

Education is Power: Your Decisions Make a Difference

Patricia A. Nelson

Introduction

“If you quit on school—you’re not just quitting on yourself, you’re quitting on our country.”¹ These were President Obama’s words to students across the nation in his speech on Nov. 8, 2009. As I watched my class listen to the president, I wondered how his experience in school compared with my students. Many look to him as a role model. I wondered if they could relate to this call to country or if they would make the same kind of choices in school that he described. The speech was to encourage students to value education and stay in school. Many of my students would say they are in school because they have to be. One student told me that she takes school for granted because that is all she has ever known. My middle school students are often more concerned with social issues and peer pressure than with their education. They are usually searching for a way to fit in and/or to be unique. Everyday, they are faced with many choices, and for some it is a great struggle to remain focused on their studies and see the goal ahead. Sometimes this is due to their lives outside school as much as by the demands of the school day. For most middle school students, it is just an awkward time period in which they will learn to manage themselves as they prepare for high school, but for some it is the beginning of their failure as a student and the start of poor choices that will impact their future.

After 28 years in the classroom, teaching grades 1-7, I find that many students, who make poor choices, particularly in their behavior, respond with similar explanations when questioned about their actions. Some students are seeking attention, be it positive or negative, and others are trying to be cool amongst their peers. Some explain their choices with statements like “he told me to”, “he did it first”, or “I didn’t think it mattered” leaving no room for personal responsibility. I began to wonder at what age does moral consciences develop and how do children learn accountability for their actions as they consider their choices? I wondered why some students don’t make the connection between the choices they make and their success in school, which ultimately impacts their future.

Many of my students thought the idea of not going to school was quite appealing and something they thought they would choose given the chance. This was the response of my 6th grade class during a lesson on the Industrial Revolution. Children of that time did not really have a choice as they were called on to work in the factories and fields, but I began to realize that many of my students did not understand the power of education and its implications for their future. A graduation rate of about 66% in my school district is a sad reflection of the many children who do not value education and drop out.² Their

choice to quit impacts their future as well as society. Unlike the children of the Industrial Revolution, my students must attend school until they are 16 and they are faced with choices that impact their education.

On April Fool's Day I had the chance to experiment on my students concerning their decision-making. I found my students ready to follow the absurd policies I told them would be going into effect at our school or in my class. After I told them it was a joke, they were relieved and we had the opportunity to analyze why they were willing to follow such ridiculous orders. We discussed the power of authority, my role as their trusted leader and their ability to make a choice concerning the orders. We had just finished studying WWII and it became apparent that they thought they should obey without question, much like Hitler's child soldiers who carried out the Nazi orders.

Decision-making became the main point when my class had the opportunity to hear a Holocaust survivor speak in our school gym. Dr. Susan Cernyak-Spatz described her experience as a teenager imprisoned in Auschwitz for three years. We were all mesmerized by her horrific story of survival. However, it was the way she ended her presentation that stayed in my mind. She told the students that she had two reasons for telling them her story. The first was so that they would know that it really happened, as there are those who claim it did not occur. Her second reason was very direct. She told the students that they must always do things that are right and never just because they are following orders. She warned against carrying out orders without thinking or without conscious. She addressed the need for children to be well educated so they could rely on their own judgments rather than blindly follow the decisions of others. The indoctrination of Germany's youth enabled children to disregard their own principles to achieve the Nazi agenda at any cost. She told them to be thinking about their choices and the impact their actions would have on others.

Following her visit, the class looked more closely at the Hitler Youth and we read a selection in a book that recounted the life of a child who had been a part of the Hitler Youth. It described the "gangs" of children who supported either the Communist or the newly forming Nazis and their wars with each other. The story of the murder of Herbert Norkus, turned martyr by the Nazi Party, left us in disbelief as we considered the choices made by those children. And then several students began to say that the story sounded a lot like what happens in today's street gangs. My school and the schools we feed into have gang related issues, so I wondered if my students would be able relate to gang members' experiences and learn from their decision-making.

And so I looked for places in the NCSCOS where I could emphasize the power and impact of education and the ability to make independent, well informed decisions as well as give students reason to examine their own decision-making process. It is with the added challenge of peer pressure, social issues and the media's influence that I hope to

help my middle school students relate to the decision making of others in order to better make their own judgments.

Objectives

Why do children act the way they do? What are good decisions and bad decisions? How do circumstances impact their decision-making? How do their decisions impact their lives? What can you learn from other children about your own decision-making?

These are some of the questions that I want my students to be able to address by the end of this unit. The theme of this unit is decision-making particularly as it relates to education. Decision-making is based on personal values, which are still forming and are easily swayed during adolescent years. In this unit, students will examine the circumstances, choices and actions of the children in three cases studies. They will analyze and make conclusions about the children's reasons and wisdom of their decision-making, and the impact their actions had on their lives. Students will compare and contrast their own experiences and decision-making methods and abilities with those in the case studies and draw conclusions for their own use in their future actions.

The three case studies will include: Matthew Crabtree who lived during the Industrial Revolution in England and received no formal education, Alfons Heck who was a member of the Hitler Youth and received a misguided Nazi Education, and Kody Scott who left school and childhood behind to become a member in an L.A. gang.

