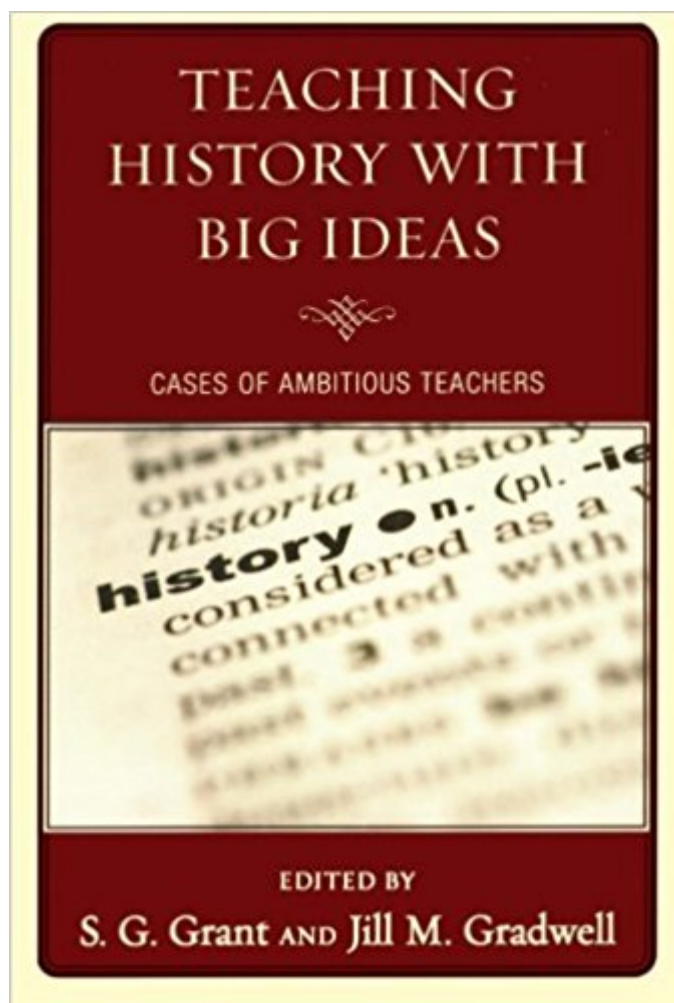


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# Teaching History With Big Ideas: Cases Of Ambitious Teachers



## Synopsis

In the case studies that make up the bulk of this book, middle and high school history teachers describe the decisions and plans and the problems and possibilities they encountered as they ratcheted up their instruction through the use of big ideas. Framing a teaching unit around a question such as 'Why don't we know anything about Africa?' offers both teacher and students opportunities to explore historical actors, ideas, and events in ways both rich and engaging. Such an approach exemplifies the construct of ambitious teaching, whereby teachers demonstrate their ability to marry their deep knowledge of subject matter, students, and the school context in ways that fundamentally challenge the claim that history is 'boring.'

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In *Teaching History with Big Ideas*, coeditors S.G. Grant and Jill Gradwell have compiled a series of powerful cases of ambitious teaching that highlight the challenging, complex, and messy world of working in a high-stakes testing environment. The cases cover a range of topics and experiences, different students, different contexts. Yet all of these teachers provide fascinating insight into their journeys as teachers, how they've thought about using big ideas in social studies instruction, and how they make sense of working in diverse contexts that all seem to value test scores, albeit in different ways. . . . This book clearly highlights how scary it is to move away from teaching to the test, but how rewarding and powerful that decision can be. (associate professor of social studies education, University of Virginia, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Curriculum,

Instruction, and Special Education, University of Virginia)S. G. Grant and Jill Gradwell achieve their worthy goal of creating a road map for ambitious history teaching. This engaging, accessible book features narratives written by teachers who navigated a variety of instructional dilemmas and constraints, undertook the hard work of reflecting on their established practices, and decided to try something new that they believed would benefit their students. The teachers' insightful stories, combined with the editors' practical recommendations, leave no doubt that ambitious teaching is an arduous journey with changing itineraries and destinations. Fortunately, social studies educators now have an invaluable resource that shows us a variety of ways that such a journey can be undertaken. (Elizabeth Anne Washington, professor of social studies education, University of Florida)Teaching History With Big Ideas is the book we've been waiting for. Chapters are written by teachers who are achingly honest about their struggles and triumphs, candid about frustrations with principals or their setting, aware when they teach in a privileged school, and ambitious in their goals for teaching and learning. This is a book of teachers doing many things and letting the reader peer into their classrooms as they try different approaches and eavesdrop on their thoughts during class and as they reflect afterwards. Grant and Gradwell contextualize these chapters and offer their own analysis, but the chapters are rich enough to provide readers with the material to define other themes or discover nuances of their own. This book provides a model for the field to emulate, replicate, build on, and develop. (David Gerwin, associate professor of social studies and history, Queens College, CUNY)In this lively and honest book, Grant and Gradwell breathe life into the concept of "ambitious teaching" and then passing the pen to eight teachers who describe in specific detail how they learned to use important questions and inquiry to improve the quality of what their middle and high school students learned. Through their struggles and successes, it becomes apparent that it is possible to up the level of intellectual challenge and engagement of students, even in this era of high-stakes testing. This is an important book for social studies educators who recognize that we need to move away from content without questions and teaching without meaningful inquiry. What we need is more ambitious teaching, a goal that Teaching History With Big Ideas will help us accomplish. (Diana Hess, professor of curriculum and instruction, University of Wisconsin, Madison)Grant (education, Binghamton U.) and Gradwell (social studies education, Buffalo State College, State U. of New York) present eight case studies in which middle and high school social studies and history teachers from New York describe "ambitious teaching" practices, in which teachers know the subject matter and its potential well, know the students well and what they are capable of, and create challenging teaching environments. Coming from a variety of experiences, school contexts, grades, and subjects, the teachers explain the use of big

ideas, questions or generalizations that help them decide what to teach and center teaching units in complex issues that are open to multiple perspectives and interpretations like the Holocaust, imperialism, and why little is known about Africa, as well as teaching Advanced Placement courses, working with diverse learners, and using writing. (Book News, Inc.) The purpose of this book was to offer a more practical guide to how to implement powerful teaching. Grant and Gradwell are successful in this regard, through allowing teachers who have triumphed and struggled (and sometimes both) to tell their stories and offer advice. Overall, this is a powerful, new look at how to meld the theory of ambitious teaching with the practice of most secondary teachers. It can and should be used in pre-service methods classes to give students a guide for implementation and as a stepping stone for discussion about a variety of classroom situations. (Education Review)

S. G. Grant is the founding dean of the School of Education at Binghamton University. His research interests include the intersection of curriculum and assessment policy. Jill M. Gradwell is an assistant professor and coordinator of social studies education in the Department of History and Social Studies at Buffalo State College, State University of New York. Her research centers on teaching, learning, and assessing history.

I really enjoyed this book. I think it provided me with great lessons that I can incorporate into my classroom and make history more meaningful for my students.

This book is 100% exactly what my son, a college student, expected it to be. He's 100% pleased w/ this purchase.

Great Book!

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