that narrative reinterpretations can be derived from any historical literature. Significant research has shown the benefits of using a literature-based curriculum in elementary and middle grades historical instruction. Levstik (1986) states that students involved in literature-based historical curriculums are active learners. By using the techniques of naturalistic inquiry--participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and daily observation logs--Levstik studied the relationship between narrative and historical understanding in a class of sixth-graders where the teacher allowed students to take part in curriculum selection. Based on the students' expressed need to know and their desire to explore various historical narratives in order to discover more about the human experience, Levstik discovered that as "agents of their own learning" (p. 16), students took a more active role in that learning. In fact, when students were given the opportunity to select their subject matter rather than forced to follow a chronological text-book driven curriculum, Levstik noticed that student interest was triggered and driven by their own

need to know more about given events, personal connection to the subject matter, and also peer and teacher influence or suggestion about the material in question. In 1992, VanSledright and Brophy agreed that student interest is often captured as well as fostered by historical narratives because students are able to identify in some fashion with the characters found in the narrative accounts. To demonstrate this idea, consider the study conducted by Beck, McKeown, Sinatra, and Loxterman (1991) in which a traditional expository text was compared with a revised text that related historical facts in narrative form. After interviewing groups of students who were asked to read the texts, an analysis of prototypical responses was performed. Beck et al. concluded that students were able to recall and explain more information correctly from the revised text than from the traditional expository text, showing that students gained a deeper understanding of the historical information presented in the revised text than in the more conventional text.

Following Beck et al. (1991), McGowan, Erickson, and Neufeld (1996) point out that in some fifth-grade classrooms, there is an increasing availability of supplemental texts such as historical fiction, biographies, and other literature-based accounts of history which are contributing to student interest, understanding, and appreciation for history. In addition, many alternative texts are surfacing which contain rather compelling first-person accounts and convincing narratives in contrast to expository texts (Freeman & Levstik, 1988). This introduction of narrative text into historical instruction has some educators concerned that students will begin developing a romanticized and rather inaccurate view of history (Beck et al.). However, as pointed out by VanSledright and Kelly (1998), these narratives contain within them the power to “demystify history” and bring students of all ages together with the real people of past eras (p. 261). Through

narrative reinterpretation (that is, storytelling) students are able to truly look into the past, and through the re-telling of those accounts, live vicariously in seemingly untouchable times. I would argue that when storytelling is used to teach history in the elementary grades, students develop a greater enjoyment and appreciation for history. It is the intention of this work to test this argument in a field-based study.

Story Selection and Design

The stories that were selected for this study were chosen primarily on the basis of their relevance to the material presented in the textbooks used in the participating classrooms. As previously mentioned, the 4th and 5th grade history textbooks used at Austin Elementary School are published by MacMillan/McGraw Hill. During my time with the 4th grade students, I covered a range of material from the first three units encompassing the settlement of the western hemisphere, the creation of the State of Indiana as well as our nation, and the challenge and opportunity brought about by the Civil War. During my time with the 5th grade students I covered material from the first two units encompassing the time of the first Americans and also the meeting of several worlds during the age of exploration and settlement of North America. The scope and sequence of the first three units in the 4th grade book, *Indiana*, is listed in Appendix E while the scope and sequence of the first two units in the 5th grade book, *Our Nation*, is listed in Appendix F. These are the areas of history presented by the teachers in each of the classes. My role as storyteller in the experimental (non-conventional) classes was to present stories to the students that both mirrored and enhanced the textbook material. The

following section provides a glimpse into the discovery and or crafting of those stories as well as an inventory of stories that were told.

For several weeks prior to conducting my field-study, I collected stories and relevant information pertaining to the different social studies units mentioned above. Several sources upon which I drew came from public libraries in surrounding counties. I read numerous works of historical fiction as well as non-fiction accounts of the topics highlighted in each unit. I also found a wealth of stories and information in *Cobblestone*, a magazine of U.S. history specifically written and designed to correspond with curriculum standards and targets elementary students as its intended readership. *Many Voices: True Tales from America's Past*, a 1995 publication of the National Storytelling Association, proved a valuable resource for pertinent stories as well. Finally, I drew from a bank of stories in my own body of text as a result of enjoying an undergraduate-level history class in which the professor taught primarily by telling stories. After locating and drawing from these many resources, the time came to craft the stories so that my presentation of them would differ from the material offered in the textbook.

The conventional textbook approach typically offers a very brief and usually bone-dry synopsis of a significant person or event in a few short paragraphs. From these paragraphs students are expected to know and remember how the targeted event or person affected or changed history. Instead, students often find themselves feeling disconnected and lost in the details, remembering very little of what they read. In an effort to promote retention and interest and in order to help students find a connection, the stories I told ranged in complexity from complete narratives following a specific character throughout the story to imaginative reconstructive role plays in which students

helped create the story as it unfolded. At other times, I presented small story snippets to pique student interest about various events occurring simultaneously in different regions of the country, each time providing students with resource lists indicating where they might find additional stories relevant to the subject matter at hand. By providing students with a list of accessible resources, I presented an opportunity for them to take learning into their own hands at a deeper level than that to which they are accustomed during a typical oral reading or lecture-based session. For a complete list of the stories told in the non-conventional classes, please see Appendix G. Following is but one example. I told this story during the 4th grade unit entitled, “Creating a State and Nation.” The story, *The Pigeon Roost Massacre*, details an event that occurred in Scott County, Indiana at the same time that the War of 1812 was taking place. At the time I told this story, we had already spent some time talking about the tensions between the Indians and the settlers in the Northwest Territory. At this point, I wanted to tell the story of the Pigeon Roost Massacre for several reasons: 1) the site of the massacre and now historical monument is located approximately 8 miles from where the students were sitting at that moment; 2) I realized that most of the students were unaware of this event although it happened so close to where they live; and 3) because of the proximity of the physical location, I believed that students would want to follow up on this story by visiting the site, thus allowing them to touch a piece of their own history. The story of the Pigeon Roost Massacre can be found in Appendix H.