Rationale

Who are my students and why do I want them to learn the ideas in this unit? My students are at a critical point in their lives in which poor decision-making will lead to failure in school, limiting their future opportunities as well as impacting society. As mentioned above, I have students who take school for granted and do just enough to get by because they have to. Often, children's values are influenced by peers or the media, and this can sometimes lead to bad choices. I believe this bad decision-making contributes to the drop out rate. I also believe that children who are drawn to gang membership would benefit from examining the experiences of other youth in order to measure their own decision making process, which in turn might cause them to avoid membership. Below, I will give a closer look at the demographics of my school and district, the graduation rates, and the report count of students involved in gangs, as these are the factors that lead me to write this unit.

District and School Demographics

I teach for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina which is the 18th largest city in the United States. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is considered a large urban district, which served 134,060 K-12 students in the 2008-09 school year. The demographics for the district are: American Indian/multi-racial 4.3%, Asian 4.7%, African American 41.8%, Hispanic 15.5% and white 33.7%. The free and reduced lunch program serves 48.7% of the students.³

My school, Carmel Middle School, has approximately 1,000 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. In the 2008-09 school year, our demographics were: African American 19.2%, Hispanic 13.5%, White 60.4% and other 6.9%. The free and reduced lunch program served 30.2% of the students.⁴

Graduation Rates

As I mentioned above, the North Carolina Department of Education reports that CMS had a graduation rate of 66% in 2008-09.⁵ I could hardly believe that one-third of the students were not graduating! This shows that education does not hold personal value for many children as they choose to drop out. Carmel Middle School feeds into three high schools. The following graduation rates are improved for the most part over the district as a whole. In 2009, South Mecklenburg High School graduated 80%, Myers Park High School graduated 80% and EE Waddell High School graduated 59%.⁶

Gang Involvement

Occasionally, I hear a few of my students talking about gangs or “joking” around with a gang term. Of course, students who use gang signs, wear gang clothing or appear in anyway to be connected with a gang are reported to the school administration to determine any affiliation or activity. But, many of my preteen students already have an awareness of the gang culture, probably learned from the media. Children who have gangsters as their role models hear the call to glory through gang life without understanding or by ignoring the devastating impact it will have on their young lives. The middle school child is at an age where their values are easily influenced as they search to shape their identities and take on independence. A Report Count from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department lists the incidents where the victim and/or a suspected member or affiliate of a gang was involved. In 2007, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools report count was 181. In 2008, it was 167 and from Jan. to June in 2009 it stands at 63. The following chart shows the count for Carmel Middle School and the three high schools Carmel feeds.

Report Count

	Carmel Middle School	EE Waddell High School	Myers Park High School	South Mecklenburg High School
2007	0	13	1	1
2008	1	14	4	0
Jan-Jun 2009	0	4	3	0

Documented gang members listed as in attendance at some point over the last five years for the above mentioned schools are: Carmel Middle School 3, EE Waddell H.S. 58, Myers Park H.S. 13 and South Mecklenburg H.S. 8.⁷ These numbers do not seem big when compared to the enrollments of the school, but when we are talking about children, even one joining a gang is too many. I want my students to learn about the risk factors that can lead to gang involvement and the probability of finishing school for gang members. I want them to understand how a formal education will benefit them over an education learned from the streets of their hood or in the penal system.

Background Information and Three Case Studies

The following three cases studies will allow children to investigate their own behavior by examining the behaviors of others. By taking away the personal component students may be more willing to draw conclusions about their own decision-making.

Matthew Crabtree: The Life of a Child during the Industrial Revolution

What would your life be like if there was no law mandating that you go to school and your family needed you to work? How would this impact your childhood and your future? How much decision-making power did Matthew have in his life? Does the success of your education affect society? These are questions I want my students to address as they examine the experiences and choices of children in the Industrial Revolution.

In the first case study, students will analyze photographs and read passages from children of the Industrial Revolution. They will focus on the testimony of Matthew

Crabtree who had no opportunity for school and lost his youth to harsh factory work. Students will determine what choices he and the other children had and what impact the lack of education made on their futures. They will compare Matthew's experience with their own. They will list ways in which completing their education will impact their future as well as society. The following background information on the Industrial Revolution and Matthew Crabtree supports Lesson Plan #1.

While the British Empire grew in wealth through the power of its steamships and railroads that supported the growth of factories and production, for many life became harsh. There was a great movement from the farms to the cities as the inventions of the time opened up opportunities for work in the factories. Most families could not survive unless everyone in the family contributed financially. This meant that even young children would become workers. Factory owners benefited from the use of child labor because children were small enough to get into tight spaces, easy to manage and could be paid very little, if at all. In 1851, 50% of the textile workers in England were 15 or younger.⁸ Other children labored in the coalmines as haulers" pulling carts or as "trappers" opening and closing the mine vents. Children, as young as 6, would work in a factory for 12-14 hours with minimal breaks. Of course this exhausting workload in an unsafe environment made way for crippling accidents and even death as children worked around and with large, heavy machines.

