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Genetic Testing: Modern-Day Eugenics?

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"Eugenics is the science which deals with all the influences that improve and develop the inborn qualities of a race" argued Sir Francis Galton in an editorial published in *Nature* in May 1904. The brief article is not a scientific study, but serves as a succinct treatise of Galton's work and his motivations. His argument is persuasive, as his intentions are genuine and aimed at creating a better society, a society that would not be plagued by disease and immoral behaviors.

Eugenicists called for the improvement of the human race through better breeding. In *Heredity and Eugenics*, Charles Davenport postulated that with proper application, Eugenics could solve the social problems that were plaguing society at the beginning of the 20th century. Most importantly, Eugenics was used to justify the separation of the different races to ensure that the population of the US would not become more "mercurial and darker in pigmentation". The Eugenicists would win their ultimate victory in 1924 with the passage of a sweeping immigration reform bill limiting the number of immigrants from what some Eugenicists considered to be the less desirable corners of the Earth.

This unit will have three main themes. First, it will examine the social conditions that existed in the late 19th century that allowed the Eugenics Movement to emerge and flourish. Part of this effort will include looking at the writings of Charles Davenport, Sir Francis Galton, and other early eugenicists. Also included in this historical piece will be an examination of the 1924 immigration law that created the quota system that would be used for than 40 years. Second, this unit will examine how the Eugenics Movement influenced other social constructs of the time period including methods of controlling the less desirable. This includes the Supreme Court decision in *Buck vs. Bell* (1927) and the sterilization of mentally incompetent individuals. The third part of the unit will focus on the way eugenic science creeps into our present day life. This will mainly take the shape of examining the use of prenatal genetic testing and its impact. It will examine the social, ethical, and moral issues associated with genuine hereditary diseases, and the best way to address these valid and genuine concerns.

To approach controversial moments in history with dignity, it is imperative that the teacher remains unbiased. Of particular concern with this unit is not the history being studied, but the present day debate over genetic testing. In the unit design and classroom instruction, it will be necessary that the conversation and lessons are structured enough to allow all voices to be heard and validated.

Essential Questions

1. What were the origins of the Eugenics movement? What role did Charles' Darwin and his Theory of Evolution play?
2. How is access and membership in society controlled? What role did the Eugenics movement play in the 19th century as a mechanism of control?
3. How was the Eugenics Movement used to justify and control society including the use of sterilization and immigration reform?
4. How should the government use science in the present day in constructing public policy?
5. What are our moral and ethical obligations in regards to childbirth in the present day? How does Darwinian medicine influence these obligations?

Classroom Environment

I mostly teach 11th and 12th grade at New Haven Academy, a small interdistrict magnet school in New Haven, Connecticut. The size of the school helps to foster an environment rich in intense and close relationships among the members of the school community. Black and Hispanic students make up 80% of the student body, the remaining 20% are Caucasian. Also, roughly 65% of the students are from New Haven while the remaining 35% reside in the suburbs of the city. A large portion of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch, and the school qualifies for a free breakfast program. Classes at New Haven Academy are small, are sixty to seventy minutes in length, and in the Humanities Department, meet daily. Therefore, students are able to spend a significant amount of time investigating and studying each unit of study. Finally, New Haven Academy does not track students, and there is no leveling of students based on ability. Therefore, in my class at any given time I will have students that might be in an upper level or lower level class at the same time. Therefore, it is imperative that all of my activities are accessible and meaningful for a variety of abilities.

New Haven Academy has an intense relationship with an outside organization, Facing History and Ourselves. A not for profit international organization, Facing History's mission is to foster a critical understanding of the choices we make and to force students to take responsibility for their community. The Facing History network is large and each member school participates differently with a varying amount of intensity. At New Haven Academy, participation is intense, and we utilize the Facing History curriculum extensively. In the ninth grade students take a seminar titled the Holocaust and Human Behavior. The course is a study of the Weimar Republic and the events that led to the Holocaust. In the latter parts of the course student look at issues of accountability, and traditionally, put individuals on trial for their participation in the Holocaust. In the past, students have put on trial Walter Stier, a bureaucrat that helped organize the special trains that transported

the prisoners to the concentration camps, and Elwira Bauzer, a children's book author who wrote propaganda. In the tenth grade students take a course that applies the scope and sequence of the Holocaust course to three additional atrocities: the Armenian Genocide, Apartheid in South Africa, and the Rwandan Genocide. The basic goal of the second course is to examine the connections and patterns that emerge in history. In the twelve grade students study the Civil Rights Movement utilizing the documentary film *Eyes on the Prize* and complete an independent Social Action project. In this project students choose a local, national, or international issue, and design and implement an independent community service project to address the issue. It is in the eleventh grade that students study the Eugenics Movement and its role in constructing the 19th century social fabric of the United States.

Scope and Sequence

Facing History and Ourselves provides a particular scope and sequence as a basis for the curriculum that they write. Most of my units follow the same basic framework. Although this unit will not follow the framework as extensively as others, it will contain many of the same elements. The unit will be taught to my 11th grade Humanities class. This particular course is an examination of United States social, political, and cultural history from Reconstruction to the Present Day using both primary source historical documents and literature. By the time students take my class, they are familiar with Facing History and Ourselves, and will understand the vocabulary that is particular to that curriculum.

The general framework of a unit consists of the following sequence. To start, students examine issues of individual identity and their own role and place in the community. From here students move on to examine what is called We and They behavior. They explore the nature of group behavior and how access to the group is controlled. The third section is a historical case study. For the 11th grade, this will take the shape of examining the origins of the Eugenics movement and its impact on late 19th century and early 20th century America. The case study will also examine how several threads weave their way into American society throughout the 20th century. These include immigration reform and forced sterilization laws that were legislated in the middle part of the century. Finally, the last portion of the scope and sequence is known as Choosing to Participate. The central idea here is to encourage students to utilize historical awareness and knowledge to make informed decisions about the present day. For this unit, students will engage in activities that allow them to explore the present day and evaluate the use of genetic testing. In the end, students will determine if genetic testing does or does not qualify as modern day eugenics.