The Research Problem

The purpose of this study was to analyze and compare student attitudes toward learning history. In order to accomplish this purpose, the researcher introduced an instructional method of teaching history to 4th and 5th grade students very different than the conventional instructional methods used in many classrooms today, in order to determine if a change in students' attitudes toward learning history could be produced. At the conclusion of the study the researcher will determine which methodology proved most effective. The instructional method developed incorporated the telling of stories pertinent to the material being introduced during the students' history lessons. Half of the time the researcher acted as storyteller, and the other half of the time the students were given the opportunity to serve as storyteller. This method is very different to the conventional method of lecture and note-taking coupled with a round-robin style of reading the chapter aloud.

In order to determine a change in students' attitudes, a survey and questionnaire which measured students' attitudes had to be developed. The survey measured students' attitudes on a 4-point Likert scale which also offered an open-ended section in which students were encouraged to share their reasoning for their given answer.

Finally, in an attempt to determine whether or not students' attitudes hold any bearing on their test scores, each student's test scores were collected and analyzed.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the study's analysis:

- 1) History affinity will increase from the pretest to the posttest for the children in the storytelling group and it will not change significantly for the children in the conventional classroom.
- 2) Assessment scores will increase for students who are in the storytelling group and will not change for students who are in the conventional classroom group.

Delimitations

The data collected in this study was gathered from only one elementary school in a rather small, rural town in Southern Indiana. The results of this study may (or may not) be highly generalizable to other regions which are comprised of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures.

The school district in which this study was conducted is one with a significant amount of transient students. Because students move in and out of the district rather frequently, some of the students who participated in the study left the district before the completion of the study. Given the transient nature of the students in this district, there were also students who participated in the final portion of the study who were not included in the beginning of the study.

While the total number of 4th and 5th grade students intended for the study was 228, some of these students were unable to participate in the testing measures given the fact that they were not present in their regular classrooms during their history lessons. Some of these students were not present because they were involved in special education classes at the time history was being taught.

The storyteller in this study who presented the majority of the lesson material is also a teacher in the school where the study was conducted. Some of the students participating in the study were former students of that teacher/storyteller. Although anonymity was maintained in the data collection, the former student/teacher relationship may have affected students' attitudes during their participation in the study.

In order to maintain consistency between the control group and the experimental group, the stories selected for presentation needed to align with the material being covered by all classes involved in this study. The history curriculum chosen by Scott County School District 1 is published by MacMillan/McGraw Hill, and, therefore, the scope and sequence provided in the classroom text was the driving factor in materials chosen by this researcher.

While this study did not span the entire history curriculum throughout the elementary school, my assumption is that it can be extended to attitudes about history beyond fourth and fifth grade. This study could be repeated with any grade level as long as the surveys, questionnaires, and unit assessments were worded appropriately.

Definition of Terms

Historical storytelling is the oral narrative reinterpretation of historical events.

Conventional historical pedagogy consists of instructional methods that include lecturing and note-taking, round-robin oral reading by students, and the completion of question and answer activities generated by textbook companies.

Storytelling pedagogy consists of non-conventional instructional methods that include, but are not limited to, the telling of and listening to stories pertinent to the

subject material at hand. These stories may be presented by the teacher or by the students, and can, in fact, also be listened to by way of recordings. When the stories are told by the students, these instructional methods can also include a significant amount of student-selected material in order to keep interest levels at a maximum. In this manner, the storytelling pedagogy provides for a break from the textbook in an effort to bring history to life.

Control Group refers to the group of students in the classes receiving conventional historical instruction consistent with conventional historical pedagogy.

T1, 2, 3, 4 is the designation used to indicate classes in the control group.

Experimental Group refers to the group of students in the classes receiving non-conventional historical instruction consistent with storytelling pedagogy.

N1, 2, 3, 4 is the designation used to indicate classes in the experimental group.

Assumptions

The results of this study are based upon the assumption that the students were honest in their responses to the survey and questionnaire. It was also assumed that equal variance existed between the 4 categories on the Likert Scale allowing for consistent data analysis.

Importance of the Study

Just prior to beginning this study, I commented to one of the teachers in the control group that I wanted to conduct the study because I believe there is a better way to teach history than simply lecturing to students or having them read from the book. I told

the teacher that I thought there had to be a way to get students excited about what they were learning. I also mentioned that I thought the use of stories would have a significant impact on students' interest level toward the material being presented. The teacher commented back to me, "There has to be a better way; there just has to be." Ironically, just after completing the study, I attended a workshop entitled, "Making History Come Alive." At the workshop, I met a fifth-grade teacher who said in her opening remarks, "I hate hearing students say they hate history because they've had boring teachers." Both of these individuals left me with the impression I am not alone in searching for a better way. On the contrary, there is a widespread desire to find invigorating teaching methods, so that students walk away from their classes feeling like they have just stepped out of history rather than merely having heard about it.