The Industrial Revolution came to the U.S in the 19th century and mirrored the impact it had on American children. There was no federal legislation mandating that children be in school. Needless to say, the children were not in school for the most part. In the U.S.A., high school graduates numbered 95,000 or 6.3% of all 17 year olds in 1900. The average child spent 6-8 years in school. In 1910, 156,000 or 8.6% graduated, and in 1920, 311,000 or 26.3% graduated. By 1930 665,000 or 28.8% of 17 years olds graduated from high school.⁹ In the year 1910, 10% of children age 14-17 were enrolled in high schools and they were mostly from affluent families.¹⁰ Private schools would fill the need for upper level education in a time of increasing technology. They were costly and were not a choice for the working class. In the early 19th century, one third of the workforce in the US was made up of children ages 7-12.¹¹

In the U.S., the federal government passed legislation in 1938 that impacted child labor as The Fair Labor and Standards Act banned most child labor under the age of 16. It prohibited children under age 18 from hazardous jobs, however there was no minimum age for non-hazardous jobs in agriculture held around school hours. Today, education before work is what pays off for the individual as well as for society. The U.S. Census reports the following on Median Earnings for Full Time Year –Round Workers, Aged 25 and Over in 2007: not a high school graduate at \$24,964.00, a high school graduate at \$32,862.00, some college at \$40,769.00, a bachelor's degree at \$56,118.00 and an advanced degree at \$ 75,140.00.¹² The CollegeBoard reports that graduates earn about 73% more over their lifetime than that of a high school graduate.¹³ Knowledge of these

figures might persuade a child to stay in school. The CollegeBoard also reports that higher levels of education are linked to better health, lower smoking rates, increased voting rates, less unemployment and poverty, more volunteer work and less likelihood of being incarcerated. Parents with a higher education are more likely to read to their own children.

What were Matthew Crabtree's circumstances and outcomes? In 1832, the Sadler Committee put together a report on the conditions in the textile factories in England. This report would lead to the Education Act of 1870 in England, which one of the first legislations toward mandating school for children. The Sadler Committee Report gives the testimony of Matthew Crabtree who began work in the factory at age eight. Matthew testifies about his long work hours, lack of food and breaks, long travel and severe punishment. Students will read his testimony and draw conclusions about his decision-making. They will determine the impact of his circumstances and outcomes. The Sadler Committee Report has the stories of other child workers as well that could be used allowing students to choose their own case study.

Though there are many available resources showing the children of the time, the photo essay of Lewis W. Hines is a good size collection of photographs of children in many different work scenes.¹⁴ These photographs will help students visualize the experience of Matthew Crabtree and others. Students will conclude that the children in the photographs had limited choices and they would become a generation who were denied the opportunity for formal education. Students should conclude that without education there is little to no chance for self-betterment and limited opportunity for improving your situation. The photographs show children who did not enjoy the drawn out childhood experienced by so many American children today.

Alfons Heck: A Nazi Education and the Hitler Youth

What would you do if you were taught in school to hate a group of people? What would you do if you were required to belong to a youth group in which you were ordered to use weapons and carry out violent instructions? What if you were not allowed to make your own decisions and were taught that following orders was the only acceptable action? These are some of the questions I want my students to address as they examine the experiences and choices of the Alfons Heck.

In the next case study, students will examine the stories of Alfons Heck, a German boy who received a Nazi education and joined the Hitler Youth. Teachers will need to read and make selections from Alfons Heck's book, [A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika](#). The selections should enable students to describe the propaganda and indoctrination that Heck was subjected to as his education was manipulated by the government. The selections should include passages illustrating

Heck's actions and decision-making. They will evaluate the choices made by Heck in the Hitler Youth and draw conclusions about the circumstances of his life and the impact of his choices. Students will relate them to their own experiences. The following background information on the Hitler Youth and Alfons Heck supports Lesson Plan #2.

“A violently active, dominating, intrepid, brutal youth-that is what I am after.”¹⁵ From 1933 to 1945, the youth of Germany were subjected to the National Socialist Party, or Nazi Party and their control over education. Joseph Goebbels, National Propaganda Leader, changed German society under his philosophy of “Gleichschaltung” or conformity. His strategies included the use of propaganda, the creation of Nazi organizations while eliminating all others, and the organization of a control apparatus. All religious schools would be closed and all public schools would become National Schools where students would receive a Nazi education. Education would no longer be focused on academics and personal growth, but on service to the state and ultimately on training soldiers for war.

A photograph of Hitler, which elevated him to an almost God-like figure, was a focal point in classrooms along with the Nazi flag. Textbooks were rewritten in the Nazi point of view glorifying themes of racial struggle and German pride. Other books, deemed dangerous, were banned or burned. However, there were children who choose to form secret reading circles where they could share the un-German books.(HY p46) This was dangerous because the curriculum was standardized in the Nazi worldview or “Weltanschauung” in which there was no tolerance of other viewpoints. A differing opinion could jeopardize a student's graduation and be used against them in the future. Decision-making was limited as children were told what to think and how to act. Two new subjects were introduced in the classroom: racial science and eugenics in which students were taught to identify Jews and turn against them as well as to avoid inter-racial marriage to keep their Aryan blood pure. In fact, in 1933, the Law Against the Overcrowding of German Schools pushed Jews out of the schools. Students learned discrimination of Jews through their lessons.