Central to my teaching and to my classroom is the idea that the student plays and embraces the role of the historian. Therefore, my eleventh grade course is very much about teaching the historian's craft and preparing students to think like a historian. Consequently, my course is more about how to write history, than it is about the history itself. This is not to say that students do not learn US History. That is far from the truth. In my class students use the chronology of US History to learn how to research and write about the past and its relevance to the modern day. The general rule in my classroom is that students do not report what happened, they interpret what happened. Also, my end of course culminating project is a 10-15 page historical thesis. This is a graduation requirement, and all students must complete this paper to graduate from New Haven Academy. My course is very much focused on preparing students to write this paper well. The best way to accomplish this is to rely heavily upon primary source documents. This unit will be no different. Most of what the students

will read and write about can not be found in the typical history textbook, and therefore, must be located elsewhere. In the body of this unit I will refer to several texts and documents and how to access them is appropriate.

The Process

The unit will follow the above-mentioned scope and sequence. The unit is designed to take place over the course of several weeks, although this can easily be adapted to serve the needs of the individual teacher. Typically, the use of a journal is standard in a Facing History class. The journal is different from the regular class notebook. Into the journal go guided student reflections, notes, activities, and handouts. However, the journal is periodically read and checked by the teacher, and it becomes an instrument for conversation between the teacher and the student. Also, I require that students participate fully in my class. This does not mean that students necessarily have to orally participate in class, as that is merely one aspect of participation. The journal allows students to participate in a different manner, and allows the teacher to more accurately assess their learning.

Introducing the Unit to the Students

At times, students often feel as if they do not understand how individual lessons fit together to make a cohesive unit. It is important, therefore, to make sure that they understand the rationale and overarching purpose behind a unit, and for them to see where it is that they will end up. The initial activity plays a crucial role in understanding the structure of the unit, and also allows students to immediately play a critical role in the unit. Students will start this unit with a quick inquiry based activity using primary source documents. This will allow them to explore the themes of the unit, to develop questions of study, and to develop an investment in the unit as a whole.

To start, I think the most appropriate set of documents would be four excerpts from Charles Davenport's book *Heredity in relation to Eugenics* from 1911. I think the best way to examine each of the passages is to have students look for something specific in the text that allows them to access the material regardless of their reading and comprehension level. There are several different tasks that could be assigned to individual students based on their ability level. These could include any combination of the following: list all words that repeat themselves; underline nouns, circle adjectives and adverbs, square verbs; summarize the paragraph in a text message of one hundred characters or less; write a telegram to a friend of no more than 25 words. What each of these short tasks does is that it allows all students to access the material at their own level and participate in the lesson. Each task allows the student to determine the main idea of the passage at a level that they can work. A way to take this to another level is have students list the repeating words, the nouns, and the adjectives, and then have all students write new compound and complex sentences uses only these words. In the end, the class will end up determining the main idea of the passages while working on their writing skills.

The first passage appears at the very beginning of the work. Davenport wrote, "Eugenics is the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding or, as the late Sir Francis Galton expressed it: "The science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race." The eugenical standpoint is that of the agriculturalist who, while recognizing the value of culture [environment], believes that permanent

advance is to be made only by securing the best "blood." Man is an organism--an animal; and the laws of improvement of corn and racehorses hold true for him also. Unless people accept this simple truth and let it influence marriage selection, human progress will cease." ¹ In the very first paragraph of his book, Davenport is defining the parameters of Eugenics. His comparison of human reproduction to the controlled breeding of racehorses is perhaps the most revealing part of this passage. Immediately, Davenport is implying the amount of control that ought to be exerted over human reproduction, and in a way, he has reduced human reproduction to a task that must be completed.

The next three selections appear in the book much later. In the second, Davenport starts to examine how the immigrant is fundamentally different than those that already live in the United States. He wrote, "their is no question that, taken as a whole, the hordes of Jews that are now coming to us from Russia and the extreme southeast of Europe, with their intense individualism and ideals of gain at the cost of any interest, represent the opposite extreme from the early English and the more recent Scandinavian immigration with their ideals of community life in the open country, advancement by the sweat of the brow, and the uprearing of families in the fear of God and the love of country." ² Davenport hints at the great change in migratory patterns that shifted during the early years of the 20th century. Previously, most immigrants came from Northern and Western Europe, but that has shifted to be predominately Southern and Eastern Europe. He sees these new people as the "other" and is weary of the contributions that they will make to society.

His fears are summarized in the following passage. "Summarizing the review of recent conditions of immigration it appears certain that, unless conditions change of themselves or are radically changed, the population of the United states will, on account of the great influx of blood from South-eastern Europe, rapidly become darker in pigmentation, smaller in stature, more mercurial, more attached to music and art, more given to crimes of larceny, kidnapping, assault, murder, rape and sex-immorality and less given to burglary, drunkenness and vagrancy that were the original English settlers. Since of the insane in hospitals there are relatively more foreign-born than native it seems probable that, under present conditions, the ratio of insanity in the population will rapidly increase." ³ It is quite evident that Davenport is linking the social problems of the day that plagued urban America to the large influx of new immigrants. Here, it is also clear that there is a perceived link between social problems and personality traits and heredity.

In this next passage, Davenport asserts his solution to the current immigration peril. He wrote that, "if increasing attention is paid to the selective elimination at our ports of entry of the actually undesirable (those with a germ plasm that has imbecile, epileptic, insane, criminalistic, alcoholic, and sexually immoral tendencies); if agents in Europe learn the family history of all applicants for naturalization; if the luring of the credulous and suggestible by steamship agents abroad and especially in the south-east of Europe be reduced to its lowest limits, then we may expect to see our population not harmed but improved by this mixtures with a more mercurial people." ⁴ In this passage Davenport is clearly proposing limiting the number of new immigrants and placing harsh restrictions on any new immigrant population. He is also indicating that the continued prosperity of the United States is dependent upon better state control over breeding patterns.

This might seem like a strange way to introduce the material, starting off with material that does not actually happen first - there is much that happens before this publication. However, it seems to be a great inquiry based learning tool. By that, it summarizes so much about the Eugenics movement so succinctly, that unpacking the reading allows students to start developing questions. The book is old enough that it is now in the public domain, and can easily be accessed via Google books.