Currently, history (or social studies) is not included on annual state standardized achievement tests. Periodically, however, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses student performance in U.S. history in grades 4, 8, and 12. This assessment was last given in 2001 and was a continuation of the first ever U.S. history assessment administered in 1994. In 2010 the NAEP is scheduled to once again include the U.S. history assessment for grades 4, 8, and 12. The NAEP is the assessment tool used to determine the Nation's Report Card. Because this assessment is approaching, there are some states that are beginning to take another look at their annual standardized assessment tests and determine how and when to include history in their testing modules so that students are adequately prepared for 2010.

Because this study asserts that there are, in fact, better methods of teaching history than those commonly used by most educators, it has the potential to re-direct

instruction in school districts across the nation. In an effort to improve student learning and interest in the area of history and social studies, the State of Indiana is reworking its budget to include teacher in-services in the area of better historical instruction. Because the statistical data generated by this study strongly suggests that alternative teaching methods enhance student learning, it speaks to the necessity of additional teacher training in this area, not only for the State of Indiana, but for all states nation-wide.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHOD AND RESULTS

Method

Timeline

The research for this study was conducted over a 6-week period beginning on November 28, 2005, and culminating on January 17, 2006. Because this study involved the participation of minors, prior to beginning the actual research, 2 weeks were devoted to distributing and collecting Student Assent Forms (see Appendix A) from the students who would be participating in the study and Informed Consent Documents (see Appendix B) from their parents or guardians.

Participants

Four classes each of fourth and fifth-grade students participated in this study. Collectively, the classes contained 228 students. The student population in all eight classes consisted predominantly of white students who were from a lower socio-economic status, as defined by the percentage of students receiving textbook assistance and free or reduced lunches. Within each class there were students of all reading ability levels, most reading on or below grade-level. These classes were chosen due to availability and accessibility to this researcher. All eight teachers exhibited similar teaching methods and all were willing and eager to participate in the study. Students in Classes N1, 2, 3, and 4 received the storytelling instruction, making this group of students the experimental group, while Classes T1, 2, 3, and 4 were used as the control group,

receiving conventional instruction. These groupings were assigned administratively by this researcher simply because of limitations of personnel and time. The number of students in the experimental group totaled 79 while the number of students in the control group totaled 72. From the 228 students, 77 students were not included in the testing measures because they were either special education students not in class at the time of historical instruction or they were transient students moving either into or out of the school district during the time the study was being completed.

Procedure

The test site for this study was an elementary school in Austin, Indiana, a rural Southern Indiana town. Austin Elementary School is the only elementary school in Scott County School District 1. At the time of this study 750 students were enrolled in the school. There were 4 classes of 4th grade students and 4 classes of 5th grade students in the school at the time this research was conducted.

This study took place over the course of 6 weeks, encompassing two separate units found in the scope and sequence of the fourth and fifth-grade social studies books at Austin Elementary School, published by MacMillan/McGraw Hill. Prior to the beginning of the study, the eight classes involved were separated into two groups; those receiving non-conventional instruction, or the experimental group, and those receiving conventional instruction, also referred to as the control group.

Classes N1, 2, 3, and 4 received non-conventional classroom instruction in the form of storytelling and storytelling activities. In this group were two 4th grade classes (N1 and N2) and two 5th grade classes (N3 and N4). In this, the experimental group, the

lessons for each day were presented in oral story format either by this researcher, the regular classroom teacher, or selected students. When students were required to present in story format, they were given ample time to research and prepare for the assignment using appropriate supplemental texts and internet sites.

Classes T1, 2, 3, and 4 received the conventional textbook reading and lecture format, taking notes, and completing book assignments. This is the baseline method of conventional history pedagogy (Shaver, Davis, & Helburn 1979). In this group were the remaining two 4th grade classes (T1 and T2) as well as the remaining two 5th grade classes (T3 and T4). The results from Classes N1, 2, 3, and 4 were measured against Classes T1, 2, 3, and 4 as the control group.

Starting on November 28, 2005, I spent 2 days a week in each of the experimental classrooms. On Mondays and Wednesdays I spent 30 minutes each in classes T1 and T3. On Tuesdays and Thursdays I spent 30 minutes each in classes T2 and T4. In all four classes, I served as the primary storyteller for the first 3 weeks, presenting stories relevant to the material being taught in the control group classrooms. During that time, I presented stories, answered student questions about the material, and provided opportunities for students to respond in writing or through role-playing activities to the stories they were hearing. I took notes concerning my observations of the students at the end of each instructional period. During the last 3 weeks of the study I shifted my role from primary storyteller to story listener and began giving the role of storyteller to students who were willing to volunteer for it. At this point, I began providing resources for the students so that they might begin finding their own stories to present during our time together.

For the 3 days each week that I was not in the classroom, the regular classroom teacher was responsible for the lesson material. During the first half of the 6-week period, the teachers for the experimental classes spent their instructional time in one of four ways; 1) allowing students to discuss and dig further into the story I had presented on the previous day, 2) extending the story I had presented and concluding with another story just as pertinent, 3) allowing students to complete a writing or role-playing assignment that I had given them the day before, or 4) administering the assessments. During the last half of the 6-week period, students were given 3 days to research, craft, and rehearse their own stories in order to present them on the days I was in the classroom or were asked to complete the assessments.

At the conclusion of the 6-week period, students were asked to complete the History Affinity survey and questionnaire just as was done at the beginning. I brought the evaluation instruments into the classrooms for both the pre- and posttest administrations of the surveys and questionnaires. After explaining the instructions they were to follow, I gave students a chance to ask questions about what was expected of them. Once all questions were answered, I reminded students that they were not to put their names on their surveys or questionnaires and then left the room. I did so in order to remove any unnecessary pressure students might experience caused by my presence. Once the students were finished, the regular classroom teacher collected the surveys and questionnaires, placed them in an envelope, and returned them to me.

