

Notes from the Underground

* * * * *

The Historical Underground

The Doctor Seuss Project

By Mahyar Taskindoust, Student

Many of us know the works of Theodor S. Geisel, but we probably know him by his penname, Dr. Seuss. We may have grown up reading stories like *The Cat In The Hat* and *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*, just to name a few. Psychologists and researchers have agreed that these books are excellent for the development of children. Even competing authors like Maurice Sendak who wrote *Where The Wild Things Are* berates how newer children's books are not beneficial to the child, but he goes out of his way to praise how good Dr. Seuss books are.

The plots in Geisel's stories are simple enough for a child to grasp, but perhaps less known are the deeper meanings and symbolism behind these seemingly simple stories. For example, the story of the Sneetches demonstrates the effects racism and intolerance has on societies. In the story, the starbellied Sneetches act superior towards the plain-bellied Sneetches. During the Bosnian conflict, NATO translated the book into

Serbo-Croatian and distributed the book to 500,000 children in Bosnia and Herzegovina to help educate children and promote tolerance. In *Yurtle The Turtle*, Dr. Seuss shows the dangers of being overly-ambitious. As Yurtle climbed on the backs of other turtles, he forced them to bare all the burden so that he could expand the size of his kingdom. The reader is reminded of Hitler's rise to power, which ultimately collapsed when the structure of power he stood upon fell in the same way Yurtle did.

There are also a few stories that take a more grim approach. *The Butter Battle Book*, for example, can be used to describe the Cold War and the massive arms race between the two superpowers of the world. The Zooks and Yooks lived on opposite sides of a long curving wall (much like the Berlin wall) when they began fighting one another and developed more powerful weapons. Eventually, both obtained the "final weapon," which was a tiny red bomb that neither side

could defend against. Similar to the nuclear standoff between the United States and Soviet Union, both sides in the book wait in anticipation to see who would be the first to fire their salvo.

Dr. Seuss' use of rhyming and colorful illustrations provide a great attraction to young children, and the limited vocabulary helps children easily comprehend the message he is trying to convey, even if they do not recognize the subliminal messages for what they truly are. It is stories like these that help young minds develop into something positive and healthy. Even twenty years after his death, the books still influence young children like no others.



Inside this issue:

The Doctor Seuss Project	1
THU's Top Ten: The Breakdown	1
The Doctor Seuss Project, Part II	2
Voices for All to Hear	2
Historical Movie Review	3
Voices from the Past	3
Letter from the Editor	4

THU's Top Ten: The Breakdown

It's that time of the year for The Historical Underground to present our Top Ten Historical Figures list, as chosen by our very own active agitators. Like most top ten lists, this one is not without controversy. With tyrants, psychopaths, and not a single woman, there is little doubt that this list is sure to offend ... heck, I'm offended; yet this is our list nonetheless. I'm sure - like most readers - you will see this list and begin to ask ... "What?! Wait a minute ... this is ridiculous ... they have this person but not that person?!" In fact, the heated standoff has already begun at some of our meetings and will most likely continue. The method to our madness began with the scrawling of historical figures' names on the board as if we were about to conduct a fan-

tasy football draft. Then, we methodically purged the list through countless sessions of debate, and we were eventually able to narrow down the suggestions to the chosen few listed before your eyes. So, without further ado, in no particular order, here is the list:

Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Albert Einstein, Socrates, Galileo, Napoleon Bonaparte, Sun Tzu, Karl Marx, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ghandi.

If any of these names rings a bell to you, then great; if not, then have no fear, for we at The Historical Underground will be dedicating sections of our newsletter to delve deeper into the history of each figure listed. And if

you are appalled by the fact that someone you think should be on the list but is not, then what are you waiting for? Make your way to the next THU meeting and let your voice be heard. After all, the list is not carved in stone! The only rule is that religious leaders do not qualify.

~Eric Salas, Faculty



WIPE THAT SNEER OFF HIS FACE!

BUY
WAR SAVINGS BONDS & STAMPS

The Doctor Seuss Project, Part II

Bradley J Borougerdi, Faculty

There is no doubt, as the writer on the first page of this publication so eloquently pointed out, that Dr. Seuss deserves a lot of credit for his uncanny ability to evoke sentimental joy through telling stories designed to teach kids a moral lesson about life. Most Americans, however, are probably unaware of his lesser known posters and political cartoons from the World War II era, which depict German and Japanese leaders in racist dehumanizing caricatures. One example is the racist poster you see on the top left depicting Japanese Emperor Hirohito in a negative stereotype, suggesting that the Emperor and all Japanese people are nearsighted and childlike. Others are quite hilarious, such as the one displayed on the bottom left that plays on Americans' fears of defeat during World War II.