Foundations of the Eugenics Movement

The first section of the unit is an exploration of race theory and the beginnings of the Eugenics Movement. It will allow students to explore the origins of the movement. It is important to note that this part of the unit is mostly about the late 19th century, and leads up to the publication of Davenport's book in 1911.

To explore the foundations of the Eugenics movement and its origins, I think it is best to examine closely a few key resources. Through these resources, students will be able to discern the primary concepts that the movement is built upon. To get to this point, a few principles need to be addressed. To begin with, 18th century science was vexed with trying to figure out the source of mankind's differences. This was very much a product of the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason. It is out of the Enlightenment that modern science, and the Eugenics Movement, will emerge. The first principle to understanding the Eugenics Movement is to understand the question of why we are different. Some interesting class work can emerge out of pondering its possible answers, and provides an interesting exploration of our identity. A great resource to utilize with students to begin this conversation is a poem by James Berry titled "What do we do with a Variation". The poem can be found in the Facing History and Ourselves resource book Race and Membership. It is a short piece, only six stanzas of three lines. At the beginning it presents the question "what do we do with a difference?" and then provides the reader with several possible answers. These include: discuss its oddity, ignore it, poke it with a stick, clobber it to death, look at it with awe, work for it to disappear, pass it stealthily, will it to become like ourselves, or change route away from it. For the author, these are all inadequate responses, and he finishes his poem by stating that we ought to "let application acknowledge it for barriers to fall down?" A simple process to use with the poem in the classroom is to first have students read the poem aloud. Then have them choose which answer they agree with most. This provides an easy way to have all students participate and interact with the poem. The poem itself calls into question the nature of human identity, and seeks to answer one of very questions that Eugenic scientists sought out. These questions include why we are different, and secondly, how to improve the human race. The poem examines how humans ought to interact with each other, and how to exist in the same social sphere as each other for the mutual benefit of each other.

The next source that students should examine that will help them understand the principles of the Eugenics Movement is a diagram created by Petrus Camper in the late 18th Century. This work, titled "The progression of skull and facial expressions - from monkey, through black, to the average European and then thence to the Greek ideal-type." The drawing is an example of how in modern times racism adopted a "neo-classical male aesthetic, encouraged by anthropologists who liked to contrast natives and Europeans based on their resemblance to or differences from the idealized Greeks." ⁵ Man was measured in worth based on his relative resemblance to the Ancient Greeks; often regard as the father of our modern civilization. Although much is owed to the Ancient people of Egypt and Mesopotamia, it will be from the Greeks that much of our Modern society is rooted in. Specifically, their ideas about philosophy, education, art, and government all permeate our modern structures. The picture is a series of five skulls, each with a corresponding picture of a face. The skulls progress from left to right, small to big, uncivilized to civilized. In the classroom, the following activity can help students begin to dissect and understand a visual source. First, project the image on an overhead and distribute a copy of the image to each student. On the student version be sure to leave ample room for students to take notes. Next, on the handout students should create two columns, observation and interpretations. Have the students spend a few minutes describing what they see in the image. Literally, they should write a description of what the image looks like. Have students share out their ideas, and write a list on the board. Next, based on the student observations, have them discuss what these mean. Here, they begin to

analyze the drawing. The final step is to have students name the drawing with a brief descriptive title, and then share out their ideas. This allows student to synthesize the discussion, makes sense of the drawing, and summarize the resource. Only at the end should the students be told the real title of the drawing; otherwise, their perspective and creativity is disrupted. A copy of the drawing can be found on page 45 of the Facing History and Ourselves resource guide Race and Membership in American History: The Eugenics Movement.

The next part of the unit is an examination of a Samuel Morton's work *Crania Americana*. Published in 1839, about fifty years after Petrus Camper's drawing, this work further confirms Campers conclusions about the nature of man. Yet this work was based on a sound scientific study. Whereas Camper measured the facial angles of various skulls, Morton measured the volume of the cranium using mustard seeds. In the Facing History Resource book, *Race and Membership*, there is a brief excerpt on pages 47-49. In these brief pieces, Morton provides a short description of the various races found around the world. To use in the class, have students choose one of the four passages. In their journal they should make a list of the positive and negative traits that Morton attributes to each race. Next, have the student write their lists on a piece of chart paper. At this point students will be able to discuss the study and analyze Morton's findings. In brief, Morton assigns more positive attributes to what he considers the more desirable races, and more negative attributes to the less desirable races. What is particularly important in the context of the Eugenics movement is the idea that these traits are somehow linked to a person's race. For instance he asserts that Mongolians are imitative, Native Americans restless and revengeful, and Africans joyous, indolent, and the lowest grade of humanity. Because Africans are also imitative, they readily acquire mechanic arts. This became a powerful scientific proof that the slave was well suited for his lot in life, and in the years after slavery, a powerful tool to justify keeping the former slave tied to the land.

Consider discussing with students the importance and weight that is placed on scientific studies. What is the danger is using science to determine human worth and abilities? How, as regular people, speak out against science? It seems that the only effective way to refute a scientific study is to use another scientific study. Clearly, that is not within the realm of possibility for most regular people. We do not have the authority to argue against a discipline, and access to that discipline was limited to only a privileged few. The general public, therefore, is left without recourse.

Craniometry was a popular scientific endeavor in the 1800's, and the public generally accepted its findings, as well as the idea that the races of man, by nature, could be ranked. Stephen Jay Gould asserts that the "white leaders of Western nations did not question the propriety of racial ranking during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this context, the pervasive assent given by scientists to conventional rankings arose from shared social belief, not from objective data gathered to test an open question." ⁶ When Morton did present his findings and he "provided clean objective data based on the largest collection of skulls in the world." ⁷ His conclusions would become almost irrefutable. However, Gould also points out, rightly so, how Morton's conclusions were in fact baseless, and is quite suspect. Morton was a great finagler, although Gould asserts that Morton's claims were not conscious fraud. Nonetheless, his research was greatly flawed. First, he included some races and omitted others, selectively, which skewed the results. For instance, he included Inca Peruvians to decrease the Indian average but deleted Hindus to raise the Caucasian. Second, his measurements were imprecise, and when given the opportunity, he changed his methods, but not the expected results. Third, Morton never allowed for a different interpretation of the data, and instead, was convinced that variation in skull size was representative of differing innate abilities. Fourth, he omitted data and misreported his averages, always in favor of his desired result. However, Gould still holds that Morton did this without conscious manipulation. Instead, Gould asserts that Morton was influenced by his a priori conviction. ⁸ And yet, because the public regarded him as the great objectivist of his time period, his

conclusions were widely accepted and used to promulgate the vicious segregated society of the Jim Crow South.