In the control group classrooms, I visited only twice. The first time I visited was to administer the pretest History Affinity surveys and questionnaires in the same fashion described above. The second and final time I visited was to administer the posttest

History Affinity surveys and questionnaires. The surveys and questionnaires were returned to me in the same manner described above.

Throughout the course of this study, the independent variable was the teaching method used in the classes. In the control group the teaching method consisted of the conventional historical pedagogy including lecturing, note-taking, and round-robin oral reading while in the experimental group the teaching method, or storytelling pedagogy, consisted of storytelling about chapter content by both teacher/researcher and students. The dependent variables were the students' attitudes toward learning history and toward the relevance of history to their own lives as well as the assessment scores collected at the end of each chapter.

Measures

History Affinity. History affinity was measured using a single-item History Affinity scale that was developed for this project. The History Affinity scale (see Appendix C) measures students' attitudes toward history. Students from each class were asked to rate how much they enjoy/like history on a 4-point Likert scale (1 – I have a strong dislike of history; 2 – I have a mild dislike of history; 3 – I somewhat like history; 4 – I like history a lot). Students were also asked to briefly tell why they felt the way they indicated on the survey. In addition, students were asked to comment briefly on whether or not they think that what happened in the past has relevance to their life now (see Appendix D). These questionnaires and surveys were given before the experiment began and again at its completion. Responses were anonymously coded, and this fact was clearly conveyed to students in order to assure them that their answers would in no way

affect their grades. The mean score for this item on the pre-test was $M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.15$; the mean score for the post-test was $M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.13$.

Assessment Scores. Students were also required to complete the unit assessments at the end of each unit. Assessment scores were compared between the two groups, experimental and control, to determine whether or not students were able to comprehend more information from one or the other teaching methods. For the purpose of further analyses, the students' scores on the first five chapter tests were averaged in order to compute an overall assessment score. The mean for the overall assessment score was $M = 85.9$, $SD = 13.15$.

Results

Hypothesis #1

In order to test the first hypothesis about history affinity, a paired-samples t test was conducted on both the experimental and the control groups. A paired-samples t test compares each student's pre- and posttest scores to determine a change between the two. The results of these analyses revealed that there was a significant change in history affinity from the pretest to the posttest for students in the experimental group, $t(78) = 6.807$, $p < .001$. There was no significant change in history affinity from the pretest to the posttest for students in the control group, $t(71) = .528$, $p < .599$. For the control group, the mean score for this item on the pretest was $m = 2.58$, $SD = 1.21$ while the mean score for the posttest was $m = 2.50$, $SD = 1.12$, a difference of .08 which translates into virtually no change in history affinity whatsoever. This means that for the students who received the conventional history instruction, as a group, attitudes did not change enough to even

mention. For the experimental group, the mean score for this item on the pretest was $m = 2.51$, $SD = .90$ while the mean score for the posttest was $m = 3.43$, $SD = .90$, a difference of .924 which translates into a positive increase of nearly one whole category on the affinity scale. This means that for students who received the non-conventional history instruction (i.e., storytelling), as a group, attitudes toward history increased significantly in a positive direction.

Hypothesis #2

In order to test the second hypothesis, an independent samples t test was computed in order to test for a mean-level difference between the two groups (i.e., experimental and control) on the overall assessment scores. An independent samples t test compares the mean scores of the group as a whole to determine a change in those scores which can be attributed to something other than chance. In order to establish that this change did not occur by chance, the analysis must reveal that $p \leq .05$. The results of the t test revealed that the hypothesis was not supported $t(188) = 1.602$, $p = .111$; there was not a statistically significant change in students' assessment scores throughout the course of the study. For the control group, the mean score for the overall assessment scores was $m = 84.37$, $SD = 14.21$. For the experimental group, the mean score for the overall assessment scores was $m = 87.41$, $SD = 11.88$, a difference of 3.04. This implies that for these two groups, although the average score for the students in the experimental group appears slightly higher than the average score for the students in the control group, because the assessments were not performed in identical fashion (two classes in the control group were allowed to use their textbooks when completing the assessments), this

difference is invalid. Had the assessments been conducted the same in each class, and had the instructional intervention been sustained over a longer period of time, I believe the difference would have been significant enough to support the hypothesis that students who receive historical instruction in the form of storytelling score higher on assessment tests than students who receive conventional historical instruction.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS AND INDICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Significance of Stories

When storytelling was used to teach history in the elementary grades, history affinity increased; students developed a greater enjoyment and appreciation for history. Qualitative responses from students in the experimental group indicate a greater enjoyment and personal attachment to the events that happened in the past after having been subjected to the storytelling pedagogy. For instance, consider the following statement made by Cindy², a 4th grade student, at the completion of this study:

I like history a lot because every since Mrs. Watts came in and started telling stories I started taking history seriously. The reason I like history is because there is so much to learn and it is like it never stops. And now when people tell stories about history I take more interest in hearing about the story. I believe that if Mrs. Watts wouldn't have come in then I would still at this very moment still dislike history. I guess it helps me understand things that happened way way back then and I guess it helps other people too. Maybe by listening really hard I can catch things that other people can't. I guess if you really like history then there is nothing too much to learn about history.

Michelle, another student who indicated that she had a strong dislike of history at the beginning of the study had this to say prior to receiving the storytelling instruction:

I don't like history because it doesn't mean anything to me. Plus it is really boring. Sometimes I almost want to fall asleep in the middle of history.

² All student names have been fictionalized in order to maintain confidentiality.

Sometimes I hate history so much that it makes me wish there was no such thing as history. I hate history so much. I don't think history relates to my family.

