

Book: lies my teacher told me by james loewen



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Name: Lecturer: Course: Date: Book: Lies My Teacher Told Me In the 12th chapter of “Lies My Teacher Told Me,” by James W. Loewen, several problems are discussed concerning how history is taught. Loewen argues that teachers teach students history as mere facts that happened in the past for them to believe. Rarely do teachers teach students how to connect these facts to their lives, families and the community. This results in making history a boring class and one that is not critical since it is just a matter of facts that happened, which might not affect the students (Loewen 293). However, these facts could affect the lives of students.

Teaching history to students like this indicates the way it becomes a routine and does not add insight or power of discernment to the students. Through the conventional method of teaching history where students only read and answer questions for factual recall, history becomes tedious and does not provide students with an opportunity to develop analysis skills. However, through changing instruction method and using evidence-based learning, students can learn and understand history, as opposed to memorizing facts.

Further, nothing sticks in the minds of the students about history since this method of teaching requires one to memorize everything instead of understanding. This is because the method removes the emotional part of learning that connects the students to the facts. The textbooks are just devout, and they lack passion, implying that history is not necessary.

Loewen cites that teachers may try to make history stick in the students' mind by toughing on areas in their lives. However, the textbooks disconnect this since they do not integrate family and community as they only focus on the facts making student involvement difficult. However, these problems can

be fixed through changing the way history is taught in class. There is need to make it more appealing and involving as opposed to individuals sitting down and listening to mere facts as they are mentioned. Some of the most engaging classes are such as science where students are highly involved in their learning especially in the laboratories.

Unlike science, history has no practical lessons. Therefore, involving the students will require more effort. One way of getting their involvement is bringing the period under study to the students. One way of doing this is taking students to a historical museum where they can learn the lifestyle of people living in the period under study. For instance, learning about the Roman Empire would require students to visit a museum with artifacts of the time.

This will involve the students especially since it takes them out of the class to seek more answers as well as evidence to what is learnt in class. Another way of involving the students is using the method used by Charlotte, a popular high school history teacher in the United States. Having graduated in a masters course that emphasized articulation of sophisticated conception of historical thinking as well as possession of pedagogical thinking, she used a different approach to instruct students (Hover and Yeager 671). “ Rather, Charlotte’s instruction was highly self-oriented; she lectured in a narrative fashion that allowed her to present her own interpretations of history ...” (Hover and Yeager 671). This can be done through designing a particular purpose while teaching history.

The teacher should have a purpose as Charlotte had for teaching moral values, which influenced her instructional decisions. Thus, if a teacher wants students to learn some set of morals, the instructions should be designed to ensure they support the purpose of the lesson. Another method emphasized by Monte-Sano is evidence-based learning where inquiry is central to learning.

According to Monte-Sano, “ inquiry involves working with and interrogating historical documents in an effort to understand and explain the past,” (1046). This method emphasizes on the analysis of evidence in order to account for past events. This is in contrast with the conventional way of instruction in history class where students are required to read textbooks, attend lectures as well as memorizing of facts. In order to develop students’ evidence-based analytical skills, it is better to deal with primary documents that provide evidence, as opposed to textbooks that provide an already concluded analysis of the primary documents. This will involve the students more as opposed to reading for memorizing, which makes history quite tedious. For instance, using letters of soldiers who fought in the Vietnam War can provide a better insight, as opposed to what is written in textbooks.

This can further elicit more questions as Johannessen show, (120). He further cites that using primary materials is better than fictional for drawing real life conclusion, (120). This also improves the skills of the students in writing evidence-based essays as well. This is because they can analyze and interpret evidence from primary sources and synthesize information to come up with qualitative and quantitative findings and to make better conclusions (Monte-Sano 1047).

Finally, another problem that was identified by Loewen was the textbooks used for history, which he says are designed to state facts and nothing else. The solution to his problem is using primary data for evidence as opposed to relying on textbooks. The primary documents provide raw data from which the textbooks draw. From primary documents, students can be involved in their analysis to prove some of the questions they have.

Therefore, reduction on the use of textbooks can be reduced to allow students to think more critically as opposed to having everything done for them in the textbooks (Monte-Sano 1047). Additionally, with primary materials, interpretation will be dependent on the students experience in life and ways in which such information relates to their life as well as community, thus achieving the emotional part omitted in textbooks. After reading “Lies My Teacher Told Me,” by Loewen, I was left with a lot of thoughts about what I learnt in history as well as with answers to why history becomes boring while it should be interesting considering the facts it provides about the past. One of the most intriguing facts to learn from this book was that many parents had many doubts about some of the materials that children were supposed to believe in class, but they still wanted their children to believe.

For instance, 56% of parents participating in the study showed doubts on authorities but wanted their children to believe and respect these authorities (Loewen 289). Why a parent would want a child to believe what they learn at school is probably because it implies irreproachable morals or obedient children. However, this denies children the right to inquire or question some of the things around them.

This subjects the children to following instructions blindly without questioning, which hinders creativity. After reading this book, I began to understand why it was always hard to question my teachers even when I thought otherwise or tended to differ with what the teacher said. I always believed teachers are always right and can never go wrong. This came to change later after seeing a teacher correct a mistake she did. During the time I was learning history, the teacher would even say that we should not worry at the beginning of a chapter since he will not go much into facts to avoid making it uninteresting. However, this was even boring considering all we did was sit in class, read textbooks and answer questions at the end of chapters. Passing history was dependent on one's ability to memorize facts. This method of teaching makes history boring as Loewen cites that it depends on factual recall, (293).

After reading the book, I felt like parents as well as students are short-changed by having to pay for history classes only to sit down during lectures, read textbooks, answer questions and memorize facts in order to pass a history class. This was boring but also exceptionally easy to pass since one needed last minute memorization to pass. The reason for feeling short-changed is the fact that one does not need a teacher to read a textbook and answer questions at the end of the chapter since the answers are found in the chapter content. This book has affected me in a positive manner. Now I know that history classes can be engaging as well as challenging to students just like other technical subjects. I believe that this book should be read by all those involved in teaching history as well as students in order to help all

people understand that history can be taught in a different way that allows involvement of the students.

The book can be used to help teachers in changing their instruction approach in order to engage the students. Works Cited Hover Stephanie and Yeager Elizabeth. " I Want to Use My Subject Matter to..." The Role of Purpose in one U. S Secondary History Teacher's Instructional Decision Making." Canadian Journal of Education, 30. 3 (2007): 670-690. Print.

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