The final piece of this brief introduction to Eugenics could revolve around Sir Francis Galton, the founder of Eugenics. Interestingly, Sir Francis Galton was Charles Darwin's half-cousin. Although the two men would have little contact growing up, as established scientists, they had some correspondence. It is these letters that could be useful in a classroom setting. Students benefit greatly from analyzing a primary source document, and letters are often the most accessible documents. In a letter written to Darwin in December 1859, Galton offers his admiration of Darwin's work *On the Origin of the Species*. Galton wrote, "Pray let me add a word of congratulation on the completion of your wonderful volume, to those which I am sure you will have received from every side. I have laid it down in the full enjoyment of a feeling that one rarely experiences after boyish days, of having been initiated into an entirely new province of knowledge, which, nevertheless, connects itself with other things in a thousand ways." ⁹ Ten years later, Galton again writes Darwin, and makes reference to Darwin's work on evolution. In December 1869 Galton wrote, "I used to be wretched under the weight of the old-fashioned arguments from design, of which I felt, though I was unable to prove myself, the worthlessness. Consequently the appearance of your *Origin of Species* formed a real crisis in my life; your book drove away the constraint of my old superstition as if it had been a nightmare and was the first to give me freedom of thought." ¹⁰ Both of these excerpts provide real insight into how Galton regarded Darwin and his work. In the first quote, Galton is reminiscent of how it felt to discover and learn something for the first time, and is overwhelmed by this emotion. In the later letter, Galton asserts that the *Origin of the Species* woke him from a nightmare of constraint, and allowed him to see the world in a different manner.

Darwin had written a congratulatory letter to Galton on the occasion of the publication of Galton's own book, *Hereditary Genius*. Galton opens his letter with words of admiration for Darwin. He wrote, "It would be idle to speak of the delight your letter has given me, for there is no one in the world whose approbation in these matters can have the same weight as yours." ¹¹ Although the two men would not work together, it is quite evident that the men knew of each other, and regarded the other's work as incredibly important. Although it would be unwise to state that Darwin's book inspired or caused Galton to develop the science of Eugenics, I think it would be prudent to assert that the publication of the first heavily influenced Galton's work. Even beyond the theory of evolution, I think Galton felt liberated by the idea of a new theory being able to emerge. I also think that it is an important part of the story. Neither of these men wrote their books in a vacuum, but each was heavily influenced by the surrounding world. The 1800's were a period of great discovery, in science and in philosophy, and these two men were a part of that world. In the classroom, students could certainly read and analyze these letters.

Another consequence of Darwin's work, is the often attributed phrase "survival of the fittest." While Darwin does in fact use this phrase in one section of his book, he intended the phrase to be a synonym of his own term "natural selection." Furthermore, it was Herbert Spencer that coined the phrase, and it would be other influential members of society that would alter Darwin's original idea. Social Darwinism would emerge in the later 1800's and would encourage the application of Darwin's theory of evolution to man and his relative worth in society. That is to say, it became a justification for why the poor were poor and the rich were rich. It also became a useful tool in the creation of an economic caste system. And although there was social mobility, only those who pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, who worked hard, would benefit. The poor were dubbed unfit, and blamed for their lot in life. Certainly, this could be an area that could be further explored, and definite connections between this unit and the already established framework of US History are present. However, these connections will only be mentioned, and not explored with great depth.

Eugenics in the Public Sector

This section of the unit will deal with how the Eugenics movement crept into national consciousness and began to influence public policy. This portion of the unit will focus on two of these policies: forced sterilization and immigration policy.

Sterilization Laws

In the early part of the 20th century a new technique emerged as a mechanism of control over those deemed to be undesirable: forced sterilization. In many states, laws were created that would allow for the sterilization of criminals that fit certain criteria. On April 22, 1927, the case of *Buck v Bell* was argued before the US Supreme Court. In his decision, Justice Holmes provides a very brief overview of the case. "Carrie Buck is a feeble-minded white woman who was committed to the Sate Colony above mentioned in due form. She is the daughter of a feeble-minded mother in the same institution, and the mother of an illegitimate feeble-minded child." Virginia law allows that in certain cases, where the health of the patient and the welfare of society may be promoted, sterilization of mental defectives may be performed. This would be in the form of vasectomy in males and salpingectomy in females. The justification of this law is clearly reasoned. The state had under its guardianship many defective persons, who, if released into the public, would become a menace, but if sterilized, this danger would be mitigated. ¹² The impact of eugenic thinking becomes quite present in Holmes's next statement. He asserted that, "experience has shown that heredity plays an important part in the transmission of insanity, imbecility, etc." Holmes is one of the leading intellectuals in the United States; his approval of the Eugenics is critical in allowing the movement to sustain itself. And although this case is decided in 1927, after the immigration reform acts of 1924, it stands as a symbol of Eugenics being accepted by mainstream society. Later in the decision when Holmes asserts that "three generations of imbeciles are enough" he is subscribing to the idea that the State has a role to play in creating social order and can impose on society rules and regulations meant to promote its healthy existence. The court upholds the lower courts decision.

Interestingly, several facts are left out of the decision. To begin with, Carrie Buck's mother was a patient at the mental institution, who had three children of uncertain parentage. The institution argued that this qualified the mother as having a record of prostitution and immorality - two traits that were thought to be linked to heredity. Carrie was placed into foster care, and schooled successfully. Later, Carrie was deemed incorrigible and feeble-minded, and gave birth to an illegitimate child. Both Carrie and her daughter were then institutionalized and sterilized by tubal ligation. What is not mentioned in the court's decision is that in all likelihood Carrie Buck was raped by the nephew of her foster family, and in an effort to save their own reputation, Carrie was institutionalized. Secondly, her lawyer was inept, and did not adequately represent Carrie at her trial. Regardless of the circumstances of the case, Holmes believed in Eugenics and its potential positive impact on society. Because of the ruling, dozens of states would later add sterilization laws to their books.

