

Lesson 5: Who Controls the Textbook?

Textbooks are not just books. They are filters.

The Beginner's Investigation · Lesson 5 of 10

The Big Idea

Someone decides what goes into a textbook — and what stays out. Whoever controls that decision shapes what millions of students believe.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy

After the Civil War, organizations formed to preserve Confederate memory. One of the most important was the **United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC)**, founded in 1894. The UDC became deeply involved in monuments, public memory, and education — including pressuring schools to reject textbooks it considered unfair to the South.

Textbooks Are Filters

Someone decides:

- what gets included,
- what gets left out,
- which words are used,
- whose perspective gets attention, and
- what students are expected to remember.

Same Topic, Different Frameworks

Student A Learns	Student B Learns
"The enslaved population was generally treated well, and many were loyal to their enslavers."	"Enslaved people lived under a system of forced labor maintained through violence and the denial of basic freedoms."

Both students studied "slavery." They walked away with completely different pictures of the world.

Information → Interpretation → Belief → Behavior

Try It

Open any textbook or article. Ask: *Whose perspective is centered here? Whose is missing? Which words were chosen — and what other words could have been used?*

Don't take our word for it. Investigate.

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