In addition to his work as a political cartoonist and propagandist during World War II, Dr. Seuss was commissioned by the U.S. government to create a series of instructional cartoons for American soldiers. The lead character in these cartoons was Private Snafu, who always ended up making mistakes on the battlefield that led to his demise. The idea was to playfully show American soldiers what *not* to do while fighting in war, and it was quite successful.

After the war, he branched off to create hundreds of cartoons and political ads that reflected his sometimes controversial perspectives in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Many of the views he held were quite progressive, such as his views condemning the American War Department for discriminating against African Americans.

However, as already mentioned, his racism towards Japanese people led him to remain silent about the Japanese internment camps that America established during the war. The government demanded that anyone - American born or otherwise - who had as little as 1/16th Japanese blood in their body be expelled from their homes and forced to live a harsh life of confinement until the war was over. The detained never received compensation for the property, time, and labor they lost during the process. The short but excellent documentary, *Days of Waiting*, depicts Japanese-Americans' struggle during the war. Seuss' silence on this issue is a grim reminder that even though he held some progressive positions, he was not immune to the collective silence surrounding the internment camps.

Voices for All to Hear: Notes from the TCCD Trayvon Rally

Random Rants

“Even with powerful speakers sharing moving testimonies, the true stars of the rally were [students] Marqus and Latarsha.”

After attending a lecture series on Feminism in the Northern Ballroom at TCC SE, another THU sponsor and I were pulled aside and introduced to Marqus Smith. Along with his wife Latarsha Smith, the two were organizing a rally for Trayvon Martin and asked if we would be willing to speak at the event. Impressed with their utmost sincerity and the fact that they were just two concerned students at our campus, we agreed. Marqus and Latarsha petitioned to get the event sanctioned by Student Activities, they created flyers, they invited local activists from Arlington's NAACP to participate, and even garnered the attention of CBS local news. In fact, to this day, TCCD SE is the only community college in Texas to have held a rally to reflect on this tragic incident.

The rally was held outside the front of TCC SE on March 28th, 2012. It

began at noon and lasted almost 2 hours. It was a successful and enlightening experience for the Southeast campus and the community at large. Even with powerful speakers sharing moving testimonies, the true stars of the rally were Marqus and Latarsha. These young activists wanted to bring awareness to the myriad of issues involved in this unfortunate case and how they might resonate with our Tarrant County community.

Marcus and Latarsha represent the spirit of being conscious and concerned about their community and expressing these concerns at a place where freedom of expression deserves the highest attention: an institution of higher learning. We at The Historical Underground are proud of and courage the activism demonstrated by Marqus and Latarsha Smith and believe that they represent the core ideals of higher

learning by championing thoughtful discourse to bring about a resolution for a better community ... today and tomorrow. Our president, Dr. Coppola, also deserves credit for having the courage to support these students by letting them voice their opinion on campus.

~Eric Salas, Faculty



Historical Movie Review:

Der Baader Meinhof Komplex

Uli Edel's 2008 film depicting the rise of the Red Army Faction takes us to the turbulent days of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and examines some of the more radical aspects of the period's left-wing student movement.

West Germany's Red Army Faction (RAF) was a student-led Marxist-Leninist organization aimed at eliminating imperialist elements within the West German government. Many West Germans were concerned with their country's increasing militarization in the 1950s and their overt support for the U.S. and Great Britain in the Cold War. Germany had entered into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1955 and began building an army to actively participate in NATO's mission of collective defense.

The RAF perceived many of these long-term developments as reactionary elements of a fascist state and began engaging in armed resistance. The RAF carried out a series of multiple bombings, arsons, and assassinations throughout the 60s and 70s. The Baader Meinhof Complex takes a close look at the members of the Red Army Faction as well as their basis for carrying out acts of terrorism. With the suppression of popular social movements during the late 60s, escalation of the Vietnam War and American intervention in Latin America and the Middle East, members of the RAF felt as if armed proletarian revolution, as opposed to non-violent civil disobedience, was the only way to bring about an end to imperialism. The film also takes a look at the sense of fear that engulfed both the country at the time of the RAF bombings and members of the RAF themselves, making this a very suspenseful and intense political thriller.

~Joseph Huber, Student



Voices From the Past

Bradley J Borougerdi, Faculty

Joseph Stalin. Perhaps one of the most recognizable faces in history. This man was behind one of the most profound societal transformations the world has ever seen. It is still a mystery as to how he was able to manipulate and control so many people, as he was not the great orator that Hitler was, and his demeanor was not particularly attractive. In fact, despite the idealized image of his face (at bottom right), the man born Joseph Dzhugashvili in Georgia during the Russian Empire had a rather menacing look to him. His face was littered with pockmarks, and sources say one arm was recognizably shorter than the other, which caused him to fail the military test to serve in the Tsar's army.