History just makes my life worse. It makes life difficult. I just hate history. I don't want to be around it because it is so boring. I hate history.

At the end of the study, however, Michelle's response on the History Affinity scale indicated that she liked history a lot. Notice her comments here:

The reason that I like history is because I didn't know how much history means to me. The real reason I chose that statement [4 – I like history a lot] is because history is so fun. It's so fun to hear about the stories that are in the book and listen to Mrs. Watts tell other stories about what we learn. History is so fun.

One of the most telling comments for me came from Brian, another 4th grader. In his initial responses at the beginning of the study Brian made it very clear how he felt about history:

I hate reading about the past. I hate learning about history. History is stupid. What does it have to do with me? It will always be stupid. Even when I am an adult it will still be stupid. That is how I feel. History is in the past. Why do I have to learn it? If it is already in the past leave it alone. I don't want to learn it. Neither does anyone else want to learn it. Why should I learn it?

By the end of the study, the stories had made a difference for Brian. These were his final comments at the end of the study:

I like history a lot. At first I hated it because all it meant to me was trash. But now I understand what it is. It is people who went through difficult times just like we are today. Every time Mrs. Watts comes in the classroom I listen to every word

she says. It relates to me because some of the stuff that happened back then happens now and can help us now. Maybe history is about learning from mistakes people made in the past. If we do that our lives could be better than theirs.

The qualitative results certainly support the quantitative data obtained when testing Hypothesis #1; student affinity did increase for students in the storytelling group.

Concerning Hypothesis #2 which stated that assessment scores would increase for students in the storytelling group and would not change for students in the conventional instruction group, the data did not support this hypothesis. However, it is the opinion of this researcher that statistical significance was not reached because some of the students were allowed to use their textbooks when completing the assessments and others were not. I also believe that had the instructional intervention been sustained over a longer period of time, the difference in mean scores between the two groups would have been significant enough to support the hypothesis that students who receive historical instruction in the form of storytelling score higher on assessment tests than students who receive conventional historical instruction. Interestingly enough, the teachers who allowed their students to use textbooks on the assessments did not volunteer such information. I found out about this infraction while combing through the qualitative results given by the students regarding their attitudes toward learning history. It is my opinion that the participating teachers acted in this manner so as to level the playing field for their students.

Another aspect of the study that struck me as interesting was one of the teacher's responses to the storytelling methodology. Mr. Hart, a teacher in one of the experimental classes, has never used any form of storytelling to teach history to his classes before

agreeing to participate in this study. When I asked him about how he had previously taught history, he responded by saying that he, like many other teachers, asked students to take turns reading aloud from their textbooks and then he would summarize what had been read. During the second half of the study when the students were serving as storytellers, Mr. Hart gave his students classroom time to draw sources from the internet as well as from the classroom library in order to prepare for their stories. I appreciated Mr. Hart's willingness to go along with what I was trying to accomplish with his students, but I assumed that once the study was completed, Mr. Hart would revert back to his previous teaching style. My assumptions were wrong. One afternoon following the study's completion, I was walking down the 4th and 5th grade hallway. As I passed Mr. Hart's room, I noticed a familiar activity during this time that was slated for history. I stepped into Mr. Hart's room and found some of the students in small groups, others looking through books in the classroom library, and still others researching on the internet. I asked Mr. Hart what his students were doing (although it appeared obvious to me), and he said they were either researching significant people from the Civil War or they were telling stories about significant people from the Civil War to their small groups. I was nearly speechless. In my enthusiasm, I listened briefly to the students telling stories and offered encouragement to those on the computers. Later that afternoon, once the students had gone home, I returned to Mr. Hart's class to ask him if he always approached the Civil War that way. He informed me that he had never done anything like that with any of his classes before, but because the students were so excited about the stories we were sharing and because they wanted to continue learning in the same fashion I had shared with them, he decided to give it a try. Mr. Hart said that he was so pleased

with the effort and attention he was getting out of his normally unruly class; he intended to continue teaching history by letting the students be responsible for the material in this manner. He also said, “This whole storytelling thing has made me want to tell stories too. This could be the start of something big for my history lessons.”

Mr. Hart is not alone. Teachers in classrooms all across the United States are continually exploring alternative approaches to conventional teaching methods and pairing them with conventional teaching methods in order to better educate their students. In-service opportunities abound limitlessly as administrators seek training for their staff so that all might better understand the latest educational reform efforts. In a sweeping trend across the United States, teachers and administrators alike are looking for ways to align curriculum with educational standards while at the same time provide meaningful and relevant instruction to students. When used in the classroom, storytelling allows teachers to meet educational standards by providing meaningful and relevant instruction across the curriculum.

As students study the world around them, educators hope to teach them how to live civilly with others sharing their world, both near and far. Something of the cultures that make up that world should be learned if students are to grasp a sense of where they stand in relation to all others. The effort to assimilate this information is referred to as the social studies. When exploring the social studies, students begin learning how to develop their own character traits while at the same time learning about the history and geography of the world around them. For some students, history (social studies) is nothing more than the study of untouchable people involved in near forgotten events that happened in a time too long ago to remember. How, then, can the teacher spark an interest in history within

those students? Through the telling of stories. Storytelling teachers present history as a series of fascinating narrative tales, rather than a collection of dates and periods.

Storytelling teachers seem to know the story of humankind's inner development as well as that of his outer. When a teacher uses myth, legend, and epic to accentuate the factual recitals of actual events, great things can happen in a student's mind. If the teacher is willing to teach in story, there is nothing found in history that he/she cannot make interesting to students. Likewise, when the pages of a history book come to life in front of students, they cannot help but pay attention. In fact, once the story of history comes alive before them, the students become not only spectators, but also participants in it as well (Cather, 1926).

