

Notes from the Underground

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The Historical Underground

Voices from the Past: Dr. Seuss

By Serena DeLeone, Student

When I hear the name Dr. Seuss, I experience an overwhelming abundance of joy revolving around memories from some of my favorite books such as the all-time classics, *Green Eggs and Ham*, *The Lorax* and *Horton Hears a Who*. I never saw Dr. Seuss as anything more than just a classic childhood storyteller until I spent a summer working at a special needs camp as Nature Director. The theme for that summer was Dr. Seuss, and there were quotes from his books posted throughout the camp. The purpose for this was to remind campers that everyone is different, but we all bring a lesson to life. I had never stopped to consider the deeper significance of the messages in his writings; they were inspirational and sometimes even political. My character was the "Lorax," which I remembered reading as a child; but I re-read it upon taking my Nature Director position so I could play my role properly. The book is about a young boy that seeks out the Once-ler to find out what caused the disappearance of the Truffula trees and why there was smog in the air. The Once-ler explains to the boy how the place used to be beautiful with tall trees, happy animals, and clear breathable air. Then, the greedy old man came and chopped all of the trees down to make Thneed's, polluted the air with his factory, and

forced all the animals out to find food and shelter. The Once-ler then gives the boy a seed in hopes that he brings back the trees. It wasn't until I read this book that I realized it was about corporations being greedy, and going to great lengths to expand their markets; even when that meant damaging the environment. I recognized that Dr. Seuss was weaving meaningful lessons/morals throughout his books, which piqued my curiosity about the man: this mysterious Dr. Seuss.

Theodor Seuss Geisel, Dr. Seuss, was born on March 2, 1904 in Springfield, Massachusetts into a wealthy family of German immigrants. Both his father and grandfather were successful local brewmasters. As Geisel grew up, however, his family had to endure the suffering and hardships that came with



"You're never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child."
~ Dr. Seuss

WWI and the prohibition era. Throughout these tough times Geisel's mother would soothe his sister and him to sleep with rhymes from her childhood. After Geisel became successful, he claimed that his mother was one of his inspirations. As a teen, Geisel attended Dartmouth College, and there he became editor-in-chief for the school magazine called, "Jack-O-Lantern." Geisel was later expelled from the newspaper for having a drinking party, which was not only against school policy, but it was also illegal because it was during prohibition. This setback, however, did not stop Geisel from still writing for the magazine; only now, he would sign his name as "Seuss" instead of his surname, "Geisel," thus creating the inspiration for his nom de plume "Dr. Seuss" later in life. After graduating from Dartmouth, he moved to England and studied at Oxford University to fulfill his father's dream for him of becoming a profes-

sor. Geisel dropped out of Oxford that same year and pursued traveling instead. While in England, he met his first wife, Helen, who later committed suicide in 1967. Helen was suffering from Guillain-Barre syndrome which caused her to have partial paralysis which is one of the reasons she ended her life; the other reason was her suspicions of Geisel having an affair with long time friend Audrey Stone Diamond. After Helen's death, Geisel married Audrey the following year, and he gives her credit for his later success.

Geisel returned to America and pursued cartooning which later led to a fifteen year career making advertisement campaigns for Standard Oil. As WWII grew near, Geisel focused his attention on drawing political cartoons for PM magazine, and later, because Geisel was too old to be drafted during WWII, he created animated cartoon training videos for the army called Private Snafu. Geisel left political cartooning because he was outraged by how our country was bullying smaller nations. It wasn't until Viking Press asked him to illustrate *Boners*, a book of children's sayings, that he got his first real break as an author. Geisel's first book, which he wrote and illustrated, was, *And to Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street*. His book was rejected twenty-seven times until it was finally published by Vanguard Press. This big break came because an old college friend from Dartmouth was an editor for Vanguard. In 1954, *Horton Hears a Who* was published; it is about an elephant that defended a small nation of Who's from his community that was trying to destroy what they saw as just a speck. This book showed Geisel's strong political side and how he had felt during WWII about America bullying small nations to get what they wanted. Geisel later signed a contract with Random House and Houghton Mifflin and penned *The Cat in the Hat* in 1957 which had a message for children that their imagination is important. The last book Geisel wrote before his death was in 1990 called *Oh the places you will go*. The book is about the different obstacles you will face through your life journey. That following year on September 24, 1991, Geisel passed away from throat cancer. By the time of his death he published 44 children's books and they have been translated into 15 different languages. People all over the world have been influenced by these wonderful children's books that took them from childhood to adulthood, and his legacy will continue for generations to come.

