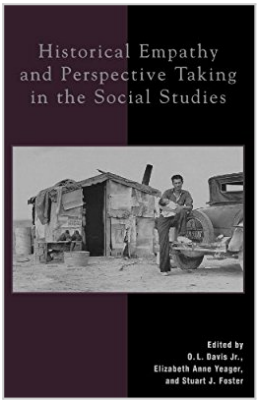

Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies

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Making the historical past come alive for students is a goal of most social studies teachers. Many youth find the people and events and movements portrayed in their textbooks to be wooden, remote, and empty. For history to become alive to them, students seek personal meanings as they use knowledge of context and ponder details. Currently most school history programs emphasize knowledge acquisition at the expense of these personal constructions of meaning. This new collection of essays provides practical assistance in the search for a more robust teaching of history and the social studies. Contributors to this volume offer insights from the discipline of history about the nature of empathy and the necessity of examining perspectives on the past. On the basis of recent classroom research, they suggest tested guides to more robust teaching. They also employ examples from classroom practice about how teachers can facilitate students' consideration of multiple and sometimes conflicting perspectives when seeking historical meanings. The contributors insist that with experienced history and social studies teachers, students can learn many historical details and, with the use of empathy, develop deepened and textured interpretations of the history that they study.

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Editorial Review

Review
Davis, Yeager, and Foster's volume will contribute to the current sea-change in approaches to history education. As schools move from teaching history as 'the facts,' to promoting more complex thinking about the past, the concept of 'historical empathy' will figure centrally in curriculum, instruction, and research. *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies* offers a diverse set of studies on how young people—and their teachers—make sense of the past, from Lee and Ashby's ground-breaking British research to a range of studies by both established and newer American researchers. (Peter Seixas, University of British Columbia)

Through descriptions of their own research initiatives, generous citation from the literature, and classroom vignettes, the authors make a compelling case for the power of entertaining the beliefs, goals, and values of others and appreciating the past as a very different place from the present. They whet the reader's appetite by showing how the power of evidence and historical context enable students to understand and appreciate why people acted as they did. For the historical researcher, teacher educator, and classroom teacher concerned with meaningful history, this is a must read. (Janet Alleman, Michigan State University)

This book collects enlightening work by leading researchers from the US and the UK. Recommended for graduate students, researchers, and professionals. (*CHOICE*)

Empathy, a construct at the heart of historical understanding, is given fresh life in this exciting collection. With a careful balance of established researchers and rising stars, *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies* sets a new standard in research on history learning. I predict that it will become an indispensable reference for teachers, researchers, and curriculum developers for years to come. (Sam Wineburg, University of Washington)

About the Author
O. L. Davis, Jr. is Catherine Mae Parker Centennial Professor of Curriculum and Instruction. **Elizabeth Anne Yeager** is associate professor of social studies education at the University of Florida. **Stuart J. Foster** is associate professor of social science education at the University of Georgia.

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