The history of the world is teeming with stories to be told. If the teacher listens closely enough, the actors of the actual dramas (yes, actors, not re-enactors), will speak just loudly enough to script the stories themselves (Hicks, 2004). Once a teacher teaches history in this manner, some students will be forever transformed, wishing to be taken back in time day after day. When students allow themselves to be transported to another place, it is possible for the teacher to use stories in order to present students with additional information about the geography of the place they are visiting through the telling of the historical story itself. At other times it might be necessary to introduce students to a land without first connecting it to an event. In those cases, rather than pulling down the classroom map and filling sleeping minds with what seems to them, trivial information, stories indigenous to the lands the students are studying may prove more effective. For example, when introducing students to Asia, the teacher might find it helpful, once the area has been located, to tell folktales and legends or myths from those

countries. By telling indigenous stories, the teacher can again, in narrative form, spark an otherwise unknown interest in her students. Storytelling sparks an interest that, in turn, lights a fire. Once the fire sets ablaze, it is hard to stop. At this point, students may be given the opportunity to find stories for themselves from periods or characters of interest to them as well as an opportunity to tell those stories to their classmates. This process of the student becoming the storyteller has profound implications for all aspects of learning no matter what the subject area.

Suggestions for Further Study

Very few quantitative studies exist showing the benefits of using storytelling in the classroom. As has been demonstrated in this study, storytelling carries within itself the ability to enhance students' attitude toward the subject material they are learning. From this it would appear that more quantitative studies concerning student attitude and storytelling in any of the curriculum content areas would be beneficial not only to storytellers but also to educators as well. It is important to find teaching methods that are both interesting and effective when presenting material students feel to be uninteresting or exceptionally difficult to learn.

While this study reveals a significant increase in students' attitudes toward history, the population of the study was small. In order to extrapolate these findings to a broader population, it would be beneficial to study a larger student sample over a longer period of time. By doing this, one could determine the long-term effects storytelling may have on not only attitude but also comprehension, language acquisition, cultural awareness, and communication skills. All of these areas are important skills across the

curriculum as students move through elementary school and into middle and high school.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Child Assent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: Listening to Stories During History Instruction

This form may have some words that you do not know. Please ask someone to explain any words that you do not know. You may take home a copy of this form to think about and talk to your parents about before you decide if you want to be in this study.

What is this study about? The purpose of this study is to learn about 4th and 5th grade students' attitudes toward history. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a student in the 4th or 5th grade and are learning about history in your class.

What will happen to me if I choose to be in this study? During the next six weeks you may get to listen to stories about your history or social studies lessons. A storyteller may come into your class and tell stories about what you are studying in history. Your teacher will be in the room during the stories, and if you have any questions about the stories you might hear, you can ask the storyteller or your teacher to explain them to you.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this form. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what will happen to you.

What might happen if I am in this study? I do not expect that anything I do will involve any risk to you. You might feel bored during some of the stories, or you might find that you are enjoying the stories very much.

What do I get if I am in this study? If you are in this study, you may find that you like hearing stories about history. You might also find that you want to hear more stories about history. You might even find that you want to look for or write your own stories about what you are learning in history.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT

DATE

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

DATE

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

DATE

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Document

This paper is an Informed Consent Document. It will explain about your child being a research subject in an experiment. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you want your child involved.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research study is to explore and compare the attitudes that 4th and 5th grade students have about learning history. The study will go on in all of the 4th and 5th grade classes at Austin Elementary. It will involve two different ways of teaching. In half of the classrooms the teachers will teach like they do every day. In the other half of the classrooms, the students will listen to stories about things that have happened in the past and will also get to tell some stories of their own. At the end of the study I want to see which teaching style is better for the students. As a teacher I notice that students usually struggle when they have to learn about the past. When students struggle, they have problems learning. When teachers see students having problems they should find different ways to teach so students will not have such a hard time. When teachers tell stories (storytelling) to teach about history, I think students can find interesting people and happenings that they want to learn about. I think that when teachers use storytelling in their teaching, students enjoy learning about history and might even start to like history. This is what I hope to explore in this study.

DURATION

This study will take six weeks to finish.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Your child may have nervous feelings about talking in front of classmates. It is important for you to know that the grade your child gets in history will not change whether or not he/she is involved in this study.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS/COMPENSATION

If your child is involved in this study, there are a lot of benefits he/she may experience. Your child might like history more than he/she does now. If your child is involved in this study, he/she might understand history better than he/she does now. If your child is involved in this study, he/she might be able to think more clearly about important matters than ever before. Finally, if your child is involved in this study, he/she might feel more comfortable talking in front of his/her friends than he/she does now.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

You can call Julia Watts at 812/497-0155 or Joseph Sobol at 423/439-7863 if you have any questions or problems. If you have any questions about the rights that your child has as a research subject you can call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6055.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that my study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at East Tennessee State University for at least 10 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming me as a subject. Although my rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, and research related personnel from the ETSU Department of Curriculum & Instruction have access to the study records. My records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

The way this study will be carried out has been explained to me. The risks and benefits that my child might experience have also been explained to me. All of these things are known and available. I understand what my child's involvement involves. I also understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw my child from the study at any time, without my child being punished or penalized. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy has been given to me.

My child's study record will be kept in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as talked about above.

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER DATE

SIGNATURE OF PARENTS OR GUARDIAN DATE

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR DATE

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS DATE

APPENDIX C

History Affinity Scale

HOW WELL DO YOU LIKE HISTORY?

