

Not Your Ordinary School Textbooks

"You'll never believe what happened at the book festival on Sunday! Betty and I were working the table and this boy came by. He took the textbook and said, 'I know this book.' I asked him how he knew it, and he said because it is in his classroom. He told us that he 'loved the book.' I asked him what he liked about the book and he said, 'It's not ordinary history, it's interesting history.'"

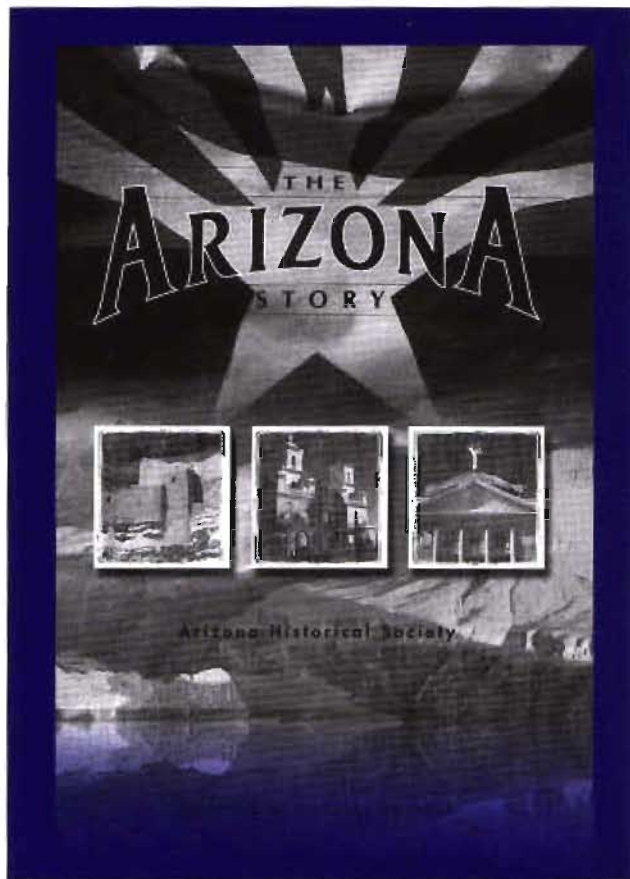
—KYLE MCKOY, Director
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In 2009, the AASLH Awards Review Committee received four separate school textbook nominations from Arizona, Wisconsin, Montana, and North Dakota. After thorough review, the Committee concurred that each deserved Leadership in History Awards from AASLH. While the projects varied greatly in scale, approach, budget, timeline for development, and audience, all four provide interesting models for consideration in the field. And none can be accused of being simply ordinary history.

Arizona

From 2006 through 2008, the Arizona Historical Society (AHS) developed *The Arizona Story* for the benefit of the state's fourth-grade students. Created in response to the special emphasis the Arizona Department of Education Standards for Social Studies placed on analyzing and assessing primary resources, the AHS textbook provides ample opportunities for students to discover Arizona history through the use of the society's collections. The resulting text tells the state's story with illustrations from AHS's photographic, archival, and object collections.

The text's publisher, Gibbs Smith, bore all advertisement, promotion, and printing costs. While generally organized chronologically, and presenting Arizona's history from 10,000 B.C.E. to the present, the textbook also contains chapters on Arizona's land (combining the geol-



ogy, geography, and ecology of the state), U.S. and Arizona civic and governmental history, and Arizona economics.

The book is particularly notable in that it integrates and supports multiple intelligence learning strategies into the classroom and combines multiple intelligence learning techniques with museum collections, state, and national history. As Syd Golston, president elect of the National Council for the Social Studies, shared, "I find [*The Arizona Story*] of high interest for young readers, yet challenging enough for teachers to use as they move the elementary curriculum toward real and detailed study of history. In fact, the opening chapter comprises a wonderful introduction for young people to the concept and practice of history as a discipline."

Thus far, nineteen of the twenty Arizona school districts where AHS has presented the text, as well as numerous private and charter schools, have adopted the book for use. Districts from the

Navajo Nation to the Pima-Maricopa Indian Reservation, and from rural and urban districts alike, have chosen this text over the three competitive textbooks for use in their schools. Curriculum materials include the textbook, a wraparound teacher edition, a teacher resource guide, audio books in both Spanish and English, transparencies, and a website that houses multimedia resources.

The Arizona Story truly stood out among other textbooks offered to Arizona schools. Korin Forbes, Elementary Social Studies Specialist for Mesa Public Schools, noted, "Mesa Public Schools (MPS) adopted this program in May 2007, after a nine-month adoption process in-

volving teachers, staff, and community members. Some of the unique features that made this program stand out above the alternatives were the ease of use of the teacher's edition, the high interest level of student materials, and the accurate portrayal of the history of Arizona.... Many MPS students are first and second generation Hispanics and do not have a solid grasp of their heritage and the importance it has in our nation's history. *The Arizona Story* gives them reasons to value the uniqueness of where they live, learn more about their heritage and be proud of it."

And, perhaps most importantly, the students enjoy using the book themselves. "I have to admit, the Arizona book rocks!" writes a fourth-grade student from Mesa Public Schools, "the book is full of all kinds of interesting facts. My favorites were where it talks about the Hohokam and how they used to live and what the sports were like. I appreciate the book we have."