The Nazi education also turned the focus from mental training to physical training. In 1936, 2-3 hours of P.E. were required in the school day and that number jumped to 5 hours in 1938. School was no longer about academics and original thought; instead, physical training and obedience to orders became the tools for success. Boys were easily enticed by a school curriculum that included physical activity such as boxing, sailing, and even driving motorcycles. Complaints by parents were met with protests from children that their parents were old fashioned and just didn't understand. The youth was even known to turn their parents into the authorities if the parent was anti-Nazi.

Teachers were required to join the National Socialist Teacher's Alliance and were dismissed if they strayed from the Nazi agenda. Students kept an eye on their teachers, reporting violations, while teachers pressured students into joining the after school Hitler

Youth groups. Alfons Heck tells that his childhood came to an end at age 10 when he began his journey as a child soldier in the Hitler Youth.¹⁶

From 1933-1945, the promise of a great future turned German children onto after school groups in the Hitler Youth. In 1935, 4million, or 50% of all German children belonged to the Youth and in 1939 the Reich Youth Law required all healthy German children over the age of 9 to join so that in 1939 more than 8 million children were a part of Hitler Youth.¹⁷ Children rallied by the appeal of flags, banners, bands, and weapons were drawn in the movement. Thousands attended Youth Rallies to hear Hitler speak about their future and repeated the following oath as recorded by Heck. “I promise in the Hitler Youth to do my duty at all times in love and faithfulness to help the Fuhrer-so help me God.”¹⁸ There were five organizations for the youth to join as displayed on the following chart.¹⁹

Hitler Youth Organizations

Age	Boys	Girls
6-10	Pimpfen (The Little Fellows)	
10-14	Jungvolk (The Young Folk)	Jungmadelbund (Young Girls)
14-18	Hitler-Jugend (Hitler Youth)	Bund Deutsche Madel (League of German Girls)

The philosophy that youth must be led by youth put young children in adult roles as well; as prevented the “wrong” adults from influencing them away from Nazi ideas. Heck comments that his first leader, or Fahnleinfuhrer, was 15 years old.²⁰

While girls were taught to be good wives and mothers who should produce more Aryan children, boys went on to greater opportunities. At age 12, successful boys could get the opportunity to go on to one of ten Adolph Hitler Schools where they were taught upper level classes by the best. Success at the Adolf Hitler School could led to attendance in the Napolas (National Political Institute of Education), which was run by the Nazi Party²¹. Learning war games here was serious business as live ammunition was used. Heck reports that over half of his classmates were killed before they reached age 18.²² By 1937, 50,000 boys had earned marksmanship medals.²³ Students were trained to think and act as one and it became inconceivable to defy an order. The Hitler Youth were paired up with Germany’s Wehrmacht (army), Luftwaffe (air force) and Navy. Boys learned to fly gliders in the Flieger-HJ, ride motorcycles in the Motor-HJ and sail in the Marine-HJ. In fact, it was by choice, that Heck accepted the invitation into the Flying Hitler Youth even though he claimed a fear of heights.²⁴ This would be the start of his goal to enter the Luftwaffe.

Hitler Youth attended summer infantry camps as part of their duty to serve. The words on each camp gate, “We are born to die for Germany,”²⁵ describe the loss of

innocence, as the children of Germany would be told what to think and how to act by the Nazi Party. In the final defense of Germany, boys as young as 15, were sent to the Russian Front. In fact, in Hitler's last public appearance, he came out of his bunker where he decorated 11 and 12-year-old Hitler Youths with Iron Crosses for their defense of Berlin.

Heck's book provides excellent examples of the indoctrination of the German youth. However, parts of the book are not appropriate for middle school students. By reading teacher-selected passages, students will be able to get in tune with Heck's childhood experience as a boy soldier. Heck's education is well documented and because his story begins at the same age as that of my students, my students should be able to find some common ground with Heck. The excitement he describes concerning parades, rallies, uniforms and adventures maybe easy for many of my students to relate to. Some students may relate to the desire for power, which Heck experienced at a young age as well as the freedom from the watchful eyes of parents. Even the receipt of his first dagger and gun may be an experience that some of my students who have learned to scout or hunt will find their own selves drawn to. Heck's actions and decisions as a child soldier are described. My students may find that in some cases, he really was not making decisions at all, but merely following the only acceptable course of action. In other cases, they may find themselves at complete odds with the choices made by Heck. It will be interesting for my students to put themselves in Heck's place and examine their own decision-making using their own value system.

An additional resource that middle school students will find readable is Susan Bartoletti's book, Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler's Shadow. The first chapter describes the death of Herbert Norkus who was only 14 when he was killed in a "gang war" between the youth supporting the communist party and his group which supported the Nazi Party.²⁶ Students will be able to use this chapter to evaluate the values and decision-making of the youths involved in the death. Chapter five provides good description and illustration of the Nazi Education. Students will be able to use this chapter to compare the values and choices of children who followed the Nazi agenda with those who went against it. They will recognize the elements of manipulation found in the National Schools as they read about the biased information taught concerning racial superiority. The text and pictures show the "worship" of one man's ideas and the chapter gives examples of intolerance for any student's viewpoints that were anti-Nazi. Students will conclude that the Nazi students had limited ability to make their own decisions due to the brainwashing element found in their schools.