Please use the following scale to indicate how well you like history. After circling the one statement that best describes how you feel about history, please use the lines below to tell why you chose that statement. Remember, you do not have to put your name on this survey, and your answers will not have any affect on your grade.

1 – I have a strong dislike of history.

2 – I have a mild dislike of history.

3 – I somewhat like history.

4 – I like history a lot.

APPENDIX E

4th Grade Scope & Sequence, Units 1 - 3

Unit 1 – Settling the Western Hemisphere

Chapter 1 – People in the Western Hemisphere

Lesson 1 – People Come to the Americas

Lesson 2 – Prehistoric Native Americans

Lesson 3 – Native American Life After 1700

Lesson 4 – Other Native Americans

Chapter 2 – Europeans in the Americas

Lesson 1 – The Arrival of Europeans

Lesson 2 – Europeans in the Middle West

Lesson 3 – French Forts

Lesson 4 – The World Around Us: The History of Colonization

Unit 2 – Creating a State and a Nation

Chapter 3 – The American Revolution

Lesson 1 – The French and Indian War

Lesson 2 – The American Revolution

Lesson 3 – Indiana in the Revolution

Lesson 4 – The Northwest Territory

Lesson 5 – The World Around Us: Independence

Chapter 4 – Building a New State

Lesson 1 – Forming a Government

Lesson 2 – Native Americans Fight for Their Land

Lesson 3 – Statehood

Lesson 4 – Pioneer Living

Lesson 5 – Life in Harmony

Lesson 6 – Indiana on the Move

Unit 3 – Challenge and Opportunity

Chapter 5 – The Civil War

Lesson 1 – Slavery in Indiana

Lesson 2 – The Civil War in Indiana

Lesson 3 – After the War

Lesson 4 – The World Around Us: Slavery in Brazil

Chapter 6 – New Growth, New Challenges

Lesson 1 – Farm Life

Lesson 2 – The Growth of the Cities

Lesson 3 – Working After the War

APPENDIX F

5th Grade Scope & Sequence, Units 1 - 2

Unit 1 – The First Americans

Chapter 1 – Peopling the Western Hemisphere

Lesson 1 – Early Cultures

Lesson 2 – Aztec and Inca

Chapter 2 – Native Americans

Lesson 1 – Native Americans of the Southwest

Lesson 2 – Native Americans of the Woodlands

Lesson 3 – Native Americans of the Plains

Lesson 4 – Native Americans of the West

Unit 2 – Worlds Meet

Chapter 3 – The Age of Exploration

Lesson 1 – Europe and Marco Polo

Lesson 2 – The Expansion of Trade

Lesson 3 – The Search for New Trade Routes

Chapter 4 – Contact and Exploration

Lesson 1 – Europeans Come to the Americas

Lesson 2 – Explorers and Conquerors

Lesson 3 – The Spanish Build an Empire

Chapter 5 – The Settlement of North America

Lesson 1 – The Search for a Northwest Passage

Lesson 2 – Roanoke and Jamestown

Lesson 3 – The Plymouth Colony

APPENDIX G

List of Stories Used

4th Grade Stories

Prince Madoc and the White Indians
They Were Here First
LaSalle and the Indians
3 French Forts
Anne Hutchinson – Puritan Rebel
A Snowball Fight or The Boston
Massacre?
The Boston Tea Party
The French & Indian War
Pontiac's Revenge
We Can Stay No Longer – (Overview of
Why Colonists left England)
Colonial Life
George Rogers Clark
Tecumseh & The Prophet
Battle of Tippecanoe
Pigeon Roost Massacre
Log Cabin in the Woods
Becoming a State
Free Like the Wind
River of Ice
Levi and Catherine Coffin
Morgan's Raid

5th Grade Stories

The First Americans – Beringia
Prince Madoc and the White Indians
The Shaking Tent – Prophecies about the
Coming of White Man
How Coyote Spread the Stars
Indians of the Southwest
Anasazi
Hopi
Woodlands Indians
Indians of the Northeast
Hiawatha and the Iroquois
Confederacy
Plains Indians
Counting Coup
Using the Buffalo
When the Buffalo Disappeared
Indians of the Northwest Pacific Coast
Salmon Boy
Totem Poles
Adventures of Marco Polo
What Happened to John Cabot?
The Lost Colony
John Smith & Jamestown
The True Story of Pocahontas

APPENDIX H

The Pigeon Roost Massacre

By the fall of 1812, although Indiana was not yet a state, several settlers had made their way across the Ohio River and established homes for themselves in what we now know as Southern Indiana. When folks moved into this part of the state, they were often encouraged to do so at their own risk because Indians were known to attack in these parts. In fact, whenever a family moved into the area, they were told that if they were going to stay, they needed to build a blockhouse for themselves in order to protect themselves from the Indian attacks; the simple cabins that they were planning to build would not provide enough protection if the Indians decided to attack.

In 1809, just 3 years before 1812, there were 12 families who came from Kentucky and made their homes in a small settlement about 8 miles away from our school called Pigeon Roost. Even though there was a well-traveled Indian trail going right through Pigeon Roost when these families came into the area, they felt pretty safe so they built for themselves a scattered collection of small cabins and farms. One family did build a blockhouse, but most of the families chose to build cabins. The cabins that they built were very small and were built in a spot in the woods that the settlers had cleared so they could raise their crops and tend to their animals.