In the classroom, students might struggle with understanding the text of the court case. It is important therefore to give them the tools to decipher the opaque language used in legal writing. Here is a simple process. Students should be given a copy of the text that they can write on. First, they should read through the document. As they read they should use an active reading protocol and highlight important information. They should then code the highlighted material. I like to have them use the following markings; ! for something surprising; ? for a question; * for something important; and arrow for a connection. They then have to explain. If they coded something with a question mark, they should then write the question. If they found a

passage important, they should then explain why it was important. This allows students to interact with the material and begin to analyze it. Also, it forms the basis of a discussion. Students then have concrete material to discuss and talk about with each other in a group setting.

What is of particular interest in the instance is the extent that Eugenics has crept into national consciousness, and in the 1920s no longer exists in purely the scientific sphere. Take, for instance, one of the greatest pieces of American Literature, *The Great Gatsby*. Written by F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1925, the novel examines the social fabric of the upper crust of society in the mid 1920s. The novel depicts the conflict between old money and new played in love affair between Daisy Buchanan and Jay Gatsby. Fitzgerald presents a few small, and yet very important, glimpses at how Eugenics began to creep into the consciousness of society. First, he was preoccupied with the idea of the egg; several times in his novel he comments on the presences of an egg, whether it being the use of the word egg, or yolk; the novel explores the conflict that exists between West Egg and East Egg, two distinct neighborhoods of Long Island. It seems a bit trivial, but Fitzgerald was concerned with the nature of man, and was exploring the nature of man's qualities, and whether they are born into him or acquired.

A more obvious presentation of eugenic thought is early in the novel when Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband, implores that Nick ought to read Goddard's newest work *The Rise of the Coloured Empires*. Tom seems to believe in Eugenics, and although he might not understand it completely, he asserts that he is worried about the future of his race. He hints at his race's importance in the world and the contributions it has made to society. Tom will try to explain the importance of this work, failing miserably, and only be successful at proving that he knows it is based upon significant scientific work. Whether or not Fitzgerald approves of Eugenics is beside the point. What is important is that Eugenic ideas appear in his novel. It is part of the national consciousness at this time, and people most likely would have at least heard of Goddard's work.

Immigration Policy

The late 19th century saw an unprecedented amount of immigration into the United States. At first, this was welcomed, and immigration was encouraged. In fact, the Statue of Liberty herself, the very symbol of freedom, on her podium exalts the virtues of the United States and her immigrants. Emma Lazarus wrote the following words: "Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore / Send these, the homeless, the tempest tossed to me. / I lift my lamp beside my the golden door." And immigration flourished. But overtime, immigration shifted from being mostly a Northern and Western European endeavor to being a Southern and Eastern European one. And in response to this, the United States reformed how it regarded its newly arrived immigrants. Immigrants would be tested, with the unhealthy being remanded into quarantine. However, the greatest change in immigration policy came in 1924 with the passage of sweeping immigration reform laws by the US Congress. These laws would establish a quota system that would allow only a limited number of immigrants from each country into the US each year. The quotas were based on the 1890 Census, and therefore skewed in favor of the Northern and Western European immigrants. It was a necessary step to address what Francis Sargent, the Commissioner General of Immigration would call an "immigration peril."

But immigration control was not new to the United States. Over time, the government had slowly placed limits on who would be allowed to enter the US. Whereas from 1789 to 1875 there was no limit placed, over the next thirty years, this would change. Here is a summary of these limits: 1875 - no convicts or prostitutes; 1882 - no idiots, lunatic, anyone requiring public care, no one who cannot pay a head tax of 50 cents; 1882-1943 - no Chinese; 1885 - no cheap contractor laborers; 1891 - No immigrants with contagious diseases, no paupers, no

polygamists, and medical inspection begins; 1903 - no epileptics, no insane persons, no beggars, and no anarchists; 1907 - no feebleminded, no children under 16 unaccompanied by parents, no immigrants unable to support themselves because of physical or mental defects; 1917 - no immigrants from most of Asia and the Pacific Islands, no illiterate adults. ¹³ In 1875, it is almost understandable that the government would begin to limit immigration, especially with the small limits that were placed. However, what become evident is that over time, the limits placed on immigration are the very social conditions that the Eugenicists were fighting against. It is the immoral and undesirable who were targeted. A simple exercise to use with students is to have them identify the limits that they feel were the most reasonable, and those that were the most unreasonable, and explain their reasoning. This could create a fruitful impromptu debate or discussion.

The debate in Congress over the National Origins Act was fierce, and it offers a glimpse into the mindset of the American Public. Since the early 1900s the public had been crying for more immigration control, as evidenced by the Immigration Restriction League and its victory in 1917 in limiting immigration. I have decided to include some brief excerpts from some of the bills supporters. To begin, Calvin Coolidge, who would sign the bill into law, stated to the American people that, "Restricted immigration is not an offensive but purely a defensive action. It is not adopted in criticism of others in the slightest degree, but solely for the purpose of protecting ourselves. We cast no aspersions on any race or creed, but we must remember that every object of our institutions of society and government will fail unless America be kept American." Coolidge's defensive action is an attempt to protect America, a sentiment echoed by members of Congress. Ira Hersey described America as "a mighty land settled by northern Europe from the United Kingdom, the Norsemen, and the Saxon, the peoples of a mixed blood. The African, the Orientals, the Mongolians, and all the yellow races of Europe, Asia and Africa should never have been allowed to people this great land." America is regarded by these men as a land of Caucasians, and threatened by the recent influx of foreigners.