Kody Scott: Is gang membership a good choice?

What would you do if you felt that school didn't really apply to you or meet your needs but you saw a team of other kids making money and a powerful name on the streets?

Would you leave school to join them? Would you break the law to belong? How would it impact your future? These are some of the questions I want my students to address as they examine the experiences and choices of L.A. gang members.

In the last case study, students will read quotes from Kody Scott's book, Monster, The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member, which describes how he left school and childhood behind to become a child soldier in his neighborhood streets. Students will explain the risk factors that lead to membership and describe the reasons that Scott joined. Students will determine the impact of his choices and relate them to their own experiences. The following information on American youth gangs and Kody Scott supports Lesson Plan #3.

Background information on gangs was taken from my notes from seminar. Gangs are defined by the following criteria. They are self founded and have a common interest. Gangs control a territory, facility or enterprise and they participate in organized criminal activity. Gang members use signs, symbols and colors to identify themselves. The average age of gang members is 17-24, however there are younger members like Scott who joined the Crips in South Central L.A. when he was 11 years old.

Though American gangs go back to the time of the Industrial Revolution, modern gangs set up in the 1970s. Gangs fall into two groups, those that focus on territorial possession and those that focus on drug money. The use of cars and weapons has increased the level of violence used and experienced by gangs. Violence becomes both the means and the end.

Gangs have a codependent relationship with the neighborhoods they develop in. This is well illustrated in Kody Scott's autobiography. The book describes the neighborhood as the home base and safe haven for its members. The hood serves as a place to gather intelligence on the enemy and on the police. The hood provides new recruits, which is seen in Scott's relationship with his brother. On the other hand, gangs look after their hood, providing protection for its inhabitants. The hood is the carrier of the gang culture, traditions, order and rules.

The external risk factors that are prevalent among those who join gangs:

- 1) Living in a community which is poor, disorganized or unsafe
- 2) Living in a family that is broken, has an absent parent or in which you feel unwanted
- 3) Economic problems that keep parents from caring for children
- 4) Incidents involving the police at an early age
- 5) A child who displays anti-social behavior
- 6) A child who has no attachment to a teacher or maybe labeled and /or stigmatized
- 7) Peers that are gang members

The reasons for joining a gang are woven throughout Scott's book. Most of the reasons come down to one desired trait, respect. Children who cannot find respect because of their circumstances at home or in school may seek it out in a twisted fashion by joining a gang. Children may join a gang for all the same reasons anyone might join a club or group. Joining a gang allows a child to belong to a group, which gives definition to his identity as shown by the wearing of colors and use of signs and symbols. Gangs provide friendships as seen by the intense loyalty Scott had for his homeboys. Gangs can provide money, which in turn give you prestige, power and importance. If your life is failing you and you are failing life, joining a gang looks like a rational decision for self-betterment. Some may decide that they need to join a gang out of fear for their own safety. Others may be forced into gangs because it is the way of life in the hood. And sadly, some may feel the need to join because they feel that they don't fit in anywhere else and there is no one that understands them.

Scott's book was not written for middle school students. However, by pre-reading, the teacher will be able to use the autobiography to select passages that illustrate the circumstances, risk factors, and Scott's decision-making. The impact of his decisions is seen in the deaths of others, his time in detention centers, prison and solitary confinement, and in the pain he inflicts on his loved ones. In the end, Scott takes a stand against gangsterism and makes it his mission to educate others. Students will conclude that he was able to see the power in education to help design his mission even against the odds and from behind bars.

Strategies and Classroom Activities

Materials:

A copy of Matthew Crabtree's testimony at to the Sadler Committee

A teacher prepared PowerPoint or website showing children at work in the Industrial Revolution

A Child of Hitler by Alfons Heck

Monster, The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member by Sanyika Shakur, aka Monster Kody Scott

The teacher will need to read all books ahead of presentation and make selections appropriate for class, as the books are not suited for middle school students in their entirety.

Lesson Plan 1- Children of the Industrial Revolution: Why do you go to School?

Objective:

Students will read and analyze the testimony of Matthew Crabtree as given to the Sadler Committee in England in 1832. They will view photographs of children working during the Industrial Revolution. They will determine the kinds of choices the children had and the impact a lack of education had on their futures. They will compare their experience with that of Matthew Crabtree and photographed children. They will list ways in which completing their education will impact their futures as well as society.

Essential Questions:

Why did Matthew Crabtree act the way he did? What were his circumstances? What decisions did he make? How did his circumstances and decisions impact his life?

Strategies:

Step 1: Anticipation Guide. Students will be motivated with an Anticipation Guide which will include 10 –12 statements describing the work hours, pay, working conditions and benefits of both children during the Industrial Revolution and those of today. Many of those facts have been listed in the Case Study section of this paper. Students will mark each statement with true or false as they anticipate the reality of the facts. A discussion following the actual answers to the Anticipation Guide will lead into a closer look at the lives of the children during the Industrial Revolution.