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Crocodile Chronicles: The Life of Steven Irwin

By Caleb Hinojos, Student

Born February 22, 1962 to parents Bob and Lyn Irwin, Steve would become the face of animal conservation during the turn of the century. Eventually, he came to host a very popular show called *Croc Files*, which promoted wildlife care and conservation all over the world. While he was not out in the field conducting research, Irwin was the overseer at the Australian Zoo before his untimely death in 2004. But who was Steve Irwin? Although many know of him and his signature statement “Crikey,” most cannot tell you about Irwin the person. So, who is Steve Irwin?!?!

At a young age, Steve developed a love for the natural world. When he was about eight, his father packed up his family and moved them to the Northern Queensland Territory of Australia to open up the Beerwah Reptile Park. It was at this park that Steve would begin working with his signature animal: the crocodile. At the age of 9 he wrestled his first crocodile while on a mission with his father to remove a group of freshwater crocs from the Leichhardt River System in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

As his fascination for animals continued to grow, he began to venture out and do field trips with more of a research emphasis. In 1985, he set out with his Toyota Hilux to the Cape York Peninsula in search of a new type of goanna (monitor lizard). After seven weeks of living in his Hilux he came back home to the park. During this time Steve collected a lot of information about how the monitor lives and reproduces. Three years later, because of all the field time he spent working with them, the then named *Varanus prasinus* would later become known as *Varanus keithornei*, or, in Steve’s words, the “canopy goannas.”

His work with animal discovery did not stop there. While on a fishing trip with his family in 1997 Steve and his father caught an unidentified turtle on the end of his line. After taking pictures to document the capture they released it and went to an expert on turtles John Cann. To commemorate the experience Steve later named the species *Elseya irwini* after his family name.

In the later years of his life, Steve would focus on more environmental conservation methods. “I consider myself a wildlife warrior. My mission is to save the world’s endangered species.” His organizations include the Wildlife Warriors

Worldwide, International Crocodile Rescue, the Lyn Irwin Memorial fund, and the Iron Bark Station Wildlife Rehabilitation facility. He also bought tracts of land in Fiji, Australia, Vanuatu, and America. His intention was to help keep these tracts of land clear of any human interference that would harm the native wildlife. He insisted that everyone could make a difference if they tried.

While shooting a new documentary in 2004 entitled, *Ocean’s Deadliest*, Steve went to a shallow reef to record some footage for his daughter’s television show. Upon spotting a stingray he went in for a closer look. During the approach the stingray became startled due to the crew and cameras and shifted directions for an escape. During this event however Steve was pierced in his pericardium, or the sac that encloses the heart. Paramedics declared him dead at the scene.

It has been almost ten years since his tragic passing, but his influence still lingers. You can go to almost any reptile show and ask some of the collectors, both novice and seasoned, about whom their influences were in the reptile community and most likely his

name will be on the list. He proved that by following his passion and love, you really can make a difference. It is unfortunate that he will never get to see these effects that he has had on herpetologists around the world, but his spirit will be carried on by them regardless.

Steve Robert Irwin’s awards and honors include the Centenary Medal given to him by the Australian government, as well as an adjunct professor position at the University of Queensland School Of Integrative Technology posthumously. He also had a species of land snail, *Crikey steveirwini*, named after him posthumously.



Slavery and the Ultimate Sacrifice

By Cori Juarez, Dual Credit Student

History knows this woman, Margaret Garner, to be the woman that murdered her daughter. In January 1856, Margaret Garner, a slave, murdered her enslaved infant daughter. The question that lingered on everyone’s minds was why?

Margaret Garner was born into slavery in Kentucky in 1833. At the age of sixteen, Margaret met another slave, Robert Garner, and began a relationship. By the autumn of 1849 they were expecting their first child and not long afterwards they married. That same year, Margaret was sold to another member of the Gaines family, Archibald Gaines. Historians say that Archibald could possibly be the father of some of Margaret’s later children because they were born looking almost white. That said, Margaret was racially mixed herself, so we will never know if this is true.

Escaping from slavery was probably going through every slave’s mind, and one day Margaret, Robert, their three children and Robert’s parents boldly set out to cross the Ohio River into the free-state of Ohio. Most of the details of their escape are unknown. There were a variety of problems that the Garners faced, including slave patrols and floating ice on the Ohio River. Their chance of successfully escaping was one in three, but that did not stop them.