The general feeling is that assimilation into American Culture is not possible. From the eugenic standpoint, this is because the most important trait that America values, hardwork, is not teachable. The new immigrant, by heredity nature, is more given to laziness and immoral behaviors, and therefore cannot be assimilated fully. The idea of the melting pot, according to Grant Hudson, "has proved to be a myth. We are slowly awakening to the consciousness that education and environment do not fundamentally alter racial values." If the melting pot was a mythical being, then the prospect of assimilation for immigrants was improbable. Clarence Lea would then add that it "to avoid further racial antipathies and incompatibility is the duty and opportunity of this Congress. The first great rule of exclusion should prohibit those non-assimilable. Our own interests, as well as the ultimate welfare of those we admit, justify us in prescribing a strict rule as to whom shall be assimilable. We should require physical, moral, and mental qualities, capable of contributing to the welfare and advancement of our citizenship. Without these qualities it would be better for America that they should not come." ¹⁴

I have chosen to only include brief excerpts from the debate in Congress. In the Facing History Resource book are more complete pieces of the debate, and in the Congressional Record, the complete transcripts of the debate could be found. However, these brief excerpts do a good job of showing the student what the general sentiment of the time period.

Genetic Testing and Eugenics in the Modern Day

It might seem strange at this time in the unit, but I think it would be a useful to define eugenics, not as Galton or Davenport defined the term, but what the term has come to mean in the present day. In his article "Screening for disability: a eugenic pursuit?" John Gillott offers the reader a couple variations on Galton's

classic definition. While Galton stated that eugenics was the study of the biological and social factors that improve the inborn qualities of human beings and of future generations, Gillott adds that a modern definition might be any policy that alters the composition of the human gene pool. Some critics would alter this definition just slightly, but adding that eugenics is about humanity changing the gene pool by specifically reducing the incidence of genetic disorders, whether by the policy or the aggregate of individual decisions that bring this about. There was a vast difference between then and now - in the early part of the 20th century the movement was a state led reductionist approach seeking to alter the gene pool. In the modern day, one could argue that genetics research is aimed at identifying medical diseases, and represents a biological approach to biological problems, and since it is not a reductionist approach, is therefore not a eugenic approach either. The ethical dilemma presented by eugenics hinges on the definition of the science itself. The first activity in this part of the unit could be for a class to create a suitable, working definition of the term and determine what should be considered eugenics. I would try to encourage my students to include the following elements in their definition. To begin, eugenics was thought to be a scientific theory that if applied correctly, improves humankind. Second, eugenics was not only a biological, but also a social theory. And third, and this part is quite debatable, eugenics is a state or community endorsed and promoted theory.

My worries in writing this part of the unit is that it can be very difficult to teach a subject that is so open-ended and controversial in the classroom. My overall goal, therefore, is to avoid becoming preachy about the dangers of a modern day eugenics movement, and to allow students to examine the materials and arrive at independent conclusions about the present day. As a teacher, my primary goal is to teach student how to think and write critically, not to indoctrinate them with a particular interpretation of history.

In my research I came across what I think could be a very useful resource in the classroom. Written by Richard Lynn, *Eugenics: a Reassessment* is a fascinating exploration of the movement. His overarching thesis of the book is that eugenics has been discredited in the modern day, but that the theory is essentially correct, and if used properly, could ensure the continued prominence of an industrialized country. Certainly, he takes what many would consider to be a controversial view; but it is this controversy that makes his book such a useful resource. Lynn is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Ulster. For the purposes of this unit, I think the best approach is to examine his work in parts. First, he outlines the objectives of the eugenics movement, and an examination of those objectives will certainly help students. Second, he presents logical arguments for the implementation of a new eugenics in specific regards to intelligence, mental retardation, mental illness, personality, and psychopathic personality, and genetic diseases and disorders. In the final part of his book he also presents a plan to control the child birthing process and limit child bearing to those determined to be fit. The point here, if used in the classroom, is it allows students to critically analyze a modern day eugenics program, and determine its worth in society.

Lynn asserts that eugenics is a useful science, and that its core principles are important to the present day society. To summarize, he states that health, intelligence, and moral character are valuable human qualities that to some extent are genetically determined, and are the foundation of a nation's intellectual and cultural achievements. He also states that in the second half of the 20th century, a steady genetic deterioration has occurred in the industrial world, a dysgenics, and that a new eugenics could arrest this process. It is feasible to improve our genetic qualities through both classic and new eugenics. Finally, eugenics serves the needs of both the individual and the nation state, and therefore, should not be suppressed but encouraged.¹⁵ Again, the book has received some positive and some negative reviews by Lynn's peers. If used in the classroom, it is imperative that students understand that secondary sources are not to be regarded as truth, and it is possible to argue for or against an author's particular view. In fact, this is the essence of history as a discipline; the ability to analyze the past and critique another's analysis is the very foundation that my courses rest upon.

The first case study that Lynn discusses revolves around the prevalence of genetic disorders. He surmises that in the 20th century, there "was a dysgenic trend for medical progress to preserve the lives of many of those with genetic disorders, which enabled them to have children and to transmit their adverse genes to succeeding generations." ¹⁶ Into this category of genetic disorders, Lynn includes the following; Huntington's Disease; Tourette's Syndrome, Marfan's Syndrome; Dwarfism; Cystic Fibrosis; Sickle Cell Anemia; Tay-Sach's disease; color blindness; Hemophilia; Muscular Dystrophy; Spina Bifida. Certainly, some of these disorders are quite debilitating, while others are not. Lynn also argues that mental illness is generally undesirable, and most of time, should be actively bred out of society. He subscribes to the ideals of the bell curve, and argues that unintelligent people are a hindrance to society. Next, Lynn argues that mental retardation, especially in its mild forms, is a detrimental to the success of society. This is only before he exposes the criminal nature of psychopathic tendencies, and connects them to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the tendency to be teenage parents. In the final section of his book, Lynn asserts that too many people are unfit to be parents, and that the state ought to control the ability of people to procreate. He proposes a parental licensing program, and advocates for the sterilization of all individuals until they can prove themselves fit to be parents.