Step 2: Impressions. Students will set up a sheet divided into four boxes to record their notes. The boxes are labeled at the top 1) What I See, 2) What I Hear, and at the bottom 3) What I Feel, and 4) What I Think. Instruct the students on the use of the note-taking sheet by explaining that they are about hear the words of Matthew Crabtree and then view pictures of children from the Industrial Revolution. They should use the note sheet boxes to record the things they see, hear, feel and think as they watch and listen. Students listen to the testimony of Matthew Crabtree and record. Students will view photographs on a teacher made PowerPoint featuring pictures of the children and record. At the end of the presentation, give students a few more minutes to record before discussing. The discussion can be done as a partner, group or whole group activity.

Step 3: Essential Questions. Ask the Essential Questions listed above and discuss after the students are able to write personal responses.

Step 4: Double Tableau. A Tableau is a presentation of a “narrated, human still scene”. Students will work in small groups (3-4) using their note sheets to compose two tableaus that focus on work, play or education. The first scene will show the experiences of the Matthew Crabtree and the second scene will show a group agreed upon experience of a modern day child. Each scene will be narrated with two to three sentences. Students will be asked to prepare any props, costumes or scenery they feel is essential to their tableau. Students will present the tableaus to the class. Students will comment by comparing the two tableaus.

Step 5: Matthew and Me. The teacher will lead the students in a discussion that illustrates the point that Matthew had limited opportunity to make choices because of his situation. Students will be asked to close the lesson by responding to the following prompts. How is my life like and or different from Matthew’s? How are our choices the

same or different? Could Matthew take responsibility for his education? How will our futures be the same or different? What can I learn from Matthew?

Lesson Plan 2- The Hitler Youth: Does it matter what you learn in school?

Objective:

Students will read and classify quotes from teacher selected passages from Alfons Heck's book, Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika. They will use knowledge of the Nazi Education and the Hitler Youth to classify Heck's actions and decisions as good or evil and rate them considering Heck's circumstances. They will draw conclusions about the impact of his decisions on his life. They will determine what decisions they would have made in Heck's place and compare their own experiences with Heck's.

Essential Questions:

Do Heck's actions make him good or evil? What circumstances caused him to make certain decisions? Who is responsible for his actions? Are there circumstances that absolve people from responsibility for their actions? What decisions would you have made if you were in Heck's position?

Strategies:

Step 1: Good or Evil. Students will determine whether Heck was good or evil. They will read and classify teacher prepared passages from Heck's book on a T-chart titled Alfons Heck's Actions. The chart has two columns labeled Good and Evil. Students should work in small groups or pairs to classify the actions by placing them on the T-chart.

Step 2: Impressions. Students will set up a Response Paper to write their opinions of Heck using the T-chart to support their ideas. Their writing should discuss whether they think Heck was good or evil and tell why.

Step 3: A Nazi Education. Students will be able to describe a Nazi education. They will read Chapter 5 of Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow, by Susan Bartoletti. They will list any details from the reading or the photographs in the chapter that catch their attention. Students will discuss their findings and tell why they selected certain "attention getters".

Step 4: The Hitler Youth. Students will be able to describe the experiences of the Hitler Youth. Small groups will be assigned one of the other chapters, 1-10, from the book. Students will read the chapter and complete a "3-2-1" thinking sheet on their assigned chapter. Concerning the youth, they will list 3 actions or tasks done by the children, 2 expectations or requirements for the children and 1 "attention getter". Students will present their 3-2-1 to the entire class. Students will write an opinion of the Hitler Youth.

Step 5: Revisit. Students will revisit the Good and Evil T-chart to determine whether Heck was good or evil under the circumstances of a Nazi education and the Hitler Youth. Students will discuss what they think they would have done in Heck's position and tell

why. Then, students will then take on the Nazi perspective and fill out a Hitler Youth Performance Card for Heck. They will design this by listing his actions from the Good and Evil T-chart and grading them with a letter grade. They will be required to make a comment for each grade in which they assign responsibility for the action. Students will then discuss their grading and comments and determine how the card would look if it were graded in their own classroom.

Step 6: Alfons and Me. Students will compare their experience and decision-making with that of Heck. The teacher will lead a discussion that points out the misguided education Alfons received, which did not allow him to make his own decisions. Students will be asked to close the lesson by responding to the following prompts on their Response Papers. How is my life like and or different from Heck's? How are our choices the same or different? Did he make decisions concerning his own education? Which decisions were made on his own and what outcomes is he personally responsible for? Are others making decisions for me? Who is responsible for the outcome of my decisions? How will our futures be the same or different? What can I learn from Heck?

Lesson Plan 3- American Youth Gangs: Should I stay in school?

Objective:

Students will read passages from the book Monster, The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member to describe the circumstances around the life of Kody Scott as a child. They will determine his reasons for wanting to join a gang. They will identify the risk factors for gang membership that were present in Scott's life. They will examine the outcome of Scott's decisions and describe the impact his decisions had on his life. They will compare and contrast their ideas for attaining respect and success with Scott's actions.

Essential Questions:

How did Scott's circumstances as a child influence his decision to join a gang? What impact did his decisions have on his life?

Strategies:

Step 1: The Circumstances. Students will describe the circumstances that surrounded Scott's childhood experience. The teacher will set up a Circumstances Chart in with Kody Scott's name in a circle in the center and then divided into 4 boxes, each touching the center circle. The boxes will be labeled Home, School, Hood and Homeboys. The students or teacher will read selected passages from Scott's book and the class will decide which of the four categories is best described in the passage. The passage can then be glued onto the chart for future reference. Students will set up a Response Paper to write a description of the environment Scott lived in as a child.