Nevertheless, arguably more so than anyone else in history, the man who took the pseudonym Stalin (meaning man of steel) during the years of revolutionary activism before the Bolshevik Revolution was able to control everything in his path and drastically influenced the trajectory of Russian history; all before dying peacefully in his bed in the 1950s.

After being kicked out of seminary school in his youth, he became a revolutionary criminal of sorts, evading capture countless times. He even escaped with all the money from a 1908 bank robbery that left everyone else involved dead or

arrested. This type of luck seemed to follow Stalin everywhere he went. This was especially the case after the bloody civil war years, when the Tsar and his brutal secret police organizations went to great lengths to torture the Russian peasants into submission. Moreover, Stalin displayed an uncanny ability to get people to defy the police.

Eventually, he became the de facto leader of the Bolshevik party, but he stepped down when Lenin came back from exile to lead the revolution. In many ways this was a genius move, as he was appointed commissar of nationality, which was an obscure position but full of bureaucratic work that allowed him to develop personal relationships with people in positions who could get things done. After Lenin's death, the connections he made over the years allowed him to defeat his political opponents and rise to power. Interestingly, his totalitarian rule was just as Tsarist as it was communistic, making him more of a traditional Russian ruler than the revolutionary he liked to claim he was. His experience as head of the bureaucracy gave him access to important information, and his corrupt personality was such that he had no qualms with using it all for personal gain.

In fact, in contrast to many others on our top 10 list, Stalin was all about

establishing and maintaining his own power. Nobody did it better than him. Granted, he miraculously brought industrialization, innovation, and superpowerdom to Russia, but he killed millions of people doing it. The Great Purges saw thousands of people perish, and millions more were shot and dumped in mass graves. But Stalin's victims didn't just perish; they were erased from historical memory. Researching photos from the 1930s reveals that he even took the time to ensure that his enemies were cropped out of all photos so that they literally disappeared without a trace.

What made him so influential, however, was that he was able to do all this without losing a shred of his popularity. I interviewed an 85 year old WWII veteran in Volgograd about 5 years ago who told me with a straight face that, "in the 1940s, if you opposed Stalin, you deserved to die." And die they did; by the millions. When it was all said and done, the cult of personality he was able to create for himself was so powerful that people actually dropped dead at his funeral after seeing his lifeless body! This type of power has been unrivaled by any in history, no doubt making this monster of a man one of the most powerful and influential leaders the world has ever seen.

"The death of one man is a tragedy. The death of millions is a statistic."

~Stalin





Notes from the Underground

Volume 1, Issue 6 — April 2012

"HISTORY IS OUR WEAPON OF CHOICE"



Join Us: Fridays/1:00pm/ESEE 1224

Contact: Bradley.borougerdi@tccd.edu



Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are proud to present to you our sixth edition of *Notes From the Underground*. First things first, we recently held elections and we want to recognize our outgoing officers' efforts and contributions and congratulate all of the new officers of our organization. Going forward, Austins Ossai will be our new President, and he will be providing leadership and direction for our group over the next year. Our Vice President, and a contributor to this edition of *Notes*, is Mahyar Taskindoust. Past and future contributor to *Notes*, Sarah Dinh, will serve as our Secretary and Minister of Propaganda. Margie Gray was not only elected to be Treasurer, but was recently honored for being our most outstanding member.

Our organization continues to be active on and off campus. April is going to be a particularly busy month and there are a few important activities that we would like to call everyone's attention to. First, our local chapter of the NAACP is petitioning to change the name of Division Street in Arlington to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. In order to do this, the NAACP is collecting the necessary signatures to petition the city at TCC-SE. Our organization has agreed to help staff tables in the Southeast commons to collect the signatures. We believe that public commemorations of Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement are important to maintaining a consciousness about the past, and we invite you to stop by and sign the petition. It is our hope that we will begin to see further efforts to rename public spaces and streets after local Civil Rights heroes such as Juanita Craft and A. Maceo Smith. Our organization is also going to be traveling to the Sixth Floor Museum on Saturday April 28th to conduct research for a documentary that we will produce about the museum and its resources. We produced a similar documentary last year about the Holocaust Museum in Dallas.

Lastly, we are going to publish a May edition of *Notes* so there is still time to submit articles for publication and consideration for our end-of-the-year awards. As always, if you are interested in contributing, join us on CampusCruiser and for our in-person meetings on Fridays at 1pm in ESEE 1224.

~Greg Kosc, Eric Salas, and Brad Borougerdi