The 12 families who came to settle in Pigeon Roost were almost all related to each other. Believe it or not, 6 of the families even had the same last name. Their name was Collings. Some of you might even be related to them. Because almost everyone was related to each other, they lived like they were one great big family. They built their cabins pretty close to each other so that they could help each other out whenever they

needed to. Now, when I say that they built their cabins close together, I don't mean close together like we build our houses now. Today, we build our houses so close that sometimes we share a yard with our neighbor. Back then, most of the time, you might have to travel for a few miles before you even got to your neighbor's house. If your house was a quarter of a mile away from your neighbor's house, then you lived pretty close. That's how it was with the families who settled in at Pigeon Roost. Their cabins were all spread out over a few miles, but there was only about a quarter of a mile between each pair of cabins.

For the first 3 years, life was good for the settlers at Pigeon Roost most of the time. They had the same struggles that many pioneer families had back then, but they got along pretty well and were able to take care of themselves. They were even able to make friends with some of the Indians who traveled in and out of the area. These Indians were members of the Shawnee, the Delaware, and the Potawatomi tribes. Many times, these Indians would come through the Pigeon Roost area to hunt and even stay for awhile. That may seem a little strange to you, but it's true. They got along so well with some of the Indians that one of the men at Pigeon Roost taught some of the Indians how to shoot a gun and even had shooting contests with the Indians. His name was William E. Collings. The Indians gave him a nick-name though; they called him "The Long Knife." That's what they called the men that they thought were really amazing. Because the settlers at Pigeon Roost had never really had any trouble with the Indians who came through that area, when they were told to be aware of Indian attacks, they usually shrugged off the warnings. They were not afraid of the Indians. You can imagine their disbelief though

when, on September 3, 1812, a group of Shawnee Indians attacked the settlers at Pigeon Roost. From the stories I have read³, this is the way it happened that day.

Most of the grown men were gone to serve with the military for the War of 1812. That left the women and children at home along with just a handful of older men. The morning of September 3 was just like any other morning. The women were taking care of the younger children and the cabins while the older children were doing their chores. One of the women was on her way back home from visiting with a neighbor. No one suspected anything that morning. The first sign that something was wrong came when some of the cows belonging to one of the settlers came bellowing in from the field with arrows in their bellies. They had been attacked by Indians. As the Indians reached more of the cabins, they began killing more and more of the settlers. They set fire to the cabins, many of them still having women and children inside. They even killed the woman who was coming back from a visit with her neighbor. They got her before she got back home. One of the women saw what was happening and tried to escape with her seven children. The Indians caught and killed her and her children as well. William E. Collings, one of the older men in the settlement, the man the Indians called "The Long Knife," was at home visiting with an old friend, Captain Norris. They were sitting on Mr. Collings front porch eating watermelon when they noticed two Indians in war paint lurking in the bushes. Mr. Collings and Capt. Norris knew at that moment that the Indians were on the war path. Quickly, the two men grabbed their guns and jumped to action. They took the Indians by surprise and killed both of them. The two men noticed other Indians and began shooting at them as well. This went on for nearly an hour. The men were shooting at the

³ This account is adapted from Dr. Carl R. Bogardus' *The Pigeon Roost Massacre*, a 1998 publication of the Muscatatuck Press in Austin, Indiana.

Indians; the Indians were killing the women and children. By the time it was over, 24 people had been killed. It was horrible. The Indians had surprised the settlers with their sneak attack, and in just a few short hours they had killed 3 men, 5 women, and 16 children, including one baby whom they took from its dead mother before it was born. Probably the saddest part of this story, though, was when Mrs. Jane Biggs, one of the women at Pigeon Roost, took her baby and two other children and set out to look for their cow. As she came back to the clearing where her cabin was, she noticed the cabin was on fire and surrounded by Indians. She started to run back through the woods to go to her brother's house but on the way the Indians found her. She managed to hide in some bushes but when her baby started to cry, she took the corner of the blanket and covered the baby's face with it. Mrs. Biggs was so scared that the Indians would find them because of the crying that she pressed the blanket against the baby's face even harder. She didn't realize it until it was too late, but she had smothered her own child.

Some of the survivors made their way to the only block house in the area while another survivor, Jeremiah Payne, rode to nearby Charlestown to report what had just happened. Once Jeremiah got to Charlestown and told the Clark County Militia what had happened, 150 mounted riflemen were sent out to find the Indians. These men followed the trail of the Indians until they reached the Muscatatuck River where they had to give up the chase; the river was too far out of its banks because of recent heavy rainfall. The next morning, the men would return to the Pigeon Roost to do what could be done there. The remains of the burned out cabins needed to be gone through, but saddest of all, they had to bury the 24 victims of the Pigeon Roost Massacre.

The stories are not very clear on what caused the Indians to attack the settlers. Some say that one of the settlers had stolen a white elk from the Indians and they were very upset. Other stories say that the settlers had sold whiskey to the Indians and then cheated them out of furs while they were drunk. Unfortunately, we may never know what prompted the attack. What we do know is this; on the very same day of the Pigeon Roost Massacre, we know the Indians also attacked Fort Harrison in Terre Haute and the next day, they attacked Fort Wayne, on the Maumee River. Although both of these forts were defended successfully by Americans, this was a very hard time for Southern Indiana settlers hoping to see statehood very soon.

Today, if we travel about 3 miles south of Scottsburg on Highway 31, we can visit Pigeon Roost Memorial. There is a historical marker on the side of the road, and just up the hill and over the railroad tracks stands a large granite monument marking the site of the mass grave where all the victims of the Pigeon Roost Massacre were buried. Also over the hill is a cemetery. Many of the survivors of the Pigeon Roost Massacre were buried in that cemetery after they passed on. It is definitely worth visiting.

APPENDIX I

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