Step 2: Reasons to Join: Students will determine why Scott decided to join a gang. Teacher will ask and list reasons students give for joining a group. Teacher will then present a chart titled Reasons to Join with the following headings: Identity, Friendship, Excitement, Prestige and Money and ask if students ever joined a group for one of the

listed reasons. After discussion, the teacher will ask if these are the same reasons to join a gang? To determine the answer, students will read selected passages from Scott's book and classify them under the appropriate heading. Ask students to return to their Response Paper and give their opinion of Scott's choice to join a gang. They should address whether they think his decision is rational or crazy and why.

Step 3: Who is at Risk? Students will determine if Scott was at risk for gang membership. Students will be presented with a list of external risk factors that lead to gang membership as detailed in the Background Information and Case Studies section. Students will refer to the Circumstances Chart and the Reasons to Join Chart to determine any evidence that Scott was at risk for gang membership.

Step 4: The Impact. Students will assess the impact of Scott's actions in a gang. Students will brainstorm a list of possible outcomes from Scott's decision to join a gang. The teacher will then read several passages that illustrate the following outcomes: not finishing school, putting family in danger, years in prison, and the injury and/or death of others. Ask students to discuss who is responsible for each of the outcomes and why. Then read from the last chapter in the book, quoting Scott, "Gangsterism continues. But more importantly, the struggle to eradicate the causes of gangsterism continues. And it is this struggle to which I am dedicated."²⁷ Ask students to record their opinion on their Response Papers by addressing the impact of his actions and his responsibility for them.

Step 5: The Tombstone. Students will summarize the experience, decisions and impact of Scott by designing a tombstone marking his future death. The tombstone should include an example of his circumstances, an example of his actions and an example of one of the outcomes.

Step 6: Monster and Me. The teacher will lead discussion that illustrates Monster's good and bad decisions and his personal responsibility for the outcomes. Students will use their Response Papers to answer the following questions. How is my life like or unlike Monster's? How are our choices the same or different? What were his good and bad decisions and what is personal responsibility in the outcomes? How will our futures be the same or different? How did his decisions concerning his own education impact his life? What can I learn from Monster?

Lesson Plan 4- Circumstance, Education, and Decision-Making

Objective:

Students will look at the variables in all three case studies that account for the decisions made by Crabtree, Heck, and Scott. Students will compare the circumstances, education, and decision-making ability of the studies and determine the level of responsibility each one is accountable for. Students will consider their own circumstances, education, and ability to make decisions and then set goals concerning their education.

Essential Questions:

In each case, who made no decisions, good decisions, and poor decisions? How were the circumstances different in each case? What role did education play in the ability to make

decisions? Who is responsible for the outcomes of the decisions made? How does your situation compare to that of the case studies and what educational goals would you choose for yourself?

Strategies:

Step 1: The Grid. Students will fill out a grid with a partner or small group. The Grid will list the names, Crabtree, Heck, and Scott along the top. Down the side will be listed Circumstance, Education, Ability to Make Decisions, and Responsibility. Students will fill in the grid by determining key words that describe each component.

Step 2: Evaluating. Students will use the information recorded on their grid to evaluate the decision-making by each study. They will rate their decision-making performance as non-existent, good or poor. Students will discuss the rating by supporting their evaluation with evidence from their grid as well as by citing information from the previous three lessons.

Step 3: My Decisions. Students will finish the unit by responding to the following prompt, which can be done in many different formats, including a column added to the grid with their own name, a paragraph, or a letter to themselves and so on. Students will address: 1) At what level is your ability to make decisions, and are there circumstances that effect this ability? 2) Who is responsible for your education and why? 3) What goals or decisions will you make concerning your education? 4) What do you expect the outcome of your decisions/goals to be? 5) Which case study had the most effect on you and why?

Notes

1. Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in a National Address to America's School Children," *The Briefing Room*, www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-in-a-National-Address-to-Americas-Schoolchildren/

2. "Graduation Cohort Rate," *North Carolina Department of Public Instruction*, <http://ncpublicschools.org>.

3. "Fast Facts," *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*, <http://cms.k12.nc.us/mediaroom/aboutus/Pages/FastFacts.aspx>.

4. "School Progress Report 2007-2008:Carmel Middle School," *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*, <http://pages.cms.k12.nc.us/carmel>.

5. "Graduation Cohort Rate," *North Carolina Department of Public Instruction*, <http://ncpublicschools.org>.