Somehow, they finally crossed the river and arrived at the cabin of Margaret’s cousin. The next day, however, with police officers closing in on the cabin, Margaret murdered her daughter. There have been many opinions as to why she killed her daughter, but it seems her motives were innocent as she wanted to protect her children from slavery. According to *The Cincinnati Commercial*,

Margaret said that she had heard other slaves yelling that the police were coming, and at that point, she took a knife and killed her youngest daughter, Mary. She slashed the heads of her other children in an attempt to spare them from slavery as well. Margaret and Robert were both immediately arrested and prosecuted under the Fugitive Slave Act.

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Conversations with History

Kristina Elizondo, Faculty

What courses do you teach at TCC?

I teach courses in Art Appreciation and Art History (Pre-History to Medieval and Renaissance to Present). I also teach a Humanities course during the summer, and have previously taught a Fine Arts Appreciation course at the Northwest campus and hope to teach a HUMA 1305 Mexican-American Studies course.

What is your academic interest/field of expertise?

At TCU I dabbled in Environmental Studies, History and Theater before changing my major to Art. After transferring to UNT and taking an Art History course, I became interested. Early on, my specific interests revolved around Mexican muralists, such as Diego Rivera, but viewing the work of Luis Jimenez at the Dallas Museum of Art (the first exhibition of a Mexican-American artist I'd ever seen) empowered me to pursue a career in art. I could relate to his story, and saw my heritage in his work, which motivated me to pursue art as a profession, not just a hobby.

What designates Mexican-American Art?

This is such a complicated question, and it's not just an art question. The concept of identity is elusive and difficult to define. What makes me Mexican-American? Is it the place that my family is from, the food that I eat, the languages I speak (or don't speak)? What makes me, me? Am I more complicated than the label "Mexican American?" In my opinion, identity is a philosophical discussion, not a mathematical problem with a clear answer. A lot of artists explore the concept of identity in their work today, and as far as I know, no one has come up with an easy answer.

What are your artistic/creative endeavors?

I am an art historian. I am not an artist; I don't make art. Art historians examine works of art throughout history, and study the original context of works of art. Art historians want to know all of the circumstances surrounding a work of art, like who made it, who paid for it and what it says about the culture that made it? Art historians research and write, and try to make sense of the works of

art—pieces of visual culture—that civilizations produce.

What advice do you have for anyone interested in pursuing a career in art history?

Art history can be a wonderful career for those interested in art. I think the first thing a student should do is start applying for internships at art museums. We are fortunate to have many excellent art museums in this area, and all of them offer internship opportunities for college students. My first internship was at the Arlington Museum of Art, while I was a sophomore in college. I wasn't paid, but the experience helped me become a McDermott Intern at the Dallas Museum of Art—a full-time, paid position with benefits. Both of those internships provided me with enough experience to get a staff position as the Assistant Curator of Education at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, and I have had a career that I love ever since.

What do you prefer to do when you are not teaching?

I'm not sure if it is a preference but I usually am working on my doctoral dissertation. As many TCC students know, working full time while going to school can be challenging, but it will be worth it when I earn my doctoral degree.

If you could have lunch with any historical figure, where would you go and what would you order? What would you talk about?

I'd have lunch with Hatshepsut (first female Pharaoh of Egypt). Like most Egyptian pharaohs, there were many images made of her, but most usually depicted her as a man. I probably would want to know what it was like to be one of the first female rulers in history. Since she was a pharaoh, I'm guessing she'd have domestic staff that would prepare our lunch; I'd let her decide on what to serve.

If you could fight any historical figure, who would it be and why?

I'm not much of a fighter, but I've been meaning to

write a strongly worded letter to the British Museum to let them know that I think they need to return the Parthenon Marbles to Greece. In the early 1800s, Thomas Bruce removed about half of the sculptures from the Parthenon, the greatest artistic symbol from ancient Athens. British Museum ownership of these masterpieces has always been controversial, but now it's really time for them to return the statues to Greece, their country of origin.

If education/academia was not your career path, what could you see yourself doing with the rest of your life?

This is a hard question, because I am very happy with my career and it's hard to imagine doing anything else. But, I have always really liked animals, so I could definitely see myself doing some kind of rescue or veterinary work with a variety of animals. I also have always been really interested in astronomy, and that interest was recently rekindled over spring break when I visited the McDonald Observatory in west Texas. It was incredible to see the sky through really powerful telescopes with no light pollution.