In the classroom it is necessary to create an atmosphere of safety that allows students to discuss material that is at times controversial. The Richard Lynn book presents some very controversial viewpoints, and could provide the class with some interesting text to discuss. In his conclusion to his chapter on Genetic Diseases and Disorders, Lynn provides the reader, and consequently, the class, with a perfect opportunity for debate. The 7,000 known genetic disorders, he contends, have a common element, "the distress and the costs they bring to those suffering from them and to their families and the costs of medical treatment, education, and welfare support they incur for society." He then goes on to assert that, "the genes responsible for genetic diseases and disorders cause immense suffering, impose significant costs, and have no value. There is everything to be said for reducing the number of genes and ultimately eliminating them." ¹⁷ At times in my classroom, I use an activity called a forced choice debate. It is a quick way to have an interactive informal debate. Students are given a statement, and either have to agree or disagree. The room is then divided in half, with those who agree on one side, and those who disagree on the other. Students then have to explain how they made their choice. At any point a student can move to the other side. However, at that point, they always have to explain what prompted their change in opinion. I like to have several statements about the same topic for students to discuss. Lynn's assertion about genetic disorders is the type of statement that usually sparks an interesting conversation.

There are also some scenarios that could be used in a similar fashion that Lynn describes in his Genetic Diseases and Disorders chapter. One in particular, deals with the appropriate medical treatment for children born with genetic disorders. Here is an excerpt from Lynn that involves a "Down's syndrome infant with an intestinal blockage born at Johns Hopkins Hospital. The intestinal blockage could easily have been repaired by routine surgery, and this would have been done if the infant had been normal. But in this case, the parents refused to give their consent to the surgery because they did not want to rear a child with Down's syndrome. The hospital did not seek a court order to carry out the operation and the infant died." ¹⁸ This scenario could be construed as very controversial, but nonetheless, I think it would provide students with a very modern situation to discuss. Also, it allows students to discuss Eugenics without the debate morphing into a discussion of abortion rights. There are several court cases that could be discussed that would allow students to discuss these issues in the same manner. The first involves Dolores Becker who sued her obstetrician after she gave birth at the age of thirty-seven to a Down's syndrome daughter. She argued that the doctor did not properly inform her of the risks involved in having a child at her age, nor was she offered amniocentesis. The Beckers also wanted to hold the doctor accountable for "wrongful causation of life", but the court held that this was

beyond their abilities to rule on. Another mother, Hetty Park, gave birth to a child with polycystic kidney disease who died after five years, and later gave birth to a second child with the same disease, who died at the age of two. The court of Appeals found that in both cases, the parents had a right to sue the physicians for not properly counseling them, and that the physicians could be held financially responsible. ¹⁹ Again, these two cases are controversial, but students would benefit greatly from discussing these in a comfortable and safe environment. A suggested lesson plan is described in the appendix section.

I think another way to address the issues that Lynn presents is to have students write a critical analysis of his work. This could take the form of a critical essay, a book review, or perhaps even a letter to the author himself, refuting his positions. This would allow student to think critically about the material, and apply their knowledge about the past to the present day. It would be necessary to have more extensive excerpts from the book to have students complete this task.

Lesson #1: Introducing Eugenics

Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will define Eugenics.
2. Students will list and explain the goals and objectives of the Eugenics movement

Lesson Development:

- Distribute handout. It should have the four passages from Charles Davenport's Heredity in
1. Relation to Eugenics. These are included at the end of this lesson, but can also be accessed through Google Books. The book is now in the public domain.
 2. Divide students into small groups (3-4 students) and assign each group one of the excerpts. Each group has to translate the passage into modern day English as well as write a summary
 3. of the passage in txt format. This means that the students are allowed 160 characters, not words, to summarize the meaning of the passage.
 4. Both the translation and the summary should be written on a large piece of paper.
 5. Have the groups share out their work with the whole class.
 6. Afterwards, check for understanding by having students create a definition for the word eugenics, and by listing in their notebooks, the goals of the movement.

Excerpts:

Page 1: "Eugenics is the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding or, as the late Sir Francis Galton expressed it: "The science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race." The eugenical standpoint is that of the agriculturalist

1. who, while recognizing the value of culture [environment], believes that permanent advance is to be made only by securing the best "blood." Man is an organism--an animal; and the laws of improvement of corn and racehorses hold true for him also. Unless people accept this simple truth and let it influence marriage selection, human progress will cease."

Page 216: "Their is no question that, taken as a whole, the hordes of Jews that are now coming to us from Russia and the extreme southeast of Europe, with their intense individualism and ideals of gain at the cost of any interest, represent the opposite extreme

2. from the early English and the more recent Scandinavian immigration with their ideals of community life in the open country, advancement by the sweat of the brow, and the uprearing of families in the fear of God and the love of country."

Page 219: "Summarizing the review of recent conditions of immigration it appears certain that, unless conditions change of themselves or are radically changed, the population of the United states will, on account of the great influx of blood from South-eastern Europe, rapidly become darker in pigmentation, smaller in stature, more mercurial, more attached to music

3. and art, more given to crimes of larceny, kidnapping, assault, murder, rape and sex-immorality and less given to burglary, drunkenness and vagrancy that were the original English settlers. Since of the insane in hospitals there are relatively more foreign-born than native it seems probable that, under present conditions, the ratio of insanity in the population will rapidly increase."

Page 224: "If increasing attention is paid to the selective elimination at our ports of entry of the actually undesirable (those with a germ plasm that has imbecile, epileptic, insane, criminalistic, alcoholic, and sexually immoral tendencies); if agents in Europe learn the family

4. history of all applicants for naturalization; if the luring of the credulous and suggestible by steamship agents abroad and especially in the south-east of Europe be reduced to its lowest limits, then we may expect to see our population not harmed but improved by this mixtures with a more mercurial people."

Lesson #2: Buck vs Bell (1927)

Student Learning Objectives:

1. Students will read and analyze a Supreme Court Decision
2. Students will discuss a Supreme Court Decision

Lesson Development:

1. Distribute a copy of Buck v. Bell (1927). The text of the decision can be easily found online by typing the case code into an internet browser search bar. For Buck v. Bell (1927) use 274 US 200 (1927). This particular decision is very short, under two pages, and therefore does not need to be shortened.

Also, distribute the to students the Active Reading Protocol and review with students. As they read the text they use a three-step process: highlight, code, explain. They should use the following codes: * for something important; ! for something surprising; ? for a question; "x for a connection. The third step is to explain their reason for the code in the margin. Hence, they should write the question or explain the connection.

3. Give students about 20 minutes to read, highlight, code and explain.

To have students discuss the reading, simply have them share out some of their highlighting.