6. Ibid.

7. Deputy Chief David Graham, email to author, September 8, 2009. (provided information put into chart as well)
8. "Child Labour: 1750-1900," *Spartacus Educational*, www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/.
9. Marilyn M Hawkins and Charlene L. Sanders, "The History of Covington High School: Across the Decades," *Covington High School*, <http://pangea.tec.selu.Edu/~mhawkins/chshistory/beginning/htm>.
10. "Public Education in the United States," *MSN.encyarta*, http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761571494/public_education_in_the_united_states.html.
11. Ibid.
12. "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2007," *The U.S. Census Bureau*, <http://www.census.gov/prod.2009pubs/p20-560.pdf>.
13. "Incarceration Rates by Educational Level, 1997," *CollegeBoard*, www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf.
14. "Child Labor in America 1908-1912: Photographs of Lewis W. Hine," *TheHistoryPlace.com*, <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/>.
15. Susan Campbell Bartoletti, *Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler's Shadow* (New York: Scholastic Inc., 2005), 43
16. Alfons Heck, *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika* (Phoenix, Arizona: Renaissance House Publishers, 2001), 1
17. Bartoletti, *Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler's Shadow*, 34
18. Heck, *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika*, 9
19. "Life in Nazi Germany 1933-39," *SchoolHistory*, <http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk/year9links/nazigermany/young.pdf>.
20. Heck, *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika*, 33
21. TheHistoryPlace.com, "Hitler Youth," <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/hitleryouth/hj-prelude.htm>.

22. Heck, *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika*, 39
23. TheHistoryPlace.com, “*Hitler Youth*,”
<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/hitleryouth/hj-prelude.htm>.
24. Heck, *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika*, 56
25. Bartoletti, *Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler’s Shadow*, 69
26. Ibid., 9-13
27. Sanyika Shakur, aka Monster Kody Scott, *Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member* (New York: Grove Press, 1993), 377

Annotated Bibliography

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler’s Shadow*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 2005.

Bartoletti conducted personal interviews and phone conversations with the subjects in the book. She visited the sites of many of the accounts she recorded. Chapter 5, “A Nazi Education”, is necessary for the lesson plan.

“Child Labor in America 1908-1912: Photographs of Lewis W. Hine.” *TheHistoryPlace.com*. September 2009. <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/>.

The History Place is a website that is easily used by students. The photographs are accompanied by detailed descriptions of the activities of the children.

“Child Labour: 1750-1900.” *Spartacus Educational*. www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/.

Spartacus Educational provides the dialogue of the interviews held by the Sadler Committee in England which prompted the first legislation protecting children at Work.

“Educational Attainment in the United States: 2007.” *The U.S. Census Bureau*. 2009. <http://www.census.gov/prod.2009pubs/p20-560.pdf>.

Provides data on the affects of education in the U.S.

“Fast Facts.” *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*. <http://cms.k12.nc.us/mediaroom/aboutus/Pages/FastFacts.aspx>.

Provides data on the district demographics.

“Graduation Cohort Rate.” *North Carolina Department of Public Instruction*. <http://ncpublicschools.org>.

Provides data on high school graduation rates in North Carolina.

Hawkins, Marilyn M. and Charlene L. Sanders. “The History of Covington High School: Across the Decades.” *Covington High School*. 2002. <http://pangea.tec.selu.edu/~mhawkins/chshistory/beginning/htm>.

Provides data on the graduation rates of high school students in the early 1900s.

Heck, Alfons. *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika*. Phoenix, Arizona: Renaissance House Publishers, 2001.

The book was written by Heck nearly 30 years after WWII. His description of his experience in the Hitler Youth may contain parts that are not appropriate for middle school students, so I suggest teacher-selected passages.

“Hitler Youth.” *TheHistoryPlace.com*. September 2009. <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/hitleryouth/hj-prelude.htm>.

The site provides detailed information for both teachers and students.

“Incarceration Rates by Educational Level, 1997.” *CollegeBoard*. www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf.

Provides data comparing education with incarceration.

“Life in Nazi Germany 1933-39.” *SchoolHistory*. <http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk/year9links/nazigermany/young.pdf>.

This Website provides information as well as student handout and activity sheets.

Obama, Barack. “Remarks by the President in a National Address to America’s School Children.” *The Briefing Room*. 8 September 2009. www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-in-a-National-Address-to-Americas-Schoolchildren/.

This speech, like this unit, was written to encourage children to make the decision to stay in school and take responsibility for their educational choices.

“Public Education in the United States.” *MSN.encarta*. <http://encarta.msn.com/>

encyclopedia_761571494/public_education_in_the_united_states.html.

Provides data on the history of public education in the U.S.

“School Progress Report 2007-2008:Carmel Middle School.” *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*. <http://pages.cms.k12.nc.us/carmel>.

Provides the demographics for Carmel Middle School, which is the intended audience of the unit.

Shakur, Sanyika aka Monster Kody Scott. *Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*. New York: Grove Press, 1993.

Scott’s explicit description of his life as an L.A. gang member is unsuitable for middle school students. The teacher will need to select and edit selections from the book to use in the lesson.

Children’s Annotated Bibliography

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler’s Shadow*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 2005.

Bartoletti’s book is a book written for children about children. The text and photographs provide a look at the Hitler Youth from many settings and circumstances. Students will want to read the epilogue for closure.

“Child Labor in America 1908-1912: Photographs of Lewis W. Hine.” *The History Place.com*. September 2009. <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/>.

Students will benefit from accessing this web site and revisiting the photographs after the lesson.

“Child Labour: 1750-1900.” *Spartacus Educational*. www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/.

Students will be able to use this site for further investigation into the practices of child labor in England during the Industrial Revolution.

Lezin, Katya. “Gang of One.” *My School Rocks! Magazine*, December 2008, 34-36.

This publication is written for children in middle school and can be found on line as well.