Any future developments you'd care to share?

Being an art historian, there is nothing better than seeing works of art in person, rather than via a projector in a classroom. It'd be wonderful if TCC students and faculty could travel abroad—to Italy, Spain, France—to see great masterpieces in person. I'm hopeful that one day we may be able to do that.



Kristina Elizondo's alter ego

Slavery and the Ultimate Sacrifice, Cont.

This case brought out pro- and antislavery activists. Most Southern newspapers were so uncomfortable with the situation that they refused to even write stories about it. The pro-slavery activists that did address the situation claimed that this murder was proof of slaves' inhumanity and that slaves were being instigated into crazed acts by the Northern abolitionist press. But the abolitionists, or antislavery activists, looked at Margaret as a tragic hero and that she did this because she truly loved her kids and did not want them to suffer. Eventually, Margaret and the rest of the family were returned to slavery, and Margaret died two years later as a slave in Louisiana.

Immediately after the Civil War, the case ceased to be part of America's public memory. Stories, about Dred Scott and Anthony Burns are still covered in U.S. history classes today, but Margaret's story, which was just as sensational, has dropped out of the historical narrative. I believe the main factor was because Margaret was a woman and the other cases were about men. White women did not have a place in national politics and society, so there was no way a black woman would be written into the history books. Perhaps another reason why Margaret's story has been buried is because we are just uncomfortable with a mother killing her child no matter the situation. It is worth noting that one of the most popular plays in mid-nineteenth-century America was *Virginius: A Tragedy in Five Acts*

in which a Roman (male) soldier kills his daughter when it is clear that she is about to be enslaved and sexually abused. Virginius was an enduring hero, while Margaret was quickly forgotten.

Even though a lot of Margaret's history is forgotten there are still writers and historians out there that examine her unforgettable story. For example, Toni Morrison's recent novel *Beloved* and her opera "Margaret Garner" both served to rekindle this memory. Margaret Garner is probably one of the strongest women to have ever experienced slavery. What she did was out of love for her family, not out of inhumanity.



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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Greetings brothers and sisters, friends and enemies (we recognize everyone) — we are proud to present to you the final installment of *Notes from the Underground* for the academic year 2012-2013. This month we have four solid articles from students, which include biographical abstracts of Dr. Seuss, Margaret Garner, and Steve Irwin, all of which illuminate their important legacy in different periods of American history. We have resurrected our Educator Spotlight with our very own Kristina Elizondo, TCC SE Instructor of Art and Sponsor of the Dead Artist Society.

At this time, we would like to recognize the officers, members and wallflowers of The Historical Underground. This organization is truly yours. *You* have made the meetings lively, thoughtful and productive, and this publication is the product of your effort and indefatigable inquisitiveness. College is supposed to be about intellectual explorations and learning, and you guys have taken it to another level this year with the meetings, *NFTU*, and club outings/events. We also want to send a thank you to all at the Printshop and Student Activities who handle our last minute requests and efforts, we appreciate your patience and professionalism dearly. Lastly, we would like to extend a special thank you to Mike Cinatl for his unyielding support and his constant feedback on every single edition!

April is the month in which this nation celebrates Earth Day. It is interesting to see how Americans' conceptions of the environment have evolved throughout history. Many of us point out in our classes how industrialization and romanticism worked together to produce a new way of thinking about nature as a landscape, but few of us can synthesize a period of 500 years the way Dr. Christopher Morris has in his new book about the Mississippi River Valley, *The Big Muddy*. Dr. Morris is coming to Southeast Campus to discuss his new book on April 24 in the Reading Room of the library from 1-2:20 p.m., and he is sure to provoke some thought about how our views of nature have interacted with the way we actually treat the environment.

As we conclude this year, we at The Historical Underground want to remind every student, faculty and staff member of this campus to get involved, take action, and be heard. The Historical Underground is our vehicle for action, *Notes from the Underground* is our mouthpiece for knowledge, information, and action. History is our weapon for change. **WE AT THE HISTORICAL UNDERGROUND WANT YOU. WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!** If you are interested in writing for this publication all you have to do is email: bradley.borougerdi@tccd.edu, gregory.kosc@tccd.edu, or eric.salas@tccd.edu and we will guide you through the process. Again, thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. If you are interested in joining The Historical Underground, we are holding meetings every Friday at 1p.m. in room 1224. Peace be with you all.

~ Bradley J. Borougerdi, Greg Kosc, & Eric Salas