4. This means, they can ask their questions, explain their connections, etc. Discussion should take about 20 minutes.

To check for understanding, at the end of the period, or for homework, have students write two paragraphs about the case. They should be required to include specific evidence from the text of the decision. I require students to use SER format in their writing. That means that each paragraph should have the following elements: a topic sentence that introduces the

5. entire paragraph, a Statement about what they are going to prove, a piece of textual Evidence, an explanation of their Reasoning, and a concluding sentence. I usually require that each paragraph have two sets of SER. Therefore, a paragraph will have 8 sentences; topic sentence, statement, evidence, reasoning, statement, evidence, reasoning, concluding sentence.

Lesson #3: Eugenics in the Modern Day Debate

Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will make connections between the Eugenics Movement and the present day.
2. Students will make assertions about history and defend their ideas in a class debate.

Lesson Development

1. You will need an overhead projector, or LCD projector for this activity. The room should be divided in half. One half will be agree, the other disagree.

2. Review the procedure with the students. A scenario or statement will be projected on the board. Students will be given a few minutes to read the scenario, decide if they agree or disagree, and write a quick response in their journals.

3. After two minutes have students move to the appropriate side of the room. They are not allowed to be in the middle, but are forced to make a choice.

4. Have students explain how and why they made their choice and discuss the statements.

5. Once discussion has ended on the first scenario, repeat the process with the next.

- Once all of the scenarios have been discussed, students should choose one of the scenarios to write more thoroughly about. For this assignment, they are required to present their opinion with supporting ideas, as well as acknowledge the opposing viewpoint. This piece of writing should be 2 paragraphs long and can be reflective in style. That means they do not need to follow a specific format. I would suggest that students write one paragraph from each point of view.

Scenarios:

- The 7,000 known genetic disorders, Richard Lynn contends, have a common element, "the distress and the costs they bring to those suffering from them and to their families and the costs of medical treatment, education, and welfare support they incur for society." He goes on
1. to assert that, "the genes responsible for genetic diseases and disorders cause immense suffering, impose significant costs, and have no value. There is everything to be said for reducing the number of genes and ultimately eliminating them." Do you agree or disagree with Richard Lynn's statement?

- A Down's syndrome infant with an intestinal blockage is born at Johns Hopkins Hospital. The intestinal blockage could easily be repaired by routine surgery, and this would have been done if the infant had been normal. But in this case, the parents refuse to give their consent to the surgery because they did not want to rear a child with Down's syndrome. The hospital did not seek a court order to carry out the operation and the infant died. Who is more responsible for the death of the infant, the hospital or the parents?
- 2.

- Dolores Becker she gave birth at the age of thirty-seven to a Down's syndrome daughter. She then sued her doctor. She argued that the doctor did not properly inform her of the risks involved in having a child at her age, nor was she offered amniocentesis, a prenatal test that can determine the potential presence of chromosomal genetic disorders. The Beckers also
3. wanted to hold the doctor accountable for "wrongful causation of life". Another mother, Hetty Park, gave birth to a child with polycystic kidney disease who died after five weeks, and later gave birth to a second child with the same disease, who died at the age of two. The doctors are at fault and should be held accountable for the children's illness.

- To promote Eugenics, and to improve society, Richard Lynn proposes a parental licensing program. Simply stated, only those individuals deemed worthy of being apparent would be allowed to obtain a license and have a child. Lynn proposes that to regulate this, all 12-year-
4. old girls would be required to have some form of long-lasting contraceptive device, like an IUD, implanted, and only removed when they qualify for a parental license. Likewise, all 12-year-old boys would be sterilized by vasectomy that could be reversed when they obtain a parental license. Do you agree or disagree with this proposed program?

Appendix 1: Implementing Standards

This unit applies most appropriately to three of the Connecticut State Standards for the teaching of Social Studies. This can be found at the following website:

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320898> and on the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies website at: www.ctsocialstudies.org.

Content Standard 1: Historical Thinking: Students will develop historical thinking skills, including chronological thinking and recognizing change over time; contextualizing, comprehending and analyzing historical literature; researching historical sources; understanding the concept of historical causation; understanding competing narratives and interpretation; and constructing narratives and interpretation.

This unit addresses this standard in many ways. To begin with, students are continually asked to formulate their own questions and to think critically about the past. Also, students are asked to work deeply with primary source documents and write about the past as historians formulating their own opinions.

Content Standard 4: Applying History: Students will recognize the continuing importance of historical thinking and historical knowledge in their own lives and in the world in which they live.

To address this standard students are asked to think critically about the past, and make very specific, concrete connections to the present day. This is most evident in the forced choice debate, where students should use their knowledge of the past to support their ideas about the present.

Content Standard 6: Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizens to participate in and shape public policy, and contribute to the maintenance of our democratic way of life.

This standard is addressed by having students examine past public policy decisions about immigration and forced sterilization, and having them make specific connections to Richard Lynn's ideas about Parental Licensing.

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some amazing readings and is very useful in the classroom. To obtain this book

go to www.facinghistory.org.

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book provides a succinct explanation of the virtues of the Eugenics movement and its relevance to the modern day. It provides some really interesting and controversial viewpoints.

Endnotes

¹ (Davenport 1911, 1)

² (Davenport 1911, 216)

³ (Davenport 1911, 219)

⁴ (Davenport 1911, 224)

⁵ (Mosse 2004, 1385)

⁶ (Gould 1996, 66)

⁷ (Gould 1996, 86)

⁸ (Gould 1996, 100-101)

⁹ (Galton 1859)

¹⁰ (Galton, Letter from Galton to Darwin 1952, 83)

¹¹ (Galton, Letter from Galton to Darwin 1952, 83)

¹² (Holmes 1927)

¹³ This chart can be found in the Facing History and Ourselves publication *Race and Membership in the United States* on page 214.

¹⁴ (Facing History and Ourselves n.d., 232, 226, 228, 229)

¹⁵ (Lynn 2001, vii-ix)

¹⁶ (Lynn 2001, 71)

¹⁷ (Lynn 2001, 71)

¹⁸ (Lynn 2001, 70)

¹⁹ (Kevles 1995, 292-293)

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